SERMONS
ON
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS:

Preached by the Late
Rev. and Learned JOHN GILL. D. D.

He being Dead yet Speaketh, Heb. xi. 4.

GOSPEL AND LAW THEIR FORCE UNITE,
LEARNING AND GRACE COMBINE;
TO FORM THE MINISTER COMPLEAT,
AND MAKE THE CHRISTIAN SHINE.

HEAV'N CLAIMS ITS OWN, BUT THROUGH THE LAND;
THE PROPHET'S WRITINGS SPREAD:
HIS FAIREST MONUMENT REMAINS,
AND SPEAKS THO' HE IS DEAD.

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P R E F A C E
P R E F A C E.

As the Sermons contained in this volume, were never before made public, it may be proper to inform the reader that they are the genuine productions of Dr. Gill. The 18th, 19th, and 27th, are taken from the Doctor's own manuscripts, for copies of which I am indebted to his son. All the rest (except the 26th, which was a funeral discourse delivered in the year 1765, for my honoured mother) were preached in 1762. They were taken down in short hand, and afterwards transcribed by the same person, and lodged in the hands of one of the Deacons of the church, from whom I received them.

Had the Doctor revised and prepared them for the press, there is no doubt but they would have appeared more accurate and pleasing; but notwithstanding the disadvantages under which they labour, and which are common to posthumous works, I trust that through a divine blessing they will prove useful to the interest of religion.

The character of the deceased preacher is long since established, and needs no further commendation. His warm attachment to the distinguishing doctrines of grace, and the able manner in which he defended them is well known. The delight he took in preaching on those subjects which lead directly to Christian experience, many who are now living can testify; and I doubt not recollect with peculiar...
peculiar pleasure, the advantage they received whilst sitting under his ministry. Those important points which were the joy of his heart in life, and the support of his soul in death, are the subject matter of the following discourses. They contain a body of evangelical truth, and are fully fraught with the richest experience.

The reader, I hope, will not seek to be amused with curious metaphysical speculations; if so, he will be disappointed. If he peruses these discourses with a critic's eye, I fear he will not profit. But if he reads, "regardless of affected cadence, and the little niceties of professed refinement," with a wish to find food for his soul, I trust he will not read in vain. If I am not mistaken, the plain serious Christian, under the influence of the blessed Spirit, will be able from these sermons to pick up some of the finest of the wheat, and will perceive that honey out of the rock is plentifully distributed for the satisfaction of his spiritual appetite.

I have only to express my grateful acknowledgements for the encouragement received from the numerous and respectable subscribers, whose names are annexed. That a divine blessing may attend the publication, is the fervent wish and prayer of the editor,

William Button,

Newington Causey,
Nov. 10. 1789.
SERMON I.

David a Type of Christ.

2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

Now these be the last words of David: David the Son of Jesse said, and the Man who was raised up on high, the Anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said.

These be the last words of David. This refers not to what goes before, in the preceding chapter, which contains a psalm or song of David, and which is no other than the xviiiith Psalm with some little variation. That psalm was penned upon a solemn and joyful occasion, as we are told in the title. David spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and the hand of Saul*. Now this can only respect his conquest over the Moabites, Edomites, and Syrians, which we read of in the eighth chapter of this book, and which was some time before the death of David, therefore cannot be his last words.

* Psalm xviii. Title.
David a Type of Christ.

These be the last words of David, must therefore refer to what follow in verse 2d to verse 7th.

Now, when they are said to be the last words of David, we are not to suppose they were the last he ever spake in this world; no, it seems pretty plain that he said a great deal after this. It looks as if after this he had conversation with his son Solomon; gave him directions about building the Temple; informed him of the preparation he had made for it, and encouraged him to begin and go on with that work. But these are the last words of David, after he had finished his book of psalms; the last words of David which he spake by divine inspiration; the last words of David delivered by way of prophecy, for a prophet he was; so the Apostle Peter calls him in the second of Acts. He foretold things to come, things concerning the Messiah. The ancient Chaldee Paraphrase calls these his last words, expressly, "A prophecy that he prophesied concerning the times of consolation, the days of the Messiah;" and it is most clear and manifest, the Messiah is spoken of by him in these, who should be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain*. As we shall see hereafter.

Well then, these were the last words of David, which he spake by way of prophecy; and they were, no doubt, spoken at the close of his days, that is certain: and it may be observed, that great men, under the former dispensation, towards the close of their days, in some of their last speeches, said things prophetical. So Jacob, when his time drew near to die, called for his sons, and told them what should befall them in the latter days; not

* Verse 4.
fomuch what should befall their persons, as their tribes in after times. So Moses the man of God, just before his death, blessed all the tribes of Israel in a prophetic way. And David's last words were of this kind.

The words of persons of note and esteem among men, persons of rank, in an elevated state of life, of large capacity and great knowledge, especially those of piety and religion, are generally taken notice of, and had in great esteem: and such was the person whose last words these are. He was a man of high rank, in an elevated station, a King of Israel. He was a man of great capacity and knowledge in things natural, civil and divine. That he was a religious man, the book of psalms is a full proof.—Now the last words of such a man must deserve public notice; are worthy of our consideration. The last words of our friends and acquaintance are generally regarded, and often talked of; surely then the words of so great a man as David deserve our highest regard: for which reason I purpose to consider and go through them.

Let me, however, just observe here, that if these last words of David are worthy of our notice, how much more the last words of our blessed Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom he was an eminent type. Some of his last words, as recorded by the Evangelist Matthew, were his expostulatory ones before his divine Father. When he was under natural darkness, the sun having withdrawn himself; when under spiritual darkness, God having hid his face from him; and when he bore the wrath of God, and all the vengeance due to his people for their sins and transgressions, it caused him under all to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

* Mat. xxvii. 46.

B 2 These,
These, I say, were some of his last words, according to Matthew. The Evangelist Luke gives us a larger account than this. He mentions some other words, which were his last, or near his last. One is a petition put up on the behalf of those who crucified him. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*. This shews what an excellent spirit he was of, and worthy to be regarded and followed by all that call themselves the disciples and followers of the blessed Jesus. Another expression recorded by the same Evangelist, and which seems to be later, is, Into thy hands I commit my Spirit†; that is, his reasonable soul, which was just about to be separated from his body by death. He committed this into the hands of his divine Father. This deserves our imitation also. But the Apostle John is still more particular: he tells us the very last words which were spoken by Christ, that he said, It is finished‡, and then gave up the ghost. Then the work he came into this world to do was all finished, and particularly the great work of our redemption and salvation: that was finished, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do§. O, what words are these! they ought always to be remembered, and never forgotten by believers in Christ. These last words of Christ are the foundation of all our faith, hope, joy and comfort. Salvation is finished. These were the last words of our antitypical David.

I proceed now to the text, in which we have a description of David,

I. By his name—David.

II. By his descent—the son of Jesse—which was comparatively low and mean.


III. By.
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III. By his exaltation from a low estate to a higher one—The man who was raised up on high.

IV. By his union—the anointed of the God of Jacob.

V. By his usefulness to the Church of God, particularly in psalmody, which in his time was raised to the highest pitch with regard to the outward administration of it: therefore he is called, the sweet psalmist of Israel.

And in all these things I shall consider David as a type of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall find all the characters agree with him.

I. He is described here by his name, David: which signifies beloved, as no doubt he was by his parents, he being their youngest son. He was also beloved of God, even when he was disesteemed of men. The stone which the builders refused, was made by Jehovah the head of the corner. He was preferred before all his elder brethren, by the Lord. He was the man after God’s own heart, whom he had pitched upon, and therefore raised him to the throne of Israel. He was beloved of man; not only by Jonathan the son of Saul, who loved him as his own soul; but also of the whole nation. It is said by the Historian, that all Israel and Judah loved David*. They all loved him, to a man, for his courteous, affable disposition and behaviour, and because he went out with their armies, fought their battles for them, and came in a victorious conqueror. Therefore with great propriety is his name called David.

This name is given to the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ; given unto him, and spoken of him, when David was no more; when he had been dead many hundreds of years. Spoken of Christ in reference

* 1 Sam. xviii. 16.
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to times then to come, and yet to come; for it is said, *They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King*. This respects times that are yet to come: the like is said in Hosea iii. 4, 5. The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king. The former part has been fulfilled, but the latter remains to be accomplished: the time is yet to come that they shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king. So in other prophecies, where it is foretold that the Lord would raise up one shepherd and one prince over them, even David his servant†:—This could never be meant literally of David: it means the antitype of David, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in the latter day will be a prince and a king over the Jewish nation, converted and called by grace.

And this name well agrees with him, because he is the beloved one. The beloved of the Father, his dear son, the son of his love, of whom he has said once and again, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*‡. Beloved he was by him from all eternity: our Lord testifies this when he says, *for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world*§. He was from all eternity as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him. He lay in his bosom; a phrase expressive of the most tender affection to him. Beloved he was by him in time, throughout all his meannesse, sufferings and death. He loved him in his infancy: as it is said, *When Israel was a child I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt*. This respects the Messiah, one of

* Jerem. xxx. 9. † Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24. ‡ Mat. iii. 17.
§ John xvii. 24. || Hosea xi. 1.

whose
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whose names is Israel; whom the Lord loved when he was a child in his infant state in our nature, and who shewed his affection to him by warning Joseph in a dream to take his wife, and the young child, and flee into Egypt. He went and continued there; and when it was a proper time, he was warned again to return into his own land, because they that sought the young child were dead: so the prophecy was fulfilled.

And as he loved him, and manifested it in his infancy, so throughout his whole life. When he was obeying the divine commands, when he was suffering death, still he loved him. Yea, Christ says, Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life. Many declarations there are, of his love to him. He loved him, and therefore put all things into his hands; all persons, angels and saints; particularly the latter, who are put into his hands as the effect of Jehovah's love to him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. Again: The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth—The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

Christ, the antitypical David, is not only beloved of God, but also by his people. He is beloved of all those that see the loveliness of his person, and have tasted of his love: these cannot but say of him, “He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” They know not how better to describe him, than as him whom their souls love. Saw ye him (says the Church) whom my soul loveth? They love him in his whole person as God-Man: they love him as held forth in all his offices, in all his relations.

* John x, 17. † iii. 35. ‡ v. 20, 22, 23. § Cant. iii. 3.
They love him as he appears in all his truths and ordinances. They love the truths relating to him, that set forth the glory of his person and the riches of his grace. They love him in all his ordinances: they esteem his precepts concerning all things to be right, and hate every false way*. They love all his people, rich or poor, high or low, and of whatsoever denomination among men. And they love Christ superlatively above all others, angels or men; they say, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee†. They love him above all natural relations, friends, and acquaintance, be they ever so near and dear to them. He that loveth father or mother (faith our Lord) more than me, is not worthy of me‡. They love him with all their hearts and with all their souls, with sincerity and uprightness of heart, and can appeal to him as the searcher of the hearts, and trier of the reins of the children of men, that as he knows all things, he knows they do love him. These shew their love to him by a regard to his commandments and ordinances. If ye love me (says Christ), keep my commandments§. Also by parting with all, and bearing all for his sake: by expressing an uneasiness at his absence from them: not being contented till they find him again: seeking here and there, and every where for him, and when they have found him they will not let him go—Thus our Lord Jesus Christ answers to the name David, which signifies beloved; he is beloved of his Father, and beloved of his people.

II. He is further described by his lineage and descent, the son of Jesse. He is not described here as the son of Abraham (of whose seed the Jews

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* Psalm cxix. 128. † Psalm lxiii, 25. ‡ Mat. x. 37, § John xiv. 15.

generally
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generally boasted they were), in whom all the nations of the earth were blessed; nor is he described as being of the tribe of Judah, the honourable tribe of Judah, from whom the Messiah was to spring; but he is called the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite. Bethlehem was but a small town, or city, and the family of Jesse, in that city or town, seems of no great note: hence Saul asks his servants, whom he suspected to carry on a private conference with David, "Will the son of Jesse give every one of you "fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of "thousands and captains of hundreds?" So Nabal, when applied to at sheep-shearing by David's servants, Who is David? (says he) And who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. I suppose this must be some runaway man or other. Of so little note were David and his family. Yea, David suggests as much himself, when he says, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

Now the Messiah is represented as one that should spring from Jesse: There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the people; which is to be understood of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, and describes his low and mean estate by lineal descent.

The family of Jesse was raised to great grandeur in David and Solomon; and in after-times a numerous race of kings sprang from them, which ennobled that family, and made it very illustrious, to the times of the Babylonish captivity; but after that,
they decreased quite to the times of the Messiah; and it was very low indeed then. The family of Jesse was like a tree cut down to the roots, scarcely any thing of it appeared above ground. Joseph, a poor carpenter, and Mary, a poor virgin, these were the remains of that once famous family from which the Messiah sprang; and they are both represented as very poor. They came to Bethlehem, to which they both belonged, to be taxed there. Mary's time drew near, and there she was delivered of her son: but there was no room for them in the inn, and we may be sure the reason was, because of their meanness; and at the time of her purification, she brought an offering of the meaner sort.

Christ was so mean, that he gave offence to the Jewish nation. They could not think that this person who sprang from them should be king of Israel. Is not this the carpenter's son? (say they) Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? Don't we know them all, what poor, mean persons they are? and they were offended. Such a low condition this family was in, when the Messiah was born; and he sprang from it, as a root out of a dry ground. His education was agreeable to his birth. He was brought up in an obscure place, Galilee; concerning which, Nathaniel says, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? He had not been sent so much as to a private school, much less to a University; therefore he was upbraided with it afterwards. How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Never been at school. He was not only represented as the carpenter's son; but they say, Is not this the carpenter? It seems he was brought up to trade. O, how low

*Mat. xiii. 55, 56. †John i. 46. ‡vii. 15. §Mark vi. 3.
was our Lord brought in our room and stead! He was found in fashion as a man, and in the form of a servant. He who was Lord of all; he to whom the world belonged, and all the fulness of it; yet was obliged to some few persons for his support.—Thus we see the wonderful, amazing grace of our Lord Jesus, "who, though he was rich, and Lord of all, yet for our sakes became poor; that we, through his poverty, might be made rich."

III. David is here described as the man raised up on high: raised from a low estate, to a very exalted one. A low estate David was in when he was anointed King of Israel. When Samuel inquired, if there were any other sons of Jesse, they said, there was another, but he was keeping his father's sheep. Well, he must be sent for; so God took him, as we are told, from the sheep-folds; from following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. He was raised from a low estate, to a very exalted one. He was first king over the tribe of Judah, then over Benjamin, and then over all the tribes of Israel: yea, he was exalted to be the head of the heathen round about him. In a spiritual sense, like other saints, he was raised as a beggar from the dunghill, set among princes, and made to inherit the throne of glory.

In this, he was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ: to Him this character well agrees; the man who was raised up on high. The man. It is a very emphatic article in the original text, which is, in a good measure, preserved in our translation. Not a mere man, or a common man, but, the man. The man that God has chosen; the man of his right hand, as he is called. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, the Son of man whom thou madest strong

* Psalm lxviii. 70, 71. † 1 Sam. ii. 8.

for
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for thyself*. The man of thy right hand; dear to God as his right hand. The man of his right hand; whom he made use of as his right hand in the great work of our salvation. The man of his right hand; whom he supported with the right hand of his righteousness. The man of his right hand; whom he has exalted with his right hand, and at his right hand. The man, his fellow. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow†. —

Not that Christ, as man, is Jehovah's fellow: but that divine person, to which the human nature is united, is Jehovah's fellow. As man, he was not; as a divine person, he was. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God‡. He has the same nature and divine perfections; the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in him. The man, the second man, the Lord from heaven§; not that he, as man, came down from heaven, as some have thought; no, for as man he was a son of earth, agreeable to a prophecy concerning him. Truth shall spring out of the earth: and righteousness shall look down from heaven||. —

Christ, as man, came from earth; but as God, he came down from heaven: not by local motion, but by assumption of the human nature. "Came down," not to do his own will; but the will of him that sent him.

"The man," that was chosen above all the individuals of human nature, for the purposes for which he was sent: hence he is said to be chosen out of the people¶. Pitched upon this one single individual human nature. The human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ he selected from all the rest, and therefore he is said to be his elect: Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth**. Chosen out from among the people,

* Psalm lxxx. 17. † Zac. xiii. 7. ‡ Phil. ii. 6. § 1 Cor. xv. 47. || Psalm lxxxv. 11. ¶ Psalm lxxxix. 19. ** Isa. xlii. 1.
the choicest, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, and was particularly chosen to the grace of union to the divine person of the Son of God, which none other of the human race was. The wonderful extraordinary man, chosen of God to be united to the second person in the blessed Trinity, and therefore bears the same name with him. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the highest; on which account he is truly said to have a more excellent name than the angels, for to which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? O what a great and wonderful mystery is this, that the Word should be made flesh and dwell among us!—God manifest in the flesh!

The man Christ Jesus was raised up on high, exalted to be a prince and a Saviour: exalted, raised up in union with the divine person of the Son of God, to be a prince, a king and head over all things to the church. To be the head of principalities and powers, even of angels. It is thought by some that this gave offence to the apostate spirits. Understanding that the Son of God in human nature must be head over them, and principalities and powers become subject to him: they rebelled, left their first habitation, would have nothing to do with this Son of God, if he must be exalted as head over them in human nature. Let this be as it may, he is exalted to be a prince, a head over all things to the church, and to be the Saviour of the body thereof: he was made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law. He was fore-ordained to be the redeemer and Saviour of men, by the shedding of his precious blood in human nature: this was the man raised up on high.

* Luke i. 32. † Heb. i. 5. ‡ Gal. iv. 4, 5.
When he had gone through his state of humiliation here on earth, God highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He ascended up on high, even far above all, and is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, in the highest place he possibly could have, the right hand of God, which was never allowed to any creature whatever, for "to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit "on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy "footstool?" But Christ in our nature is there. The man united to the divine person of the Son of God. The man raised up on high, and who when he ascended received gifts for men: or, received gifts in Adam; as it is in the original text. Received gifts in the human nature in which he ascended. Received gifts, for what? for qualifying men for public work and service in the ministration of the gospel: and has given them unto men, more or less, in all succeeding generations. And he is not only exalted to give these gifts unto men, but common grace also (if I may so call it), or such grace as is common to all the people of God: for as he is exalted to be a prince and a favour, so to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins: to give every grace, and every blessing of grace unto his people. Now what an honour is the human nature raised up unto in union with the divine person of the Son of God, in that it is raised up to bestow all extraordinary and ordinary gifts! All extraordinary, bestowed on Apostles, Prophets and Teachers: all ordinary, bestowed upon Ministers in every age, and

* Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. † Heb. i. 13. ‡ Acts v. 31.
David a Type of Christ, 15

all grace bestowed upon the people of God in common.

Once more: He is exalted to be the Judge of the whole world. God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained*; or, by Christ in human nature. He is the man, that is raised up on high for that service: to be the Judge of the whole earth; to be the judge of quick and dead: he will appear in human nature, and every eye shall see him: he will appear most glorious and magnificent: he will come in his own glory, in his Father's glory, and in the glory of all the holy angels.—Thus he is the man raised up on high.

IV. David is here described as the anointed of the God of Jacob: that is, anointed by the order of the God of Jacob. Samuel was ordered to anoint him, and he did; and he was afterwards anointed king over Judah; and after that he was anointed to be king over all Israel. The anointed of the God of Jacob. He shewed himself to be the God of Jacob and Israel, by appointing such a king to rule over them.

In this also David was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is anointed with the Holy Ghost. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost†, called the oil of gladness with which he is said to be anointed above his fellows‡, for he received the Spirit without measure. Anointed he is said to be by the Lord, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee§. Jehovah hath done it, who also anointeth all that believe. And do you ask when he was anointed? I answer, he was anointed from all eternity. In Proverbs the eighth it is said, I was set up from everlasting: it is in the original text, I was

* Acts xvii. 31. † Acts x. 38. ‡ Heb. i. 9. § Psalm xlv. 7. anointed.
The phrase expresses his being appointed unto, or invested with, the office of Mediator. He might be said to be anointed from everlasting, as such. All the grace of his people, all that was designed to be bestowed upon them, were put into his hands. He was posseffed in the beginning of God's way with a fulness of grace for all his people: hence we are said to have grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*. He was anointed with the Holy Ghost from his birth; for if John the Baptist is said to be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb†, our Lord Jesus Christ may well be thought to be so. At his baptism it was more apparent when the Spirit of God rested upon him, whereby John knew he was the Messiah. This was the sign given him whereby he should know that he was the Messiah. He was declared to be Lord and Christ, or more manifestly anointed when he received the gifts and grace to be bestowed upon his people in future ages and generations.

He was anointed with the Holy Spirit, his gifts and grace as man and mediator, as prophet, priest, and king. The Prophets used to be anointed: hence Elijah had orders to anoint Elisha‡. Christ is anointed as a prophet. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me, for what? why to preach glad tidings to the meek§; and his people, who have their anointing from him, are taught all things. Christ as a priest, consecrated for evermore, was anointed with the gifts and graces of the Spirit above measure. The oil or ointment poured upon Aaron's head, which ran down to the skirts of his garments, was an emblem or type of the abundance of the gifts and graces of the Spirit bestowed on

* 2 Tim. i. 9. † Luke i. 15. ‡ 1 Kings xix. 16. § Isa. lxi. 1.

Christ.
Christ as our great high priest. Kings also were anointed to their office, as David, Solomon and others; so Christ was anointed as king. I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion*: it is in the original, I have anointed my king. Hence it is that Christ has the name of the Messiah, or anointed one; and his followers have the same, receiving from him that anointing which teacheth all things.

V. David is described as the sweet psalmist of Israel. And this title and epithet is given him, because he composed most part of the book of Psalms under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. He also invented the tunes to which they were set, and the instruments of music with which they were sung; hence you read of some that invented instruments of music like David†. He also appointed persons to preside in this service, and to give instruction therein, of which you have a large account in the 1 Chron. xvth and xxvth chapters. And psalmody, as I have already observed, was never raised to so great a pitch, respecting the outward administration of it, as in David’s time; so that he might with great propriety be called the sweet psalmist of Israel: though the words will bear another reading, and perhaps a better: And the sweet or pleasant one, in the psalms or songs of Israel; that is, David was the sweet and delightful subject of the songs of Israel. He was the person that the people in their songs with great pleasure dwelt upon, of which you have an instance in his youthful time: when they came forth in their songs and dances, and said, “Saul hath slain his thousands, “and David his ten thousands‡.”

In this also he was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sweet and delightful psalms of David were composed under the influence of the

* Psalm ii. 6. † Amos vi. 5. ‡ 1 Sam. xviii. 7.

Messiah,
Messiah, as in verse the third, *The God of Israel said*, the Rock of Israel spake to me: the Lord Jesus, the Rock of Israel spake by him, and by his Spirit indited the psalms he was the penman of. The Spirit of Christ in him, spake of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow. Our Lord Jesus Christ might be particularly stiled the sweet psalmist of Israel, when he sung the praises of God in the great congregation; when he with his disciples, at the institution of the supper, sung an hymn: he began, he led on the disciples, and sung with them; O what a delightful sound was that, could it have been heard by us! the Messiah, the sweet psalmist of Israel singing the psalms of David! —The hallelur or hymn which the Jews sung at their Passover, was none other than the psalms of David, the cxiiith to the cxviiith. These psalms he sung with his disciples, and then he was the sweet psalmist of Israel. Moreover, he has ordered that psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs should be sung by his people. *Christ speaking in me*, says the apostle*; so that what is written by him, may be said to be spoken by Christ; and in his epistles there are orders given to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs—Speaking to your selves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,+ And in another epistle it is said, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord;* this is the order of the great psalmist of Israel, our Lord Jesus Christ.

But particularly as David was the sweet, the delightful subject of the songs of Israel; so our Lord Jesus Christ is the sweet, the delightful subject

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* 2 Cor. xiii. 3.  † Eph. v. 19. ‡ Col. iii. 16.
of the book of psalms: we have his own authority for it; for we are told that he expounded unto his disciples in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself, and said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me*. O how do they speak of Jesus! He is the subject of these songs, in most, if not in all of them; in great abundance there you hear of him, and there he is set forth in the most delightful and glorious strains. There you read of the covenant of grace made with this our David, before the world was, and which can never be broken†. There you read of his sufferings, and of his death, in the most lively descriptions of it: especially in the xxiid psalm, where he is represented in the greatest agonies, all his bones being dislocated or out of joint, as at his crucifixion; and the most minute circumstances are mentioned, as parting his garments among them, and casting lots upon his vesture. There you read of his resurrection from the dead; how that God would not suffer his Holy One, when in the grave, to lay so long as to see corruption, but shewed him the path of life‡. There you read of his ascension, and session at the right hand of God, and of his second coming to judgment, to judge the world in righteousness, and the people with his truth§. There you read of him as the priest of God. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent: thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec||. There you read of him as being a sacrifice, and offering up his body†. There you read of him as the great prophet of Israel, not concealing truth and righteousness, and loving

* Luke xxiv. 44. † Psalm lixxxix. ‡ Psalm xvi. 10, 11. § Psalm xcvi. 13. || Psalm cx. 4. ¶ Psalm xl. 6, &c.
kindness from the great congregation*. There you read of him as the anointed king, made higher than the kings of the earth.—In short, there you read of him in all his offices. But I close all with a remark or two.

All that has been said may serve to endear our Lord Jesus Christ unto us. He is the true David, the beloved one. He is the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel, or the sweet subject of the songs of Israel. All this, I say, may serve to endear him to us; for however he may be disallowed of men, yet he is the chosen of God and precious; and he is so, and ought to be so, to all them that believe.

This may also serve to recommend unto us the reading of David's psalms, for Christ is the sum and substance of them. There is not only a rich fund of experience in these psalms, but a rich display of Christ in all his offices, in all his sufferings, and in all his grace. It may also serve to recommend unto us the singing these psalms, which, no doubt, were designed to be sung by the churches of Christ, under the gospel dispensation, since they are so full of him. And this may serve also to excite our attention to what follows: which the words I have now been upon are only a preface to. Now since here is so grand a description given us of David, and so of his Antitype, let it induce us to pay a regard to what really are the last words of so great a personage. These we shall consider in some subsequent discourses, as the Lord shall give opportunity.

* Psalm xl. 9, 10.
The Words of David, the Words of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit.

HAVING considered in a former discourse the preceding verse, which contains a fine description of David, that tends to recommend to our notice those last words of his recorded in the following verses, I shall now proceed to shew how they are further recommended to us, from the author of them: for they are to be considered not so much the words of David himself, as the words of a divine person spoken by him. This we may gather from the text. The Spirit of the Lord spake by me. They were his words, and not merely David's. It was the God of Israel that said, it was the Rock of Israel that spake to him and by him. From which we may notice,

I. The author of these words as represented in these several different expressions, which all tend
to recommend them to our most serious consideration. And then,

II. The words themselves, which the divine person or persons spake in, by, and to David.

I. The author or authors of them, for these words do not appear to be David's words, properly, but another's, even the Lord's.

1. It is observed, the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. He did not speak what he did, from his own spirit, nor out of his own heart, according to the dictates of his own mind; but the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. We read of some in the times of Jeremiah, "who ran and were not sent, who prophesied, and the Lord had not spoken unto them." The same sort of persons are described by the prophet Ezekiel, "as speaking out of their own hearts, and following their own spirit." They said those things which their own carnal minds suggested unto them, and which they judged would be pleasing to natural and carnal men, whereby they might get introduced among them, and so serve their own purposes, either with respect to applause or worldly wealth. And this being the case, some persons pretending to divine and spiritual things, speaking not by the Spirit of God, but from their own spirit, makes the caution the apostle John gives necessary. Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone forth into the world.

All who pretend to speak by the Spirit of God are not to be believed: they speak only out of their own hearts, and follow their own spirits, therefore are to be tried by the word of God, to see whether what they say is agreeable to that or no. What

* Jer. xxiii, 21. † Ezek. xiii, 2, 3. ‡ 1 John iv, 1.
David said was not from his own spirit, but the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. He, and other holy and good men, spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit of God; for prophecy came not of old time by the will of man. Even those who were the true prophets of the Lord, and by whom the Spirit of the Lord spake; they could not prophecy, they could not deliver out any thing as from God when they pleased. It was not at their option, it was not according to their will; no, but just as they had an impulse upon their spirits by the Spirit of God. Even Balaam, though a false prophet, yet, in the hands of God, and under his direction at that particular time, of which he was sensible, was obliged to say, he could not go beyond the commandment of the Lord*, or say more or less than what was suggested to him. Nay, if Balak would have given him his house full of silver and gold, it could not have been otherwise: he could not go beyond the commandment of God, to do either good or bad.

Now if this was the case with Balaam, we may reasonably conclude, that what the prophets of the Lord spake, was not according to their own will; but according to the will of God, and by the Spirit of God. This was so well known, that Zedekiah, King of Israel, puts this question to Jeremiah, who was a true prophet of the Lord, Is there any word from the Lord†? He knew very well Jeremiah could say nothing to any purpose, that he could depend upon, unless he had a word from the Lord; and that he gives according to his sovereign will and pleasure.

Well, these last words of David were spoken by him, not out of his own heart, not out of his own spirit, not out of his own head, as pleased himself;

* Numb. xxiv. 13. † Jer. xxxvii. 17.
but by the Spirit of God. And much less were what he said, from an evil spirit: the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, or what is called the spirit of the world, which rules and governs in the world, and in worldly men. We have received, says the apostle, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us by God*. Now it was this Spirit of the Lord that spoke by David. Who is of God, comes from God, is of the same nature with the divine Father, and proceeds from him: so our Lord describes the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father†. What is meant by that proceeding, we know not; we are unable to explain it; we must take it as it is. This we are sure of; that the Holy Spirit is of God, comes from God, and is of the same nature with him. So also he is from the Son, and therefore is called the Spirit of the Son‡.

A dispute there was in ancient times, and that in the churches—whether the Spirit proceeded from the Son as from the Father? It is most certain he proceeded from the one as from the other: but as to the modus of it, it is not in the power of a finite mind to conceive of. This we know, it is the Spirit which is of God; possessed of the same nature, and of the same divine perfections with God the Father, and with the Son, from whom he proceeds. He is eternal, He is called the eternal Spirit§; so from everlasting to everlasting, God. He is omnipresent; a perfection which only belongs to God. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence||? There is no such thing. He is every


where;
where; and therefore must be God. He is a God omniscient: he searches the deep things of God, and reveals them to his people. He can, and has foretold things to come. He, the Spirit of Christ in the prophets, foretold the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Omnipotence is ascribed to him: miracles, such as are above the power of nature, and contrary to the laws of nature, are done by him, in confirmation of the truths of the everlasting gospel. You read of wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which the gospel was at first confirmed. Now these abundantly prove him to be the true God, as he is represented. He is Jehovah, whom the Israelites rebelled against; they are said to vex the Holy Spirit*. It was Jehovah who said, in a vision of Isaiah, Who will go for us? In the Acts of the Apostles He is said to be the Lord, the Holy Ghost. He is expressly said to be God; lying against him is said to be lying against God†. The faints are called the temples of God; and this reason is given for it, because the Spirit dwells in them. He is likewise denominated, the Lord, the Spirit‡: that is, Jehovah the Spirit.

The same works which are said to be done by the Father, may also be ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The work of creation, this may be ascribed to him. He not only moved upon the face of the waters, and brought the indigested chaos into order after its creation; not only did he garnish the heavens; but he it was that made them: for by the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them, by the Breath or Spirit of his mouth§. He is expressly said to be concerned in

*Isaiah lxiii. 10. †vi, 8. Acts v. 3, 4. § 2 Cor. iii. 17.
||Psalm xxxiii. 6.
The Words of David, the Words of making man. Elihu says, The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life*. These are works that prove him to be the true God. Worship is also to be paid unto him. He is not only to be prayed unto as the Father and the Son are (the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ†; where he is manifestly distinguished from the Father and the Son); but he is prayed unto along with them‡. The ordinance of baptism is directed to be performed in His name equally as in the name of the other two divine Persons§.

Now it was the Spirit of God, or God the Spirit, that spake by David; the Spirit of the Lord spake by me: the same that spake by the rest of the inspired writers. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God: holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost||:" and so did David. It is expressly said, in a quotation from a psalm of his, that the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David **.

The Spirit of the Lord spake by me. It may be properly enough rendered, the Spirit of the Lord spake in me: so respects an internal revelation of the mind and will of God unto him, which he was to declare unto others, which was made by the Spirit of God unto his prophets and inspired writers. He illuminated them, or gave them a clear and distinct view of things internally. So the prophecy of Hosea is said to be the beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea; so it is rendered, though it may as well be rendered, in Hosea. The Apostle Peter does with great emphasis express it of the inspired writers, that the Spirit of Christ which was in them, testified

* Job xxxiii. 4. † 2 Thess. iii. 5. ‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 14. § Mat. xxviii. 19. || 2 Pet. i. 21. ** Acts i. 16.
Now inasmuch as the Spirit of the Lord spake by David, then what he said and delivered under his impulse, influence, and inspiration, must be reckoned the word of God; and should be received, not as the word of man, but as it is, in deed, and in truth, the word of God. So we are to account David's Psalms to be a part of the word of God, (and a most excellent part indeed!) and of Christ who speaks in them. Hence the Apostle says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly: and what does he mean by the word of Christ? He particularly seems to have regard to the words of David; since it follows, teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. These are the words of Christ, at least a great part of them: the reason is, that the Spirit of the Lord spake in and by David, in penning and delivering these Psalms. Moreover, we should regard what the Lord says by David; because what he delivered was spiritual. That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit: so, what any man says under the influence of the Spirit is spiritual. What David said by divine inspiration was spiritual; and therefore with propriety are his Psalms, in the passage before referred to, called spiritual songs: not only because the matter in them is spiritual, but because the Author of them was the Spirit of God.

It also follows from hence, that what David spake under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, must be holy, for the Spirit of God is holy: an epithet peculiar to the Third Person, called the Holy Spirit. How much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? All that comes from

* 1 Peter i. 11.  † Col. iii. 16.  ‡ John iii. 6.  § Luke xi. 13.
The Words of David, the Words of

him must be holy. The Law of God is holy; the Gospel is holy; the Scriptures are holy. They are called the Holy Scriptures: the reason is plain and clear; because they come from the Holy Spirit of God; therefore the whole matter of the Scriptures must be holy. The Law is holy, just, and good. The Gospel is so; all the doctrines and truths of it are holy: (the doctrine which is according to godliness†). They open not a door to licentiousness, as many who are ignorant of them foolishly object, knowing nothing of the power of them; for the grace of God teaches men, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Therefore, I say, if David spake what he did by the Holy Ghost, then what he said must be holy.

It must be true also; because the Spirit that spake by him is the Spirit of Truth. How often does Christ give him that epithet; Even the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me‡: and again, when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth§. Now, inasmuch as what was said by David, and by any other inspired writer, was by the Spirit of God, the Scriptures must be the Scriptures of truth: for no lie is of the Truth||.

This also being the case, David speaking by the Spirit of God, as well as all other holy and good men, it follows, that the blessed Spirit is the best interpreter of the Scriptures. It is He that can most truly lead into all truth, and make application of it; lead men into the truths contained in the Psalms of David; open their understandings, that they may understand them. It is He also that can best assist us in singing

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The psalms which he himself is the inditer of; most wisely therefore did the Apostle resolve, in the strength of divine grace, to sing with the Spirit as well as with the understanding.*

The Spirit of the Lord spake by me. And it is added, His word was in my tongue. His word: the word of the Spirit of God was in my tongue. Not only did he indite the matter, but he gave him the express words wherewith to deliver that matter.—Some have been of opinion, that the inspired writers of the word of God had only the matter thereof dictated to them, or their minds furnished with views of things, but that they were left to clothe those ideas with words of their own. If this had been the case, if there had not been infallibility with respect to words as well as to matter, they might have made use of improper ones, which would not have conveyed to our minds the proper ideas of things; so that we should have been at an uncertainty with respect to faith and practice. But this was not the case: words were also suggested unto them, by which they were to express those ideas, those impulses upon their minds. His word was in my tongue. What they said, they said, not in words which man’s own wisdom taught, but in words which the Holy Ghost taught†. The very words they were directed to make use of, as well as the matter. We are said to be nourished up in the words of faith and sound doctrine‡: not with doctrine, but the words of doctrine: not doctrines as to the matter of them—but the very words of those doctrines are laid down in the Scriptures; and therefore we are commanded to hold fast the form of sound words§—sound speech that cannot be condemned∥—which must be that which is under

* 1 Cor. xiv. 15. † 1 Cor. ii. 13. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 6. § 2 Tim. i. 13. ∥ Titus ii. 8.
The Words of David, the Words of

The direction and inspiration of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue—or on my tongue; impressed there; even his very words were so: and thus his tongue became as the pen of a ready writer*. Words flowed from him most readily, and he most faithfully delivered and penned them: as the Lord says, He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully†. Now this being his word, the word of the Spirit of God, when it comes not in word only but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, it must answer some valuable ends and purposes—for the conviction of sinners, for their conversion, for their illumination and instruction, for the working faith in them, for the encouragement of hope: it must be effectual to lead them into all truth, effectual for their consolation, and answer all the divine purposes.

2. There is another person that is said to speak by David—The God of Israel. God: He that at the first creation of all things said, and it was done—commanded, and it stood fast‡. He the great God who said, Let there be light, and there was light: He that said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters: He that said, Let the waters be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: He that said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit: He that said, Let there be lights, in the firmament of the heavens: He that said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life: He that said these things, and they were immediately done§. He spake by David. The God of Israel said. The God of Israel: He that spake to Israel upon Mount Sinai, and said in an audible voice, I am the Lord thy God,

* Psalm xlv. 1. † Jerem. xxiii. 28. ‡ Psalm xxxiii. 9. § Gen. 1.

which
which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of
the house of bondage*. And which was a most
wonderful event; for who of any nation (as
Moses said to the Israelites) ever heard the voice
of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, and
lived? Most amazing it was, that God should
speak in the manner he did upon Mount Si-
nai. The same God of Israel said to David what
follows.

The God of Israel: that is, the covenant God of Is-
rael. He was so to Israel in a literal sense. He was
the covenant God of their ancestors, the God of
Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.
The God of the Hebrews, the God of Israel: so he
calls himself. When he sent Moses to demand the
free dismission of the people of Israel out of Egypt,
Moses says unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God
of Israel, Let my people go. Moses also speaks of a
very solemn avouchment of this relation between
God and Israel. Thou hast (says he) avouched the
Lord this day to be thy God—and the Lord hath avouch-
ed thee this day to be his peculiar people+. Now this
is to be understood in a national way; but God is
the God of his spiritual Israel; the God of all Israel,
whether Jews or Gentiles. He is the God of all
whom he has chosen for his peculiar people, whom
Christ has redeemed by his precious blood, and who
are effectually called by divine grace. He is their
covenant God in a special sense. This covenant
was made with Christ from everlasting. I have made
a covenant with David my servant; that is, with the
Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom that co-
venant stands for ever. My covenant will I not break,
nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips‡.

* Exod. xx. 2. † Deut. xxvi. 17, 18. ‡ Psalm lxxxix. 34.
This is a covenant of grace, we commonly call it so, because it consists of blessings of grace; and because it is founded on the free sovereign mercy of God. I have said mercy shall be built up for ever, "and therefore I have made a covenant with my "chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant.* It is called the covenant of peace which shall never be removed †, because the grand article in it is peace and reconciliation by Christ Jesus the Lord: contrived, agreed upon, and settled in that covenant. It is also called the covenant of life, as well as of peace, because the blessings of life spiritual and eternal were secured in it; all those spiritual blessings wherewith the Lord's people are blessed in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ‡; but the most grand and principal article in this covenant is, the Lord being the God of his people. They shall be my people, and I will be their God§. Men may be temporally happy with the things of this world; but happy, beyond all expression happy, is he whose God is the Lord. This is the grand article, of the covenant of grace, that God is the covenant God and father of his people in Christ Jesus. "I will "be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and "daughters, faith the Lord Almighty||." This relation always continues: he is their God, and their guide even unto death. Now here we have the God of Israel speaking to David; and what he said, must needs be true, because it is God who said it. He is a God of truth, and cannot lie; and therefore whatever he has delivered out, as his mind and will, must be true: let God be true, but every man a liar ¶. Since it is God that said it, I say it must be true; and as he is the God of Israel, it must be for

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* Psalm lxxxix. 2, 3. + Isaiah liv. 10. † Eph. i. 3. § Jeremiah xxiv. 7. || 2 Cor. vi. 18. ¶ Romans iii. 3, 4.
the good of spiritual Israel. He can say nothing but what is so. All that is contained in the sacred writings, is for the good of spiritual Israel. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The whole of the sacred Scriptures as well as the book of psalms, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. And he who is the God of Israel that spake by David, could give the best account of the covenant of grace. This is one part of the last words of David, although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant: and who but Israel's covenant God could give the account he does, of the covenant he has made with them? It is a wonderful instance of his condescending grace, that he should say anything to the sons of men! Marvellous that he should speak to Israel face to face, as he did; that he should commune with Moses from off the mercy-seat; and that he should speak to his dear children as he does, and disclose the secrets of his heart's love unto them!—The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant.

Now what the God of Israel, says, ought most certainly to be attended to. "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him." The Lord God hath spoken, (says Amos) who can but prophecy? and when he speaks in compassion to the sons of men, who can but hearken?

3. The Rock of Israel spake to me. The Rock of Israel: which may be understood of the same

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. † Rom. xv. 4. ‡ Psalm xxv. 14. § Amos iii. 8.

person
person still; hence the word Rock in Scripture is often used as expressive of Deity,—as in that passage, *Their Rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges*:* that is, their God is not as our God; as the Psalmist says. Who is a Rock save our God?* Or, it may be understood of Christ, the second person in the glorious Trinity; and it will not be any difficulty, I think, to observe a Trinity of persons in this account.—Here is the God of Israel, Jehovah the Father, who is commonly understood by the God of Israel. Here is the Rock of Israel, the second person: and then here is the Spirit of the Lord, that spake by him: all the three divine persons. A glorious testimony of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead.

The Rock of Israel, who appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; who delivered Israel out of the hands of Pharaoh: called by Moses, his God, and his Fathers’ God. The Rock of Israel; he that was typified by that Rock Israel drank water out of in the wilderness; of which the Apostle testifies that Rock was Christ; a type of him.—The Rock of Israel, or, he who is the safety and security of Israel; the Rock in whom is everlasting strength; that Rock of Refuge which is for saints to apply to in every trouble: *The name of the Lord is a Strong Tower, and thither the righteous run and are safe.*—The Rock of Israel; on which the spiritual Israel of God is built; the church of God, against which the gates of hell can never prevail: that one and only foundation laid in Sion: that sure foundation, on which whosoever builds shall be safe:—that Rock of Israel on which every single believer is built; for he is the foundation of the apostles and prophets. All the saints under the old and new testament dif-

* Deut. xxxii. 31. † Pf. xviii. 31. ‡ Exod. xv. 2. § 1 Cor. x. 4.
penfation are laid on this foundation. Every wise and good man lays his soul, and the salvation of it, upon this Rock, which will bear it against all storms and tempests whatsoever. He is the rock, and the foundation of all our faith, hope, spiritual peace, and comfort. The foundation of our faith, the anchor of our hope, and the spring of our peace and comfort. A glorious Rock indeed! If there be any consolation it is in Christ Jesus*. This is the Rock of Israel, that spake in, by, or concerning David as his type: The Rock of Israel spake by me.

I should now have proceeded to consider what the Spirit of the Lord spake by David; what words were in his tongue; what the God of Israel said, and what the Rock of Israel spake by him: spake by him as the Psalmist of Israel; for the words may be connected with those, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said—The Rock of Israel spake by him, directed him what to speak: which serves to prove the divinity of the Book of Psalms; it is a part of the sacred Scriptures given by inspiration of God. It is also a testimony of the truth of that Book, and of what is contained therein; a greater testimony sure we can never have, since all the Three divine persons appear in it: there is the God of Israel, the Rock of Israel, and the Spirit of God. There are Three that bear testimony: and if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. The Rock of Israel spake to me, or concerning me: concerning me as a type of Christ. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of the whole book: they all testify of him, concerning his offices, concerning his grace, concerning the work of salvation and redemption; and particularly con-

* Philip. ii. 1.
cerning what he is in himself, what he endured and suffered for his people, what offices he bears, what a low estate he should be brought into, to what glory he should be advanced, and of what use and service he should be to the sons of men.

This also serves to establish the character of David as a prophet, which the Apostle gives him in Acts ii. 30, where he quotes some passages of Scripture out of the Psalms, and argues that David, being a prophet, said so and so. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ. He then cites from the xvith Psalm. His soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption. There are other passages in the same Psalm, quoted in this chapter, which speak of David as a prophet. All which prove, that the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake by him. We may then conclude, that we ought to receive what is delivered there, as the Word of God.

But what these Three divine persons said to David, or spake by him, chiefly respects what follows; as, he that ruleth over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God: or, that there should be such a Ruler (meaning the Messiah), who should be as the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. But the consideration of these things I must defer to another discourse.
SERMON III.

The Characters of a Ruler over Men: Just, ruling in the Fear of God; found with Christ.

2 SAM. xxiii. 3.

*He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.*

These words may be considered as a declaration of what ought to be in every one that bears the character of a Ruler over men. He ought to consider that he is a ruler of men, and not of brutes: that he should be just; just to men in protecting their persons and property, and in administering justice and judgment unto them; that he should act as in the sight of God, as having the fear of God before his eyes, and do those things which are agreeable to him. Or they may be considered as a prophecy of what would be: that there should, in after times, arise a Ruler over men, that would be just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God. I say, it may be considered as a declaration, under divine inspiration, of what ought to be found in every one that beareth
A Ruler over Men, just, ruling in the

beareth so high a character among men, as to be a ruler over them. I repeat it again, such an one should consider, that he is appointed a ruler of men, not of brutes; and therefore ought to treat his subjects as rational creatures, and rule over them in a humane, kind, and gentle manner; and not as tyrannical princes and governors do.

The Lord, by the prophet Ezekiel, complains of some that go by the name of Shepherds in Israel (which not only intends ecclesiastical, but civil rulers), that they ruled with force and cruelty, though the people they ruled over were the flock of the Lord; concerning whom he says, Ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God*. Persons that rule over men in such a tyrannical manner, disgrace human nature, and degrade themselves from the character of men, to that of beasts; and therefore such are compared in Scripture to them. The four monarchies, and the heads of them, in Daniel are said to be four beasts that arose out of the sea†. They are compared to those wild creatures that are the most fierce, cruel and savage: As a roaring lion and a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people‡.

One that rules over men, ought to be just and righteous in the administrations of his civil government. David delivers this as a precept, under divine inspiration, commanding and obliging such persons so to be: and he confirmed and established it by his own example, who was a just ruler over men. He ruled over all Israel, and executed justice and judgment among them: this is the testimony bore of him in the 2 Sam. viii. 15. There was nothing more desirable to him than that the same admis-

* Ezek. xxxiv. 31. † Dan. vii. 3. ‡ Prov. xxviii. 15.
nistration should be continued in his successors, particularly in Solomon his immediate successor. Psalm the seventy second, which was a psalm wrote for Solomon, begins thus, Give the King thy judgments O God, and thy righteousness unto the King's son: that is, may he be directed, assisted, and enabled to execute justice, judgment and righteousness among his subjects. This is requisite in every ruler of men whatever, wherever he his, or over whomsoever he is a ruler; for the king's throne is established by righteousness: that is the surest basis, the best security and strength of his throne and government.

A ruler of men ought also to rule in the fear of the Lord: and the rather as he is to consider that he is the Lord's vicegerent; that he stands in his room and stead; personates and represents Him; acts in his name; is accountable to Him for what he does; and still more, as he, whom he represents, and under whom he acts, is able to set up and put down at his pleasure. Then may a ruler over men be said to rule in the fear of God, when he rules as under the eye of the omniscient God whom he represents, and according to the laws of God; and when he is an encourager of every thing good and virtuous, and a discourager of every evil; a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well; when he makes use of his power and authority, to promote and protect the interest of God and of religion among his subjects; when he not only tolerates, but encourages, those that fear the Lord, to serve and worship Him according to his revealed will: then, may such a ruler, he, or she, be said to be a nursing father or a nursing mother to God's Israel.

But the words may be considered as a Prophecy of some certain person that should arise; to whom these characters altogether agree. A ruler over men

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men should be righteous, ruling in the fear of God*; and the rather, this may be supposed to be the sense, because the last words of David, of which these are a part, were spoken under a spirit of prophecy; and David might encourage and comfort himself with a view of this, as he did with a view of the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure+. Although my house be not so with God: though his family was not in such a condition and circumstances as he could wish for, yet this was what gave him relief and supported his spirits, that God had made with him an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. And well it might be a support unto him, and yield him relief and comfort in a view of the discouraging prospect he had of his family; when he was assured that there would be one arise, of his seed, that should be a Ruler over men, that would be righteous, and rule in the fear of the Lord; he could see, by a spirit of prophecy, that there would be a numerous race of kings spring from him, and few of them good: the greater part evil rulers; but yet there would be one, the King Messiah, who should rule over men just and righteous, and ruling in the fear of the Lord. To him I apprehend these words belong: and our business will be, to shew that these characters agree with him; or that there is that to be found in the true Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, which answers to them all.

This prophecy, which is here given forth concerning Christ, may be observed to agree with some others. Thus the prophet Isaiah speaks of the Messiah as the Prince of Peace; of whose government and the peace thereof, there

* The words will bear to be rendered, there shall be, &c.
+ ver. 5.
Fear of God, found with Christ.

Shall be no end: who sitteth upon the throne of David
to order and establish it in righteousness, to execute jus-
tice and judgment in the earth*. Jeremiah has a like
prophecy, where he says, that the Lord would raise
up unto David, a righteous branch; a branch that
should spring from him; a son of his; one of his seed
and offspring; one that should be just and righteous in
the administering of judgment; and afterwards he
adds, a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute
justice and judgment in the earth: in his days Judah
shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this
is the Name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our
righteousness†, or the righteous Lord. Zechariah
speaks as clearly to this point as any; and says, for
the comfort of Zion in her lowest state, Rejoice great-
ly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusa-
lem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just,
having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and
upon a colt, the foal of an ass‡.

Now our work will be to shew how these charac-
ters agree with Christ, and make it appear, that
there is that in him which answers to them, as

I. He is a Ruler.
II. A Ruler over men.
III. A just and righteous one.
IV. Ruling in the fear of God.

I. He is a Ruler. This, we find is a character
which is given unto our Lord in Scripture pro-
phecies; as in that famous and well known one,
Micah v. 2. But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though
thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of
thee shall come forth unto me, that is to be a Ruler in
Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from

*Isaiah ix. 6, 7. †Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. ‡Zech. ix. 9.
everlasting. And by ruler, is not meant an inferior or magistrate; but the chief and principal one: the supreme Ruler of the tribe of Judah. It is said of Judah that he prevailed above his brethren, and for this reason, of him came the chief Ruler.* This is no other than the Messiah the King, that should rule in righteousness; and who is different from all other kings, and his kingdom different from all other kingdoms, as to its nature, quality and extent. His kingdom ruleth over all. As he is a divine person, the Creator of all things; the government of the whole world, of right, belongs to him. The kingdoms of nature and providence are his, and he is the Governor among the nations.

But this title of Ruler, King, or Head, which is frequently given to our Lord, respects him in his mediatorial office; and is that branch of it which may be properly stiled, his kingly office: for let it be observed, that he was set up, as such, from everlasting. From everlasting he was King and Head of his church and people. I was (says Wisdom) set up from everlasting †: that is, as Mediator, or with respect to his office-capacity, and particularly in this part and branch of it, his Kingly office: agreeable to what God says, I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion‡: that is, “I have anointed him,” as in the original text; and that, from everlasting. God has given him to be Head over all things to the church§: He has appointed him King. These are our Lord’s words, I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my father hath appointed unto me||. Agreeable to those purposes, counsels, and designs of God, that his Son, the second person in the glorious Trinity, should

* 1 Chron. v. 2. † Prov. viii. 23. ‡ Psalm ii. 6. § Eph. i. 22. || Luke xxii. 29.
be King, should be a Ruler over men, particularly over his church and people; He was promised and spoken of from the beginning of the world, throughout the whole Old Testament dispensation as such.—Thus he was spoken of by the prophet, *A Scepter shall arise out of Judah;* that is, a scepter bearer: a scepter being a token of regal dignity. David in the Book of Psalms speaks of him as king, again and again. We have a remarkable prophecy of him as King in the forty-fifth Psalm, where it is said his tongue was as the pen of a ready writer to speak of the things he had made touching the King: and by what follows, it plainly appears he means the King Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ; as, that he is fairer than the children of men; riding forth in his majesty and glory; and whose arrows are said to be sharp in the heart of his enemies. Isaiah, and all the prophets after him, spake of Messiah, as a King; a Ruler of men. Especially does Isaiah, in that glorious vision he had of him, and when he had such an apprehension of himself, as a poor, vile, unclean creature: the reason of which was, because his eyes had seen the King, the Lord of hosts, of armies in heaven and earth: when he saw him upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple, and the seraphim covered their faces with their wings, and cried one unto another and said, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory*.

So, many other of the prophets spake of him as a King, especially Zechariah, in the place I have before referred to†. Daniel calls him, *the Messiah, the Prince* ‡; that is, the King Messiah. He came into the world as such, he was born such. The wise men enquired after him saying, *where is he that is*

* Isaiah vi. 1, 2, 3. † Zech. ix. 9. ‡ Dan. 9. 25.
born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him*. They might, perhaps, have no other notion of him, than as a temporal King; but he was more than that. Indeed he was not a temporal one at all; his kingdom was not of this world, but of another kind and nature. His kingdom came not with observation, so that it gave the Jews a disgust against him; because they expected a temporal prince, and no other. Indeed his spiritual kingdom did not appear very conspicuous at that time. Very few that were converted under the ministry of Christ, his forerunner, or the apostles: and few that entered into the kingdom of heaven, (the gospel dispensation), that embraced the doctrines of the gospel, and submitted to the ordinances thereof, had a clear view of him as a King, in a spiritual sense. But after his sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, he was declared to be both Lord and Christ. Then it appeared more plainly, that he was King and Ruler over men. God the father highly exalted him; then he placed him upon the same throne with himself; crowned him with glory and honour; set him at his right hand until he should make his enemies his footstool, or they should become subject to him in one way or another.

In consequence of his being thus exalted as King, He sent forth the rod of his strength out of Zion, the everlasting gospel, the power of God unto salvation: that word that comes out of Sion, and out of Jerusalem. He sent forth this, and sent forth his apostles to preach it: and as King of saints, and Head over all things to the church, gave them gifts in an extraordinary manner, by which they went and preached the Gospel every where; He going

* Matt. 2. 2.
Fear of God, found with Christ

along with them, and diffusing the favour of his knowledge in every place to great advantage. He rode forth upon the white horse of the gospel, conquering and to conquer. These were the weapons of their warfare which were not carnal but spiritual, and mighty through God for the reducing of souls to the obedience of Christ; which they were enabled through divine grace to do every where; so that wherever they came, there were multitudes ready to say, the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us. The hearts of men were opened by the powerful and efficacious grace of God. The everlasting doors were made to stand open at the voice of this King of Kings; and the King of Glory entered in, and took up his residence in their hearts; set up his throne there; dwelt by faith there, as a King in his palace. They became subject unto him, willing to serve him, and willing to be saved by him. This has been more or less the case in the Gentile world: and will be more manifest in the latter day, when Christ will take to himself his great power and reign; and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ: when he will reign before his ancients in Jerusalem gloriously. Thus he appears to have a just title to this character of a Ruler. Let us consider further, more particularly,

II. His being a Ruler over men. Christ is indeed a Ruler over angels; and he has a right to rule them, as he is the Creator of them: for all things were made by him, whether visible or invisible. As he created them, he has a right to govern them: and he is, as Mediator, appointed to be head over principalities and powers, angels as well as men; all are subject unto him. Angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him*. The angels

*1 Pet. iii. 22.
A Ruler over Men, just, ruling in the

wait upon him to receive his orders; ready to obey his commands, whatsoever he enjoins them. They are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation.

But here he is said to be a Ruler over men. He is a Ruler over the greatest of men: yea, one of his titles is, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and upon his vestment and his thigh it is written. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. All are subject to his dominion and government. By him kings reign and princes decree justice: and they are all accountable to him. He can, at his pleasure, set them up, and put them down; and they must all stand before him another day, to give an account of their administration of civil government. He is a Ruler over men, over the greatest of men. He is made higher, by his divine Father, than the kings of the earth.

He is a Ruler over the worst of men: over wicked men, who say, we will not have this man to reign over us: yet, whether they will or not, he is a Ruler over them. Though they refuse subjection to him, he will let them know he has power and authority over them, by punishing them for their rebellion. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me. Such who are unwilling to yield subjection to his government, he will rule them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. Whether they will or no, some way or other, they shall be subject unto him; for he has sworn in righteousness, the word is gone out of his mouth, that to him every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess to God.

*Rev. xix. 16. †Luke xix. 27. ‡Rom. xiv. 11.
But in a particular sense, he is a Ruler over the best of men; over good men; over holy men; over the children and people of God, which are sometimes in Scripture, signified by Sion. The church is signified thereby both in the Old, and in the New Testament. In the New Testament it is represented as the privilege of the people of God, that they are come to Mount Sion; which is explained of the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven*. Called by the name of Sion; because Sion was the object of divine love—because it was the object of his choice. He has chosen Sion for his habitation. A high, conspicuous, firm, and stable mountain: the holy hill; a representation of holy and good men. Now God has set his Son over this holy hill of Sion, or over his church and people, whom he has loved, chosen, redeemed and sanctified. Good men are sometimes called Israel, as in Micah. v. ii. Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel. Not Israel in a literal sense; for the greater part of them, the Jews, would not have him to reign over them; nor merely the spiritual part of them, the lost sheep of the house of Israel: but the whole Israel of God, Jews and Gentiles. Every one of these will say as Nathaniel did, Rabbi, thou art the son of God, thou art the King of Israel†. Of good men Christ is the Ruler. They are called saints, and hence his title runs, King of saints: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints‡. Saints, such who are sanctified and set apart by God the father, separated to holiness and happiness. Such whom Christ has sanctified by his blood, making atonement and expiation for their sins; wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his

* Heb. xii. 23. † John i. 49. ‡ Rev. xv. 3.
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own blood, suffered without the gate*. Such to whom Christ is made sanctification as well as redemption and righteousness; and such who are sanctified by his Spirit and in his name, have a principle of grace and holiness wrought in them; in virtue of which, they live holy lives and conversations. Christ is King of them.

And these are sometimes represented as a kingdom of priests, or made kings and priests unto God: for what is said by the Assyrian in a boasting manner, Are not my princes altogether kings†? Christ may say of his subjects, that they are princes, and these princes are altogether kings; and these are not only whom he rules over, but they reign with him. They shall reign with him on earth, and shall reign with him for ever and ever.

Now these persons whom Christ rules over, are not subject to him, naturally; no, they are rebels, as others. They disapprove of him as a King; reject his government; are unwilling to submit to his institutions and ordinances; and enemies in their minds by wicked works; yea, they possess enmity itself against God. Their language is like that of the carnal Jews, We will not have this man to reign over us‡. They do not care to be subject to his ordinances and appointments; but say, "let us cast away these cords from us, and break these bands afunder." In conversion, the Lord strikes his arrows into their hearts, whereby these enemies fall under him, and submit unto him. He cuts them to the heart by his Spirit, in the power of his grace, under the administration of the gospel: then they cry out, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? They are willing then, to do, and be anything. They are made willing in the day of his

power to be saved by him in his own way; to submit to his righteousness; to receive him as their King, and be subject to his ordinances. Then their language is, other Lords beside thee (Satan and the world), have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name: that is, thou only shalt be our King, and we will serve and obey thee, and thee only. Thus their hearts being opened by his power and grace, he enters in, takes his throne, and sets up his grace as a governing principle, which reigns in them, through righteousness, to eternal life. He now, as a king, exercises his authority over them by enacting laws, which they yield ready obedience to; and by writing these laws upon their hearts, in which he acts a different part from all other rulers whatsoever. When they make laws and publish them, they are written, fixed in different places, or printed in books, that persons may read them; but this Ruler of men, writes his laws in the hearts of his people. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts: and more than this, he puts his Spirit into them, in order to enable them to walk in his statutes, and do them. He subdues the enemies of his people over whom he rules. This was the view the Israelites had in desiring a king, that he might go in and out before them, and fight their battles for them. Christ is such a king. He fights the battles of his people. He subdues their enemies. He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin; has overcome the world; destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the Devil; has abolished death itself, the last enemy, and makes his people more than conquerors through him.

* Isa. xxvi. 13.  † Jer. xxxi. 33.  

E. He,
He, as a Ruler, protects them from all their enemies. In his days Israel shall be saved, and Judah shall dwell safely, for he employs all his power on their behalf. He is able to keep, and save them; and none shall pluck them out of his hands.

As a Ruler and King, he provides for them everything they want. It is very usual to denominate kings, shepherds, who feed their flocks. Christ is such an one, that stands and feeds in the strength of the Lord, and in the majesty of his God. He feeds his people like a shepherd, leads them into green pastures, and beside the still waters. He has all fulness in his hands for the supply of their wants; and therefore they want no good thing. As he is a Ruler of men, and exercises his authority in the manner he does, it is most happy for them. It is not only an instance of divine love and favour that Christ, as man and mediator, should be head over all things to the church, and have all fulness of grace in him for the supply of their wants; but it is an instance of his love and affection to his church and people, to appoint such a Ruler over them, who is every way qualified for such an office, being so wise, so good, so kind and tender, and so powerful. It is a remark of the queen of Sheba, concerning Solomon, that the Lord had a love to his people, and therefore appointed him to be king over them: so God the Father has a love to his church and people, and therefore appointed Christ to be the Ruler over them. It is an act of his free favour and good will towards them.

This rule and government is what is delegated to him, by his divine Father, of a spiritual nature; and, as we before said, is a government for which he is every way qualified.

III. This Ruler over men, is just or righteous: which respects not his essential righteousness as God, who
who is righteous in all his ways and works. Nor does it regard the course of his life as man; as such he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Nor does it respect his being the author of righteousness, working out a righteousness for his people. Nor his mediatorial office at large, which he performed with so much integrity that he justly merited the character of God's righteous servant; but it respects him as a King. His scepter is a scepter of righteousness. His ways are just and true as King of saints. Righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness is the girdle of his reins, in all the administrations of his kingly office; thus he answers to his type, Melchisedec, whose name signifies the king of righteousness; as well as also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

IV. He also rules in the fear of God. As man, the grace of fear was in him; as mediator, the spirit of fear was upon him. Not only the spirit of wisdom, knowledge and counsel, but of the fear of the Lord; which respects his administration of the kingly office. He always did what pleased his Father. What he did flowed from affection for him; so that he might be said, in the highest sense, to serve the Lord with reverence and with godly fear.

But there is another sense in which these words may be taken. They may be rendered, ruling the fear of God. Not only ruling such persons that have the fear of God upon their hearts, and before their eyes; but ruling, appointing and ordering the worship of God; having it at his command, and wholly under his direction.

The fear of God, sometimes signifies the whole worship of God, internal and external; because this, when rightly performed, is done in the fear of God: serve the Lord with fear and rejoice before E 2 him.
him with trembling*. Now our Lord Jesus Christ, as king of saints, has this fear, this worship of God, wholly at his command, altogether under his authority; and by his direction every gospel ordinance is administered. Thus in Matthew xxviii. 18. he says, all power is given to me in heaven and in earth: all power and authority as Mediator. In consequence of which, he appoints and commissions his disciples to preach the gospel: for it follows, therefore, (because I have all power given to me in heaven and earth) go ye, and teach all nations. Go and preach my gospel everywhere, baptizing them that are taught (for that is the meaning of it) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

Christ, as king of the church, has power and authority over the fear and worship of God, under the gospel dispensation. Indeed the very law itself is in the hands of Christ, as King of saints and of the church; and there it is as a rule of walk and conversation to his people; so that they are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ†.

Now there are various duties incumbent upon us with respect to Christ as a Ruler of men, of the church and people of God. We ought to own him as King of saints: to say of him, the Lord is our King, the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, and he will save us: my Lord and my God. And not only own and acknowledge him to be king, but to be subject to him; for to acknowledge this in words is not enough. “Not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom, but he that does the will of my Father which is in

* Psalm ii. 11. † 1 Cor. ix. 21. “heaven:”
"heaven:" Matt. vii. 21. Which is the rather to be attended unto because his commands are not grievous; *his yoke is easy, and his burden is light*. You regard him as a priest, and expect the pardon of your sins through his blood. He is, indeed, an interceding High Priest (of good things for you at the throne of God); and should you not regard him as your King? What! think to receive all benefit from him as a priest, and not serve him as a King! Your receiving him as a priest lays you under the highest obligations to serve him as a King. It is your duty also to rejoice in your King; *let the children of Sion rejoice in their King*. They have reason so to do; he is so wise, so good, so just, so able to subdue their enemies, and provide all good things for them. O what matter of joy is this, that Sions' King reigneth! You should do all you can for the enlargement of his kingdom: pray for the prosperity of it, and its coming in greater glory. Say, *thy kingdom come*: and, as he is pleased to say, *behold I come quickly*, you should reverberate, and say, *even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

* Mat. xi. 30.
SERMON IV.

The Appearance of Christ in human Nature, and his Discoveries of himself to his People, comparable to the Light of the Morning.

2 SAM. xxiii. 4.

And He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.

In a former discourse we considered the preceding verse, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. Now of this same Ruler, it is here said, He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds. "He shall be;" that is, He that ruleth over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God; "He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds."

As the favour of an earthly prince is like a cloud of latter rain, and dew upon the grass, as the wise man says †: to his government, being mild and gentle, he is like the light of the morning when the sun riseth, pleasant and acceptable; like the rising sun, bright and glorious; like a morning without clouds, that forebodes no ill, distress, affliction or adversity.

* Prov. xvi. 15. and xix. 12.
to his subjects, but all the reverse. This is still more true as it is applied to the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Saints, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whose Kingdom ruleth over all; the administration of whose government is just and righteous. He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He is, and shall be, like the light of the morning when the sun riseth, as a morning without clouds.

There are various metaphors applied to Christ similar to this; as, when he is said to be the bright and morning Star: the phosphorus, the fore-runner or introducer of the morning light. The day spring from on high that hath visited us; that brings on that bright and glorious day of the gospel dispensation. He is the day Star that arises in the hearts of his people; and that Sun of righteousness that arises upon them with healing in his wings. So that the expressions of his grace, and the nature of his government may be fitly signified by the beautiful metaphor and figure here made use of. And

I. This may be applied unto him as coming into the world by the assumption of human nature.

II. To the discoveries he makes of himself to his people, in and after conversion.

III. To his government as a Ruler over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God; especially with regard unto his rule and government as it will be more visibly and gloriously exercised in his spiritual and personal reign.

I. This may have respect to his coming into the world; his appearance in human nature,
when he was as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds. It was foretold of him, that his going forth should be prepared as the morning*: which is to be understood, not of his going forth of old, from everlasting, in the counsel and covenant of grace and peace; but his coming forth in time, his appearance in human nature, to work out the redemption and salvation of his people. The first hint of the Messiah, as a Saviour for lost sinful men, was as the dawn of morning light.

The sin of Adam brought a darkness upon him and the whole world. The first man was created with a great deal of light and knowledge. He was made after the image, and in the likeness of God, and which greatly consisted in knowledge, not merely of things natural, civil, and moral, but things divine, in the knowledge of God, his nature and divine perfections, will, and worship; of which Adam had a large share. But not content therewith, and being ambitious to know good and evil, he lost, in a great measure, the light and knowledge he had. Darkness overspread him; his understanding immediately became darkened; and so is the understanding of all men that descend from him by ordinary generation. Their understandings are darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. This darkness, this blindness, is universal: there are none free from it. God's elect, while in a state of nature, are so. Dark with respect to their knowledge of spiritual things: yea, they are darkness itself till they are made light in the Lord. This is the case of all men universally. Jews and Gentiles are all under the power of sin, and liable to the consequences of it, and the elect among the rest; for there is none that under-

* Hosea vi. 3.
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standeth, there is none that seeks after God. The way of peace, righteousness, life and salvation by Jesus Christ, they know not: and in such circumstances as these Adam found himself. As soon as he had sinned against God, he was immediately deprived of his gracious presence; enjoyed no more communion and fellowship with him in the way he did before: an emblem of which was, his being driven out of the garden. So he drove out the man*; signifying that sin had separated between God and him. There was an eclipse, as it were, between God and him: in consequence of which, it was a night of black darkness. He found himself in a most wretched state and condition; a most uncomfortable frame of soul: in the greatest anguish and distress; trembling at the thoughts of coming before that God, against whom he had sinned; and therefore attempted to hide himself from his presence amongst the trees of the garden†. He knew not what would be the issue and consequence of things. He could see no way of escaping the wrath of God. He had no hint of a Saviour. He was as much without the knowledge of one, or any hope of salvation by one, as the blindest heathen that ever lived upon the face of the earth. This was the case of the first man.

Now all at once, behold, an hint was given of the Messiah; a discovery of a Saviour for lost, sinful man, in that threatening to Satan, the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head‡. This was the first dawn of morning light to lost sinful man: and there was, at this time, a ray of light darted into Adam's mind, which he never was sensible or knew any thing at all of, in a state of innocence, amidst all the light and knowledge he then had. It was indeed a glorious ray of light

* Gen. iii. 24. † Gen. iii. 8. ‡ Gen. iii. 15.
which darted into his mind, upon this single hint of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head. From hence, he might and did conclude, that he and Eve should not die, since there was a seed, a son to spring from them, and one that should bruise the serpent's head, and destroy the works of him who had been the ruin of them. O! how it must gladden his heart! what cheerfulness must be in his countenance, which it is not possible for us to describe.

And this, like the light of the morning, was of an increasing nature. As the morning light spreads upon the tops of the mountains as soon as it appears, and gradually diffuses itself throughout the horizon; so this light, this morning light, which sprung up in this first promise of grace, diffused itself greatly: partly by means of sacrifices, which God appointed to be offered up from that time, and partly by prophecies, which were delivered out at certain times, respecting the glorious person that should appear in our world as the Saviour of lost man.

This light, this morning light of divine grace spread itself, or was spread by means of sacrifices, which were immediately ordered to be offered up. Adam was soon taught the way and method of offering sacrifices as an atonement for sin; as typical of the sacrifice of the seed of the woman, that should bruise the serpent's head. By these means he was more and more enlightened into the way, and nature of the method of his salvation and redemption; and still more, when the Lord God was pleased to make, of the skins of slain beasts, coats for him and Eve, and cloathed them; which were emblems of the robe of righteousness, and the garment of salvation, to be wrought out by the woman's seed, the Saviour of men. And Adam taught his posterity the
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the way and method of offering sacrifices; for we may observe that his son Abel, by faith in the promised Saviour, by faith in his atoning sacrifice for sin, offered up a more excellent sacrifice than Cain*. Hence it is, with reference to these early sacrifices, and the institution and practice of them, that Christ is said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world †. By these, and succeeding sacrifices, under the levitical dispensation, which were numerous, this morning light, respecting a Saviour, salvation by him, and acceptance through his sacrifice, was spread more and more.

This morning light of divine grace, shining through a Mediator and Saviour, was likewise spread more and more by means of prophecy. Various and numerous were the prophecies concerning Christ the woman's seed; for he was spoken of from this time forward, by the mouth of all God's holy prophets, from the beginning of the world: they all had respect to him. He was the sum and substance of their prophecies; for so the disciples and followers of our Lord said, we have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write‡. Moses wrote of him, and all the prophets did so; the Spirit of Christ in them signified what he should be, and what he should do: testified of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Every prophecy relating to him, spread more and more light concerning him. The light that came there with was like the morning light, a spreading and increasing one. By and through these prophecies it was known from whom he should particularly descend. The first hint is only that he should be the seed of the woman; and it would have been enough to have been born of any woman, to

* Heb. xi. 4. † Rev. xiii. 8 ‡ John. i. 45.
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have completed that prophecy. But by degrees this was opened more and more; that he was to be born, not in a common or ordinary way, but he was to be born of a virgin, and his name called Immanuel, God with us*; and that he was to spring from Abraham the father of the faithful, in whose seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed†. Another prophecy gives us farther light into this matter, and informs us, he was to spring from Judah; from whom the scepter was not to depart, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh, our Lord Jesus Christ, should come‡. Other prophecies inform us more particularly that he was to spring from David’s family, and to be a branch or stem out of the root of Jesse: others give us an account where he should be born, and when he should appear in the world. One prophecy fixes the very place of his birth; Thou Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel§: and others point out the exact time of his coming; that he should come before the rule, scepter or government was to depart from the Jews, before the second temple was destroyed—for that he should come into, and give it a greater glory. Daniel fixes the exact time from the going forth of such a commandment; that there should be so many weeks, that is, so many years till the coming of the Messiah.

The first promise of the Messiah, only gives a hint of the work he should do, which was to bruise the serpent’s head: but other prophecies more clearly declare, that he was to do the whole will and work of God; obtain salvation for his people; finish transgression; make an end of sin; and bring in an everlasting righteousness. That he

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was to be a Prophet like unto Moses; and a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.—that he was to be King over God's holy hill of Sion, and the scepter of his kingdom a right scepter. Other prophecies also shew what he was to do in obedience to the will of God; and what he was to suffer in the room and stead of his people. That he was to be brought to the dust, and numbered amongst the transgressors: that he was to die and be buried, and lay in the grave, though not so long as to see corruption: that he should rise again, ascend up on high, sit down at the right hand of God, and there reign till all enemies were put under his feet. These, with many others, brought on such light and knowledge concerning a Saviour and Redeemer, as plainly made it appear that this light, like the morning light, was a growing, spreading and increasing one.

This, like that also, was attended with joy and cheerfulness, as the morning light is. The first hint of a Messiah, a Saviour and Redeemer of lost man, was attended with joy and cheerfulness to Adam, as we have seen already; so every fresh prophecy, and after revelation of the will of God, concerning this matter, gave joy and pleasure to those to whom the discovery was made; as it did unto Abraham, of whom it is said, that Abraham saw the day of Christ and was glad. So every fresh discovery made by any of the prophets unto the church of God, in the several periods of time, were all attended with joy and cheerfulness. Zechariah, one of the last of the prophets, speaking concerning Christ, says, Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foie of an ass.* As the morning

* Zech. ix. 9.
Comparable to the Light of the Morning.

Light is a pledge of the rising sun, a sure pledge of it, whenever we see day break, or the morning light appear, we are sure that the sun will rise, and that it will not be long ere it is risen; so that light which broke forth and spread gradually under the former dispensation, was an earnest and pledge of Christ the Sun of righteousness arising in due time, with healing in his wings. As yet, indeed, he was not risen; there was only the morning light spreading, but the Sun was not risen. There were still the shadows of the ceremonial law remaining. That law is by the apostle described, as a shadow of good things to come, which had not the very image of the things*. All those representations, under the legal dispensation, were shadowy ones. Christ is represented as the body and substance of them: the apostle, speaking of some of them in particular, adds, which were a shadow of good things to come, but the body is of Christ†. Those continued under the legal dispensation, notwithstanding the morning light had broke forth; Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel ‡.

That law which is comparable to the moon, was indeed the lesser light, and the light which rules by night. This seems to be intended in Revelation xii. i. where the church is represented as having the moon under her feet; the moon of the ceremonial law: and it may very fitly be signified by the moon, since that consisted among other things, in the observance of new moons. Its festivals, and ordinances were regulated by the moon, and like that, were changeable; and because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, vanished away. There were in this season stars of light. As Gospel mi-

* Heb. x. 1. † Collof. ii. 17. ‡ Sol. Song ii. 17.
nifters are sometimes called; so the prophets, teachers, and instructors under the Old Testament dispensation, may very properly be signified thereby, who held forth the word of God, which was a light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths. But all this plainly intimated that the Sun was not risen: there was the moon of the ceremonial law, and stars which gave light; yet there was a comparative darkness under that dispensation, though the morning light did appear: a comparative darkness in the Jewish world and state. The children of Israel were not able to look to the end of that which was to be abolished. The way into the holiest of all was not manifest as now, until the vail was rent asunder; and as to the Gentile world, that was full of darkness and ignorance. A time of ignorance that God winked at, took no notice of, but left them to walk in the vanity of their minds: and these are said to walk in darkness, and fit in the shadow of death.

When our Lord actually appeared in our flesh, came into the world, and appeared in our nature; then he was as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds. He came in like the light of the morning, which dispelled darkness, and introduced light: dispelled darkness in the Jewish state, and scattered the shadows of the ceremonial law. Dispelled darkness from the Gentile world when his gospel came amongst them; for he came to be a light unto the Gentiles, as well as to be the glory of his people Israel. So to remove and banish that night, of which the apostle speaks, when he says, the night is far spent; the day is at hand.

* Rev. i. 20. † Rom. xiii. 12.
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By his coming into our world, the glorious light of the everlasting gospel was introduced. He came a Light. John his forerunner was not that light; but Christ was that light, and is called the light of the world*; both of the Jewish and Gentile world. The light of the everlasting gospel which came by him, appeared very bright even unto all men; which teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world. This made that day, that glorious and illustrious day, which the prophets so much spoke of, the gospel day, concerning which, the apostle thus expresseth himself, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation.

The coming of our Lord was like the light of the morning, sudden and swift: according to what was foretold of him that he should suddenly come into his temple†; or unawares, as he did. There were some indeed who were waiting for the consolation of Israel; as good old Simeon, and Anna the prophetesses; but there were but few of this kind. Christ came suddenly into the world and into his temple; at unawares to the greatest part of mankind. Like the light of the morning he came swiftly: he was, as the church desired he would be, like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Betherna. As soon as the time was up, which was fixed between Him and his divine Father, God sent him; and he came readily. He was made of a woman; made under the law§. As the morning light is attended with pleasure, joy and cheerfulness to all kind of creatures; so the coming of our Lord was attended with joy, spiritual joy, to those who knew any thing of him, and that salvation which he came to effect. The Angels who brought the first news of it say, that they brought

* John. viii. 12. † Mal. iii. 1. ‡ Sol. So. ii. 17. § Gala. vi. 4.
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good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people*:
and the first disciples and followers of our Lord,
who had the first intimation of his being come, with
what joy did they express themselves! In Raptures,
they said, \textit{we have found Him of whom Moses in the
law and the prophets did write, Christ the anointed
one, the Son of God.} So, wherever the gospel came
with power, there was joy attended it; witness Sa-
maria. We are told, \textit{there was joy in that City†.}
Thus it was wherever Christ was preached, or any
notice was given of his being come, and of salvation
being wrought out by him.

The light which came by him was, like the morn-
ing light, spreading and increasing. He and his dis-
ciples went over all the land of Judea; and the gospel
was published throughout the several parts thereof.
It indeed was at one time limited and confined there-
unto. The disciples were ordered to preach only to
the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and not go into
the way of the Gentiles: but after the resurre&tion
of Christ from the dead, they were commanded to
go into all nations, teaching and baptizing them
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of
the Holy Ghost. They did so; \textit{their words went out}
through all the earth, and \textit{their sound unto the end of the
world}. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, which
was about forty years after the death of Christ, the
gospel was preached to all nations: \textit{to every creature
under heaven‡}, as the apostle expresseth it. He him-
sell was a great instrument in this affair; for he went
about, from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum,
preaching the gospel of Christ.

Once more; like the light of the morning he came
irresistibly. As there is no such thing as preventing
the light of the morning, when it once breaks forth,

* Luke. ii. 10. † Acts. viii. 8. ‡ Colos. i. 23.
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nothing in nature can possibly do it; so there was no preventing that gospel light which came by Christ. The word of the Lord had a free course; it ran and was glorified. Though there were all the methods taken to prevent its spread that could be devised among the Jews, they could not do it; the word of the Lord grew and multiplied. Nor could it be shut out from the Gentile world: though emperors, and governors of provinces and cities, were almost all, to a Man, against it, (those spiritual wickednesses in high places;,) yet the apostles triumphed in Christ, and made manifest the favour of his knowledge in every place; which was a means of reducing thousands of souls to the obedience of Christ.

The coming of Christ is said to be not only like the light of the morning, but like the light of the morning when the sun riseth. He is styled the Sun of righteousness*. He, whom John saw visionally, like the sun when it shineth in its full strength: he who is now actually come, is like the light of the morning when the sun riseth; for he himself is a glorious Sun. A luminous body, the sun is: the greater light, made to rule by day. An emblem of Christ, who is the light of the world: from whom all light comes. The light of Nature; for he is that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the World†. The light of grace in conversion, is from him; and all after light also. Men are darkness itself until they are made light in the Lord: and the light of glory, that perfect, happy state the saints shall be brought into, and enjoy for evermore, it is all from Him. That glorious city is represented as standing in no need of the light of the sun, or of the moon, because the Lamb is the light thereof‡. * The Sun is a glorious body. « There is one glory of the sun, and

* Mal. iv. 2. † John. i. 9. ‡ Rev. xxi. 23.

F 2 "another
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"another glory of the moon, and another glory of "the stars ";" but the glory of the sun is the greatest: that is of superior glory. A fit emblem of Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person: in whom shines the glory of all the divine perfections. Any one that has a spiritual sight of things, can behold the glory of Christ as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.† He, having a spiritual sight, by means of the light of the everlasting gospel, does behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, the glory of Christ's person, and the glory of his offices; and is changed into the same image from glory to glory. As the sun is a lucid body, clear, and to appearance free from spots; so it is expressive of the spotless purity of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the Saints, being washed in his blood and through his righteousness imputed, are said to be, all fair and without spot; much more may He be said to be so: fairer than the sons of Adam. If they are said to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: much more is He so.

And if this light, which comes from the sun, in a natural sense, is what is most delightful to behold; much more must that light which comes from Christ, and shines from him. Truly the light is sweet (says the wise man) and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun ‡; O! how much sweeter is spiritual light from Christ; and how much sweeter must it be to behold him, the Sun of righteousness, arising upon us with, healing under his wings!

He coming, and grace and truth by him, caused a greater and stronger light under the gospel dispensation, than was under the legal one, when it was only as the dawn of the morning. Perhaps to this differ-

* 1 Cor. xv. 41. † John. i. 14. ‡ Eccle. xi. 7.
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dence of states, respect may be had in Solomon's Song, vii. 10. where the church is said to be, **fair as the moon**; so she was under the legal dispensation: but it is added, **clear as the sun**; so she is under the gospel dispensation, having the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

From him, the Sun of righteousness, comes the rays of light and love: and, as from the natural sun heat is derived, so likewise, from Christ the Sun of righteousness, heat as well as light proceeds. His coming inspired his people, his followers, with love to him, and zeal for him; and their hearts burned within them while he opened the Scriptures of truth unto them. From hence also springs all their spiritual fruitfulness. We read of **precious fruits brought forth by the sun**; all the fruits of grace and righteousness are owing to Christ the Sun of righteousness.

Now when he appeared, he was as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; for all clouds disappeared when he arose; all the shadows of the ceremonial law: there was a dissolving of this commandment through the unprofitableness thereof. These shadows disappeared, when he the body and substance came.—**A morning without clouds.** There was not so much as a shadow of the ceremonial law, much less any of the storm or tempest of the moral law: that which is expressed by blackness and darkness and tempest, Hebrews xii. 19; no, those were all over; the stormy dispensation is at an end; the rain is over and gone. No more the thunders of mount Sinai; all the curses of that law are fallen upon the surety and Saviour; he has borne them; he has been made, himself, a curse for his people, that he might redeem them from the curse of the law. So that now, the gospel dispensation is a morning

* Deut. xxxiii. 14.
out clouds; no storm, no tempest, no indication of any. A morning without any clouds of divine wrath and displeasure; here is nothing but peace proclaimed upon earth and good will towards men. The love and kindness of God our Saviour towards man appears. Peace is made by the blood of Jesus; reconciliation is made for iniquity; a Sacrifice offered up of a sweet smelling favour to God: a righteousness wrought out that is well pleasing to God; because by it the law is magnified and made honourable. The language of the gospel is, *fury is not in me*; no, Christ appearing in our nature, doing the will and work of his God and ours, is as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.

I should now have proceeded to have shewn you how it is applicable to his manifestation of himself to his people, in and after conversion; which is like the rising of the sun, dispels darkness and ignorance from their minds; and is of a spreading nature, like the light of the morning; and sometimes so clear that it is like the light of the morning when the sun is up; when there is a clear sky, and a serene heaven; a morning without clouds.

And how particularly it may be applied to Christ as a Ruler among men, and his rule and government of his spiritual kingdom, which ere long will be as the light of the morning when the sun is risen, a morning without clouds; and especially in his personal reign.—But I must leave these things, with what follows in this verse, to another opportunity as God shall give it.

*Isa. xxvii. 4.*

S E R-
S E R M O N V.

The Appearance of Christ in human Nature, and his Discoveries of himself to his People, comparable to the Light of the Morning, and to the tender Grass springing out of the Earth, by clear shining after Rain.

2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.

THese Words are in close connection with the latter part of the third verse, and are spoken of the same person. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and He shall be as the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds. That is, He that rules over men; a righteous ruler over men, ruling in the fear of the Lord, he shall be as the light of the morning. Whether this is to be understood of an earthly ruler, of a ruler in and among men, that rules and reigns in righteousness, governing his people according to the rules of equity and justice, according to the laws of God and his country;
try; executing justice and judgment among his subjects, and ruling in the fear of God, having that before his eyes, and upon his heart; considering himself as God's vicegerent, as standing in his room and stead, acting in his name and under his authority, and so accountable to him; or whether we understand this of a greater Ruler still, of Christ Jesus in the exercise of his Kingly office, who is King and Ruler of all men; of the greatest of men, of the worst of men, and of the best of men; who is King of saints; the righteous branch raised up unto David; a King that reigns in righteousness, rules in the fear of God, has the grace of fear in him, as Mediator, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord upon him, and who rules the fear of God, (as it may be rendered); that is, governs, orders and directs the whole worship of God, as he does under the gospel dispensation, having all power and authority, in heaven and in earth, given to him as Mediator: Whether, I say, we understand this, of the one or of the other, this must be said of each of them, He shall be as the light of the morning. If we understand the above of an earthly ruler, then the sense is, that he shall be as welcome and grateful to his subjects, as the morning light. He shall be like the rising sun, illustrious and glorious; he shall be like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain. The favour of an earthly prince, his good will, and goodness to his subjects, in the gentle and mild administration of his government, is (as David's son, the wisest of men says) as a cloud of the latter rain, and as the dew upon the grass. But if we understand this of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, as we may most truly do; then these beautiful figures and metaphors may serve to set forth the glory of his person, and the riches of his grace: and particularly
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particularly the benefits of his rule and government unto his subjects. Here are two sorts of figures or metaphors, made use of: very elegant, beautiful and apt ones. The first is, that he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun ariseth even a morning without clouds. The second is, that he shall be as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

The first of these we have entered upon, namely that in which the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, is compared to the morning light when the sun ariseth; a morning without clouds. We proposed to consider this passage.

I. As it might respect the coming of Christ in the flesh and his appearance in our nature in this world.

II. As it might respect the discoveries of himself to his people in and after conversion. And

III. As it may respect his government as a Ruler over men, righteous ruling in the fear of God.

The first of these has been considered; I shall now proceed,

II. To take notice of the discovery, or manifestation, Christ makes of himself to his people in conversion, in a spiritual manner; to which these figurative phrases are applicable; He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth; even a morning without clouds.

As the morning light dissipates the darkness of the night, and introduces light into the hemisphere; so the first discovery of Christ unto his people, the revelation of him in them, as the hope of glory, dispels the darkness of their understandings: for the understanding of every man is darkened, yea, and darkness itself. This is the case of God's own people, in their natural state, with respect to divine and spiritual
ritual things; but when Christ is discovered and made known to them, then this darkness passes away, it goes off, it is no more, comparatively: Christ's children are no longer children of the night and of darkness, but the children of the day and of the light. Light is introduced into them by Christ's appearing, in a spiritual manner, to their souls, by the everlasting gospel: and in this light, they see light. By and through the light of his Spirit shining into their hearts, they not only discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the just demerit of it, their want of righteousness, the insufficiency of their own, the glory and excellency of the righteousness of Christ, and the necessity of such a righteousness to appear in before the judgment seat of God; but, through his divine light shining into them, they see the glory of Christ's person, the riches of his grace, the finenes and suitableness of his righteousness, and the completeness of his salvation. By the light of the divine word, which enters into them and gives light (for the entrance of thy word, says the Psalmist, giveth light *), they are led into the mysteries of divine grace, and into the wonders of divine love, to behold things which their eyes had never, no never seen before. This morning light, this spring of day to them, dispels their darkness and introduces light into their souls.

And this, often times, and generally speaking, is like the morning light, sudden and surprising. As that outward light which shone round Saul at his first conversion was, so that inward light which shines into the hearts of God's people at conversion, is sudden, marvellous and surprising to them. And as the morning light brings joy and cheerfulnes with it, and makes the whole creation glad; so does spiritual light infused into the heart of a poor sinner. When Christ is first revealed to him, he is filled with joy

* Psalm cxix. 130.

unspeakable
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unspeakable and full of glory; and no wonder, considering him as having a deep sense of sin, the guilt of it upon his conscience, and seeing no way of being delivered from it; at such a time to have Christ the Saviour revealed to him; his righteousness revealed from faith to faith to justify him, his blood to cleanse him, his atoning sacrifice to expiate all sin; this must needs gladden his heart. And every new discovery and fresh revelation of him, has such an effect upon the hearts of God's people; and especially if he has been absent from them some time: as it is said of the disciples, when he had been a few days withdrawn from them, and came again, then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord*.

* John.xx. 20.

Once more, as the morning light is of an increasing nature, when it breaks forth it spreads, and that irresistibly; so is the revelation of Christ unto poor sinners. At first, their sight of him is but glimmering and obscure; they see, as the poor man in the gospel did to whom Christ restored sight, men as trees walking: they see things in a confused manner; but when Christ had touched that man again, and bid him look up, he saw all things clearly. So it is with those to whom Christ reveals himself: though their first sight of him may be dark and obscure, they by degrees obtain a clearer sight of his person, offices and grace. The Spirit of God affresh opens their understandings, increaseth their knowledge; and hereby their path is as the path of the just, which is as a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Thus the light which is communicated in first conversion, as it grows and increases, is like the light of the morning when the sun rises; when the sun is risen in all its brightness; when there is a serene heaven and a clear sky: so it is with the Lord's people when the Sun of righteousness ariseth upon them, with healing...
in his wings, with applications of pardoning grace to their souls: when in his light they see light; for, as in the light of the sun, we behold the sun, so they, in the light they receive from him, behold him, can claim him as their own, and say, *this is my beloved and this is my Friend*. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. My Lord and my God. He loved me, and gave himself for me. When this is the case, Christ is as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth: then they are enabled to say, "who shall separate us from Christ and from the love of Christ and from the love of God in Christ?" of which they have now no doubt. It is a morning without clouds.

Sometimes it is indeed with the Lord's people a dark and cloudy day; a day of thick darknes and gloominess: they know not where they are, or how things are with them; they are ready to call in question every thing; and walk in darknes and see no light; but when this darkness is dissipated, through the rising of the Sun of righteousness upon them, then it is a morning without clouds. No darkness upon their minds, no doubts hang upon them, no fears about their eternal state, nothing intervenes between Christ and them, or hinders their sight of him; but they, with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of our God.

III. I shall proceed to the application of this metaphor and figure, to the government of Christ as a Ruler over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God; especially with regard unto his rule and government, as it will be more visibly and gloriously exercised in his spiritual and personal reign.

Comparable to the Light of the Morning.

Let it be observed, that the times of reformation from popery, may, fitly enough, be called the light of the morning, with respect to Christ’s kingdom. This is signified in that mysterious book, the Book of the Revelations, chap ii. 28, and I will give him (that is, him that overcometh) the morning star. Now that is said after the Thyatirian church state; which is a representation of the Church of God in the times of popish darkness. The Lord promises to give the morning star: that is, the morning star of the reformation, the phosphorus, the forerunner or introducer of the light of his glorious kingdom here upon earth. And a wonderful spread of light there was at that time: which like the light of the morning, increased in every place in the Western parts of the world. This brought on the Sardian church state; in which, I apprehend, we now are, and perhaps towards the close of it. The character of that state agrees with ours, that we have a name to live and are dead*: and yet there are some few names in this our Sardis that have not defiled their garments with bad principles or bad practices. The present state of the church, with respect to light, seems to be well expressed in the prophecy of Zechariah, where it is said, in that day the light shall not be clear nor dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night; but it shall come to pass that at even time it shall be light†. It is so with us, with respect to our light in general; it is neither night nor day, clear nor dark. It is not day, as in the times of the apostles, and it is not so dark as it was in the times of popery; but it is a sort of twilight we are in; and though it might be feared, from the growing darkness upon us, that it will issue in an evening twilight, yet it will turn out otherwise: at even time,

*Rev. iii. 1. † Zech. xiv. 7.
or when we shall be reckoning the shadows of evening are coming upon us, it will be light, it will turn out a morning twilight. So stands the kingdom of Christ with respect to us; I apprehend the sun is not risen, with that splendour in which it will appear, in the spiritual and personal reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the spiritual reign of Christ, there will be such an illustrious appearance of him, that he shall destroy antichrist with the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming: and more especially in his personal reign, when he himself shall descend in person, and the dead in Christ shall be raised first; when his tabernacle shall be among men, and he will dwell among them, and be the light of the new Jerusalem. Now these states of Christ's kingdom will be attended with great light and great joy: both of which attend the rising of the sun.—Light. In the spiritual reign of Christ there will be a great deal of light. Many shall run to and fro; and spiritual knowledge will be increased every where. Then, as the waters cover the sea, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Light shall break forth abundantly among all ranks of men in the churches of Christ: the watchmen will see eye to eye, the ministers of the gospel, and private christians also, will agree in their sentiments about gospel doctrines and gospel ordinances. Yea, the light of that state is said to be as the light of the moon, and the light of moon as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold as the light of seven days*. So great will be the light of that dispensation, that it may truly be said to be as the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds. And especially in the personal reign of Christ, when the sun shall no more go down by day, nor the moon by night; when the Lamb shall be the light of the New

Jerusalem, and there will be no more darkness in any sense: but an everlasting day.

And both these states in which the kingdom of Christ shall appear, will be attended with a great deal of joy. When this righteous one, ruling in the fear of God, shall take to himself his great power, and reign in the spiritual state, the four and twenty elders round the Throne will cast their crowns at his feet and say, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, "which art, and wast, and art to come: because thou "hast taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned." And when he will reign personally, then those that have gotten the victory over the beast, and stand upon a sea of glass with harps in their hands, will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, saying, "great "and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, "just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints;
"who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy "name?" The apostles, prophets, and all the people of God will join in one general thanksgiving, one song of praise, to him who hath avenged their blood upon antichrist. Innumerable voices will be heard in the church, saying, "salvation, and glory, and hon- "nour, and power, be unto the Lord our God, for "true and righteous are his judgments. Amen "Hallelujah." And again they will say, "let us be "glad and rejoice and give honour to him, for the "marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath "made herself ready."

So then, this morning light, when the sun riseth, this morning without clouds, may very aptly repre- sent the state of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ as a Ruler among men, righteous, ruling in the fear of God.

But I proceed now to take some notice of the Second figure here made use of. He shall be as the ten- der grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining af-
The Manifestation of Christ to his People,

terrain; which may be applied to Christ himself, and to the influences and benefits his people receive from his government.

This figure may be applied to Christ himself. He shall be as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain: so it may point out unto us the nature of Christ as man; his original and descent, springing out of the earth; and the moving, producing cause thereof, the love and favour of God: and the whole may be expressive of his acceptableness and loveliness to his people; which seems to be greatly the design of this figure.

1. It may be considered as pointing out his nature as man. He sprung out of the earth. He is called the fruit of the earth*; An handful of corn upon the top of the mountains, which is part of the fruit of the earth†; a branch out of the root of Jesse‡; a tender plant growing up before the Lord§, and our text says, He shall be as the tender grass. Now though this may convey an idea of weakness and infirmity in Christ as man, and which is just; yet there is something more intended. The tenderness and verdure of the grass, and the flourishing circumstances in which it is, in the morning¶, may lead us to observe, that great grace that appeared upon Christ in his human nature, even in the morning of his infancy, of whom it is said, that he waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him¶. Great grace was upon him then: he increased in wisdom, and in favour with God and man. Yea, the Spirit of grace, or the grace of the Spirit was bestowed upon him without measure.


This
Comparable to the Grass, springing after Rain. 81

This simile of grass, is sometimes made use of in Scripture to express a multitude. The spires of grass are innumerable. Now, though Christ's person is but one; yet he has two natures, human and divine, united in that one person. He is the head of the body, the church, which consists of a variety of members; and he has a spiritual offspring, which are numerous, even as the sand of the sea; a number which no man can number, out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation. But I said the metaphor conveyed an idea of weakness and infirmity; and so it leads us to consider the weakness of Christ in human nature. He had all the sinless infirmities of that nature; he was encompassed with infirmity; and was in the esteem of men, a worm, and no man; treated as the most contemptible creature. yea, the apostle says, he was crucified through weakness*. And, as the tender grass is liable to be trodden under foot, and to be cut down; so he, in human nature, was trodden under foot by those strong bulls of Bashan, which compassed him about†; by whom are meant the rulers of the Jews, both ecclesiastical and civil, as well as Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, and his soldiers. He was borne down under their calumnies, their cruel scourgings; and at last brought to the dust of death: for this tender plant was not only bruised for our iniquities, but cut down as the grass of the field, and that for our sins and transgressions.

But he arose again as grass after it is cut down; and therefore the resurrection of the dead, even of Christ himself, is signified thereby; as in Isaiah xxvi. 19. Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead, just as

* 2 Cor. xiii. 4. † Psalm xxii. 12.
it casts out its herbs and plants, under the influence of rain and dew. So Christ, though he was crucified through weakness, lives by the power of God: and though he was put to death in the flesh, was quickened in the Spirit; and though he was dead, is now alive, and lives for evermore.

2. The original of Christ, in his human nature, is here expressed by the tender grass springing out of the earth. It is true, indeed, he is said to be the Lord from heaven*. He is the Lord: he is Jehovah; and he is from heaven, which is the seat of his habitation and glory; from thence he came, (not by change of place, but by assumption of nature) into our world; therefore is said to come down from heaven, to do the will of his Father, which is in heaven: and because of the glory and excellency of his person, he is said to be above all. But as to his original as man, he is of the earth. He did not descend from heaven, bringing his human nature with him, as he will do when he appears a second time, without sin, unto salvation. He took human nature from the earth; that is, he took it of an earthly woman: He was made of a woman†. The human nature of Christ was made in secret, in the lowest parts of the earth, and from thence it sprang; which probably is the meaning of that expression, Psal. lxxxv. 11, truth shall spring out of the earth: that is, he who is the way, the truth and the life‡. The truth of all promises, prophecies, types, and figures: the true tabernacle which God pitched, and not man, that sprang out of the earth.

And this may also denote, the meanness of our Lord's descent as man. He sprung out of the earth; out of Jesse's family, when that was, as it were, cut down to the roots: so he is said to be a root springing-

* 1 Cor. xv. 47. † Gal. iv. 4. ‡ John xiv. 6.
Comparable to Grass, springing after Rain.

ing up out of a dry ground*. His supposed father a carpenter, his mother a poor virgin in Israel; which was what disquieted the Jews. Is not, (say they) this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? Poor Mary in such a place? Are not his brethren and sisters all with us? Do not we know them; what a mean company they are? what poor people they be? and therefore they treated him with the utmost contempt.

3. The moving, producing cause of this tender grass springing out of the earth, is ascribed to clear shining after rain. As grass springs up apace, and revives much after a shower of rain, and the clear shining of the sun upon it; so our Lord is represented as growing up in like manner.

By this clear shining after rain, we may understand the love and favour of God; whose favour is light: and when it is manifested, the people of God have light and joy in their souls. Nothing is more desirable to them, than to have the light of that morning, and to walk in that light. So the goodwill and favour of God may be compared to rain; for if the favour of an earthly prince, may be said to be as the latter rain, and as the dew upon the grass; much more the favour of the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Now our Lord's springing up as the tender grass, or his appearance, as man, is owing to the love and favour of God. Zechariah, the father of the forerunner of our Lord, John the Baptist, in his song, says, that it is through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us.†. That is, the Messiah, the Sun of Righteousness, which made the glorious day of the gospel: his rising and appearance he ascribes to the free grace and mercy of God. And to this also the angels ascribe the

* Isa. lxi. 2. Luke i. 78.

G 2 incarnation
incarnation of our Lord; his coming in the flesh; his springing up as the tender grass out of the earth. They unitedly sing this song, *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will toward men*. Yea, our Lord himself ascribes his mission, primarily, to the love of God. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*. And, indeed, there is no one instance in which the favour, good-will, and loving-kindness of God are so displayed, as in the mission and gift of Christ. The apostle says, that God hath *shewn forth the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus*: that is, in his kindness in sending and giving Christ to us, and for us. He observes, that not only the kindness and goodness of God are here expressed, but the riches thereof; yea, the exceeding riches of his grace. The Lord, in order to shew his love to Israel, says, *since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable; and I have loved thee: therefore, will I give men for thee, and people for thy life*. This was doing a great deal; but is nothing, no nothing at all, in comparison of his giving his Son to, and for his people. He gave his own Son, his only begotten Son; and when it is considered for what purpose he was given, may we not say with the apostle, *Herein is love! herein is love amassed together: herein is love, here it centers; herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins*. For God to send his Son to be the propitiatory sacrifice; that this should be his love, and favour, and good-will towards us, to make the soul of his Son an offering for sin; that he should part with him; give him up for us all; herein has he mani-

|| 1 John iv. 10.
feasted his love in the highest degree. That while we were yet sinners Christ should die for us: O wonderful love! This is the clear shining after rain, to which is owing the descent of our Lord; and his springing up in the world to save poor, lost sinners.

4. This metaphor leads us to view the loveliness of Christ. As the grass looks exceeding, gay and cheerful, comely and beautiful, after a shower of rain, when the sun shines upon it; so amiable does our Lord appear to his people. This fruit of the earth, is said to be comely and excellent: comely and excellent to his saints: to those who have any spiritual sight of him, he is the chiefest among them ten thousand, and altogether lovely. This fruit of the earth is also said to be glorious; which may denote the glory of his divine person, as the Son of God; who is the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person. His glory, as Mediator, full of grace and truth: the glorious man, adorned with all the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God. His glory after his resurrection from the dead. The glory even of his body; according to which the bodies of the saints at the resurrection morn will be fashioned. His glory at the Father’s right hand, as sat down with him upon his throne; angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him. And especially in his government; both in his spiritual and personal reign. O! how lovely will he appear then; when he, and he alone shall be exalted, and reign before his ancients gloriously. Thus this figure and metaphor may be applied to our Lord Jesus Christ.

I thought to have said a few things to shew how this may be applied to the influences and benefits his people receive from him, under his government: and then the sense is this; “He shall cause

* Isa. iv. 2.  † Ibid.  ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 22.
his people, who are like grass springing out of
the earth, to be like that, as it appears after clear
shining after rain." Or, he shall be to them,
who are compared to grass springing out of the
earth, more than rain; for so the words may be
rendered. That is, he is more to them than rain,
and the clear shining after it; but I cannot now en-
large on this subject. To conclude,
Let us learn to bless the Lord for what Christ is
already unto us. If he is unto us as the light of the
morning, a morning without clouds; if his light
has shone into our hearts, and we have had a dis-
cernment of spiritual things; let us bless God for
this light, and say, as the Psalmist did, Bless the Lord,
O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy
name: bless the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all
his benefits*. And again, blessed be the Lord, who
hath shewn us light†. Spiritual light, caused
to shine into our dark hearts, and gave
us the light of the knowledge of the glory of
himself, in the face of Jesus Christ. Let it be our
great concern, therefore, to shew forth the praises
of him, who has called us out of darkness, into his
marvellous light: and to walk as children of the
light, and of the day; putting off the works of dark-
ness, and putting on the whole armour of light:
putting on Christ Jesus; and making no provision
for the flesh, to obey it in the lust thereof.
And this may lead us to look for what will be
thereafter, when Christ will come down, like the
rain upon the new mown grass, and like showers
of rain to water the earth; to those days, when the
righteous shall flourish, and there will be abundance
of peace, as long as the sun and moon endureth.

* Psalm ciii. 1, &c. † Psalm cxviii. 27.
SERMON VI.

The Stability of the Covenant of Grace, the Support of a Believer under outward and inward Troubles.

2 Sam. xxiii. 5:

Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.

The preceding verses have already been considered; an introduction, therefore, to the present discourse, is unnecessary: suffice it to say, our text contains part of the last words of David; in which we may observe,

I. A concession, or something that is granted, that things were not altogether right, or so with David as he desired and wished. Although my house be not so with God.

II. A strong expression of his faith in God, as his covenant God; yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant.

III. The nature and excellency of this covenant described, 1. As an everlasting one. 2. Ordered in all things; and, 3. sure.

G 4
I. Here is a concession, or something granted, that things were not altogether right, or so with David as he desired and wished: Although my house be not so with God.

1. By his house, may be meant his kingdom and government. In this sense we find the word used in the seventh chapter of this book; where the Lord, by Nathan, assures David that he would make him an house. Though he does not allow him to build the Temple, which he was desirous of; yet, says he, verse 11th, the Lord telleth thee, that he will make thee a house: that is, that he would establish a kingdom under him, and in his posterity, as it is explained in the next verse: and when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. That is what is meant by making him a house; and this is still further explained in the 16th verse, where it is said, and thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee. Thine house and thy kingdom: the last clause explains the former, and plainly shews what is meant by his house. In this sense we may understand it here; for a kingdom is as a house, or family to a king, and the subjects are as his children, and a good prince is the father of them: such a one was David.

Now David was sensible that the kingdom which was in his hands, which he had the government of, was not like the kingdom and government of the Ruler, ruling in the fear of God, before described. Mine house is not so with God: so bright, so splendid, so glorious as the kingdom and government of this great and illustrious person, whom I have been speaking of, who is like the light of the morning, even...
even a morning without clouds, when the sun riseth; like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain: but so it is not with me, with my kingdom and government. "Neverthe-
less, he hath made with me an everlasting cove-
nant, though it is not so." Or, it may be read
thus, Although my house, or kingdom, be not firm and
stable: so some chuse to render the words. "Though
it is in some respects tottering:" it has been so in
various instances; yet he hath made with me an
everlasting covenant.

When he was first set upon the throne, Abner
set up Ishbofeth over the ten tribes, in opposition
to him. When that difficulty was over, and Da-
vid was made king over all Israel, in process of
time, a son out of his own bowels, Absalom, rebel-
led against him; and caused him not only to flee
from Jerusalem, but even to pass over Jordan's river,
to be in safety from this rebellious son. When this re-
bellion was quashed, there was an insurrection made
by Sheba, who blew his trumpet, and said, We have
no part in David; neither have we inheritance in the son
of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel*: and all Is-
rael it is said followed after him; only Judah clave
to David. And after this, just before his death,(and it
may be immediately before he uttered these his last
words), Adonijah usurped the throne, and got himself
proclaimed instead of Solomon. Now with respect to
all this, he might say, "Although my house, my
kingdom, is not stable and firm, but in a tottering
condition; yet God hath made with me an ever-
lasting covenant." In which he may have respect
either to the covenant of royalty, that there should
not want one to sit upon his throne; and which in
some sense may be said to be an everlasting cove-

* 2 Sam. xx. 1.
The Stability of the Covenant of Grace;

nant; for so it is represented in Jer. xxxlii. 20, 21. If (says the Lord) ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night; and that there should not be day and night in their season: then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne. Now David may have respect to this covenant of royalty. Though his kingdom had been tottering, yet the covenant that God had made with him would be be firm and sure. Indeed some writers, especially Jewish ones, understand this in a quite different sense. Not as expressing any disorder in David's kingdom and government; but the reverse: they understand it thus, "Although my house be not so with God, so tottering, so unstable, and uncertain as the things before mentioned." The morning is sometimes a morning without clouds, as expressed in the preceding verse; and the sun rises with great brightness and clearness: at other times it is a morning with clouds; the heavens are covered with darkness, and all is gloomy, and every thing uncomfortable. Sometimes it is fine weather, at other times foul; sometimes the sun shines, at other times it is in a cloud; but my house, my kingdom is not so uncertain and unstable. But then this must be understood with respect to his more remote and glorious offspring, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ; whose throne is for ever and ever, and of whose government, and the peace thereof, there shall be no end: whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and who reigns over the house of Jacob, and upon the throne of David, for ever and ever.

2. By his house may be meant his family. Although my house, my family is not so with God; some choose to render it, "though my house or family is not, with God, mean, low, and despicable," as it had been in comparison with some families
families in Israel, (as he himself intimates when he says), “Who am I, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?” That is, what am I, a poor creature of mean extraction, and what my family that I sprung from, that thou shouldst raise me to so much dignity? Jesse his father was a mean person, comparatively speaking: his family small in Israel, and Bethlehem his native town and place of residence, one of the least of the thousands of Judah. Now with respect to this he might say, “although my house, my family is comparatively small; nothing in it for which any particular and special favour should be bestowed upon me, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant.” Or this may have respect to the disorders in his family, to the many evils committed by one and another therein. They were guilty of some of the groesest crimes. Amnon committed incest with his sister. Absalom rebelled against his father. Adonijah usurped the throne: all which pressed hard, no doubt, upon this good man; and therefore he might say, “although my house, my family, be not right with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant.”

These things prove that grace does not run in a carnal line, comes not by natural descent. Good men are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. There is nothing in carnal descent, or nothing to be depended upon on that account. This however must be a sensible affliction to this great and good man, to observe such disorder in his family, such sins committed by his children; but still this did not affect his covenant interest: although my house be not so

* 2 Sam. vii. 18.
The Stability of the Covenant of Grace.

with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant.

The afflictions of God's people, whether personal or domestic, do not affect their covenant interest. That remains always the same; David's afflictions were many; remember David and all his afflictions.* The phrase denotes his afflictions were not few, but many, very many. Many are the afflictions of the righteous†; but these do not at all affect their covenant interest, that remains unshaken notwithstanding all their afflictions, trials and exercises. The love of God towards them is the same, his affection for them is the same, he has the same special regard unto them; and takes the same special notice of them. He never withdraws his covenant mercy from his people. Covenant interest continues notwithstanding all these things. It is said the covenant of peace shall never be removed‡; and it follows in the very next verse, O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. Of the very same persons this character is given, "afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted;" concerning whom God had that very moment said, "my loving kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, faith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." So that covenant interest continues firm and unshaken, notwithstanding all afflictions. These are never to be considered as arguments against covenant interest; no, they are rather to be considered as evidences of it. For such whom the Lord loves he rebukes and chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives; whom he receives into covenant, and into covenant as a son of his. He often afflicts them; but then it is when

* Psalm cxiii. 1. † Psalm xxxiv. 19. ‡ Isa. liv. 10.
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it is necessary he should deal thus with them. Afflictions are fruits of the covenant of grace. This is what is said in covenant, if his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him; nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.* The afflictions of God's people make for their good. They work together for good: sometimes for their temporal good; as in the case of Joseph. For their spiritual good, the exercise of their graces; and that they may be made more and more partakers of his holiness. And for their eternal good; for these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory†.

3. By his house, he may mean himself: or, at least it is applicable to himself, his own heart; although my soul, my heart, be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. Our Lord compares the man that hears his words, and acts according to them, to a wise man that builds his house upon a rock: and one that does not, to a foolish man, that builds his house upon the sand‡; that is, that builds himself, his faith, his hope, and his eternal affairs and concerns upon the one, or upon the other. So this phrase here is applicable to David, or any other good man's self, his own heart or soul, although that is not so with God; not so right as he could wish and desire; nevertheless, covenant interest remains.

1. Though there may be a great deal of sin, as there is in all good men: a great many failings and infirmities in their lives and conversation, as there

* Ps. lxxix. 30, 34. † 2 Cor. iv. 17. Mat. vii. 24, 27.
The Stability of the Covenant of Grace,

are in the best of men upon earth: nevertheless, interest in the covenant of grace continues. David was very sensible he had a great deal of sin in him, and that sin had been committed by him: O how does he bewail and lament himself under a sense of his sin. Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities are more than the hairs of my head; therefore I cannot look up*, with delight, boldness, and pleasure, as I had used to do. Again, he says, mine iniquities are gone over my head as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of my sin†. It is so with every good man, more or less. It was so with the apostle of the Gentiles. In me, that, is in my flesh, dwells no good thing‡. I see a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members§. And yet covenant interest remains. Though a man finds many workings of corruption in his heart, and breakings forth of it in his life; nevertheless covenant interest continues. Original and actual sin, were no bar to the admittance of God's people into the everlasting covenant of grace. He knew very well what they would be. He knew that they would be transgressors from the womb: that their neck would be as an iron sinew, and their brow as brass. He saw all this, and yet this was no hinderance, obstruction, or objection at all to his admitting them into his everlasting covenant of grace. Indeed, he is sometimes represented after the manner of men, as if he were struggling in his mind; expostulating with himself what he should do in this case. How shall I put thee among the children||? Take thee into the everlasting covenant, and bestow blessings of grace upon thee; and give thee a goodly heritage of the host of nations; an eternal inheri-

* Ps. xl. 12. † Ps. xxxviii. 34. ‡ Rom. vii. 18. § Rom. vii. 23. || Jer. iii. 19.
tance. How shall I do it when thou art, or wilt be so vile a creature? But grace overcomes all these struggles and difficulties, as they are, humanly speaking: hence it is said, I will be their Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters, faith the Lord Almighty *.

Sin, in the whole compass of it, in its blackest colours, was foreseen, and yet no bar to the admission of these persons into the everlasting covenant of grace. All the impurity of their nature, and the whole course of sin, during a state of unregeneracy, did not hinder covenant grace taking place in effectual vocation. Notwithstanding all that impurity of nature, in which the Lord's people are brought forth into the world, and in which they continue; and notwithstanding they go on fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; they being, by nature, children of wrath, even as others; yet such is the great love wherewith the Lord has loved them, that he quickens them when dead in trespasses and sins. Though they are like the wretched infant cast out into the open field, to the loathing of their persons in the day they were born, lying in all the impurity of nature, and aft agreeable to their nature; yet this did not prevent the Lord from looking upon them with a look of love; or hinder him from casting his skirt over them, and entering into covenant with them: that is, manifesting his covenant to them, and they openly becoming his. Notwithstanding all their trespasses, original and actual, through the blood of this covenant, (so the blood of Jesus is called †), they are delivered out of the pit wherein is no water: and are encouraged to turn to the strong hold, as prisoners of hope. And they are, by this blood, cleansed from all sin. So covenant interest continues, “Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an ever-

* 2 Cor. vi. 18. † Heb. xiii. 20.
"lasting covenant, ordered in all things, and " secure."

2. Though it may be with the people of God, as it was with David; that they are guilty of many backslidings after conversion, after they are called by divine grace; nevertheless covenant interest continues. David was sensible he had been guilty of many backslidings; particularly in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah; and he continued a long time without a sense of the evil he had fallen into; but covenant interest still remained. In virtue of this, Nathan the prophet was sent to him, to convince him of his evil, bring him to a sense of it, to own and acknowledge it before God; and at the same time to inform him that he should not die, because his iniquity was put away: though at the same time, he is also told, that evil should spring out of his house: God would chastise him for the evil he had been guilty of; nevertheless his loving-kindness he would not utterly take from him, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. So it is with the people of God, more or less. What is said of literal Israel, may be said of spiritual Israel, My people are bent to backsliding from me*: and, as the same prophet says, ¶ Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer †." As an heifer that cares not to be under the yoke; so the Lord's spiritual Israel are guilty of great departures from the Lord. O what sad departures do they sometimes make from the living God, through the power of unbelief in their hearts‡; therefore they are called upon to "remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works ‡." Yet, notwithstanding all, this covenant of grace still continues: covenant love is still the same. I will heal all their backslidings, and will love them freely. Notwithstanding their back-

* Hos. xi. 7. † Hos. iv. 16. ‡ Rev. ii. 5.
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slidings I will make it appear that I still love them, that my love is a free love: not depending upon any conditions in them. And I will make it known by forgiving their iniquities, for that is meant; or by making fresh applications of pardoning grace. In what a light is this set, in the forty third chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah: they made him to serve with their sins, they wearied him with their iniquities: by which is to be understood, that they were guilty of sins of omission and commission. Yet, says the Lord, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake, and will not remember thy sins*. Covenant grace was still the same.

Covenant relation, therefore, is not broken off by these backslidings and apostacies from God. No; this is most clear from what is said in Jeremiah iii. 14. "Turn, O backsliding children, faith the Lord, for I am married unto you." Turn, O backsliding children: what strange things, what wonders in grace are here! children, and yet backsliders! backsliders, and yet children! children of God still. Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you: the relation of husband and spouse still continues. The marriage relation still subsists notwithstanding all your sins. So again in the 22nd verse; Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: and the answer is, behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Faith gets strength by such declarations of grace, and, notwithstanding all these backslidings, says, thou art the Lord our God. Thou art our covenant God.

3 The dear children of God are liable to various temptations of Satan; and sometimes are prevailed upon to do those things that are disagreeable to their heavenly Father: yet covenant interest remains.

* Hof. iv. 25.

H "Although
“Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant.” David had his temptations. We have mention made of a very fore one: Satan stirred him up to number the people of Israel *. He fell in the temptation, he suffered much, and his people too, through it, but still covenant interest remained. The best of men are liable to temptations. Peter was. Simon, Simon, (says our Lord), Satan hath desired to have thee; to have thee in his hands; to do with thee as he would; to harrass, distress and confound thee, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. The great apostle of the Gentiles, had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him: and extremely distressed he was with it. He besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him; so it is with all the people of God at one time or another. Those very persons, the Corinthians, whom the apostle describes as being washed, justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God; he intimates, in some following verses, that they were liable to the temptations of Satan. Thus the best of men experience his temptations. Nay, even the Son of God himself did. He was in all points tempted as we are †; and that as violently as ever any of the people of God were; for what greater temptations can they be harassed with, than those with which he was assaulted? But, notwithstanding all the temptations of God’s people, yet covenant interest remains. Our Lord has a sympathizing spirit with them, and rebukes the tempter. He says, the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. “Is not this one that I have chosen? is not this one that I have called by my grace: snatched as a brand out of the burning, and saved from everlasting

* I Chron. xxii. 1. † Heb. iv. 15.
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...ruin? and shall this dear child of mine fall by thy "hand? the Lord rebuke thee satan! What hast "thou to do with him? he is one of mine." The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, he knows the fittest time to do it, and he does do it: for though he suffers the enemy to go about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, yet he does not suffer him to destroy any of his own children. What is the reason of all this? Covenant interest continues. Yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant.

4. They may be, and often are in great darkness of soul, and under great distress on that account; yet covenant interest remains. David knew what darkness and distress of soul was; hence those warm and fervent breathings of his, Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? Again, Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled. This has been the case of the best of men in all ages. The man that obeys the voice of the servants of the Lord, may walk in darkness and see no light. It is said, even of the church in general, that he hides his face from her; yet she expresses her confidence. When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me *; she was satisfied covenant interest still continued. Indeed unbelief prevails frequently in such dark and distressing circumstances; and the people of God are brought into such reasonings and doubts, in their own minds, about their covenant interest, as to say, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me †, when it is impossible he should; for they are engraven on the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him. And though he does hide his face from them for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness


H 2
will he gather them; for as he has sworn that the
waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth; so
hath he sworn that he will no more be wrath with
them, or rebuke them. Even though the mountains
may depart and the hills be removed; yet his loving-
kindness shall never depart, nor the covenant of his
peace be removed. So that darkness of soul, the
hidings of God's face, divine desertions, are no ar-
guments against covenant interest.

5. The people of God are subject to great coldness,
indifference, sleepiness, sluggishness, and slothfulness:
it often attends them, as it did the Church when she
said, I sleep but my heart waketh*; but still we find
she was recovered out of this frame of soul, and
brought to the exercise of strong faith in the Lord:
this is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of
Jerusalem+. All the virgins, wise and foolish, stumbled
and slept. This may befall the best of men,
and yet, notwithstanding that, their covenant interest
remains.

6. Faith, hope, love, and other graces may not
be in lively exercise. Faith is sometimes very low.
All that a believer can say at most, is, Lord, I be-
lieve, help thou mine unbelief; but that does not af-
fect covenant interest; it does not depend upon the
lively exercise of grace. Though we believe not, yet
he abides faithful: He is faithful to his promises,
let it be with us as it will. Hope is sometimes in a
very poor plight; almost gone. The church says,
the Lord is my portion, faith my soul, therefore will I
hope in him‡: even the very fame that before had
said, my strength and my hope is perished from the
Lord§. Yea, the same may be said of other graces;
though low and upon the decline, covenant interest
still remains. All this is supposed in the phrase,
although my house be not so with God.

* Sol. Song. v. 2. † verse 16. ‡ Lam. iii. 24. § verse. 18.
II. Here is a strong expression of covenant interest; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant. What is this covenant that God had made with David? and with whom made? It cannot be the covenant of works made with Adam. A covenant was made with him consisting of these terms, that if he acted according to it, he should live; if not, should die. And Adam was the federal head of all his offspring, and a type of him that was to come, our Lord Jesus Christ. But now this covenant is broken; this is no everlasting covenant. They have transgressed my covenant as Adam. This is not a covenant ordered in all things and sure; far from it: hence the covenant of grace is said to be, a better covenant, established upon better promises. Here is no provision made in this covenant for the pardon of sin; no provision made for a justifying righteousness; no provision made for life and salvation. This, therefore, can never be the covenant meant; for David says, this is all my salvation: but there is no salvation by the covenant of works. As no justification, so no salvation from thence. David is speaking of a covenant, from whence he derived abundance of comfort under the most distressing circumstances he could be in; but there is no such comfort to be derived from the covenant of works. By the law is the knowledge of sin; but not of a Saviour from sin. That law convinces men of sin, and curses every transgressor; dooms them to everlasting destruction, and so brings upon them a spirit of bondage. This, therefore, cannot be the covenant.

Nor yet the covenant of circumcision (as it is called) made with Abraham: that is done away, being a yoke that neither the nor our forefathers could bear.

*Rom. v. 14.  † Hosea vi. 7.  ‡ Heb. viii. 6.
This was so far from being ordered in all things and sure, that the apostle declares, to those who complied with it, Christ is become of no effect unto you. Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.

Nor is this the Sinai covenant; for that was not an everlasting one. It is abolished and done away. Not ordered in all things and sure, for it gave way; otherwise there would have been no need for a second, as the apostle argues.

The covenant which the sweet Psalmist of Israel, in his last dying words, has respect unto, is the covenant of grace: founded on grace; filled with the blessings of grace. It is called the covenant of peace because a grand article of it is peace and reconciliation with God, by Jesus Christ. He was sent to be our peace; to make peace for us by the blood of his cross. It is called a covenant of life, because a grand article in this covenant is life, and it secures everlasting life to his people; for this is one grand promise of it, that God hath promised unto us, eternal life.

Now this covenant is said to be made with David: made with his son and antitype, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, who bears his name. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. A covenant projected by God the Father: it was proposed by him to his Son Christ Jesus, who agreed unto it. A mere creature cannot make a covenant with God; for what has man to give to God, to agree upon with God? What terms can he propose, or have proposed, that he is capable of performing? 'None at all. When, therefore, God is

* Gal. v. 4. † Heb. viii. 7. ‡ Isa. liv. 10. § Mal. ii. 5. ¶ 1 John. ii. 25. ¶¶ Ps. lxxxix. 3.
The Support of a Believer in Trouble.

said to make a covenant with men; the meaning is, he manifests his covenant made with Jesus Christ from all eternity. Therefore, when David says, he hath made with me an everlasting covenant; the meaning is, he hath made it manifest to me, that I have an interest in his everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. This is the meaning of, Hearken unto me, and thou shalt live, and I will make with thee an everlasting covenant*. Can any suppose, that when one, under the influence of grace, hearkens to God, then God begins to make a covenant with him? no, the meaning is, God will manifest his covenant love and grace; shew them their interest in the blessings and promises thereof, so that their faith shall lay hold on this covenant, as David did under all those distressing circumstances he was in. Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant: I clearly see my interest in it, and by faith lay hold upon it, and upon the blessings and promises of it.

I should now have considered the nature of this covenant that David saw his interest in. That it is an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; but I must defer these things, with what follows, to another discourse.

*Isa. lv. 3.*
SERMON VII.

The Stability of the Covenant of Grace, the Support of a Believer under outward and inward Troubles.

2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow.

In our last discourse on this text, Three things were proposed for consideration.

I. David's concession, that things were not so with him, as he desired and wished.

II. The strong expression of his faith in God notwithstanding; as having made a covenant with him.

III. The nature of this covenant described as everlasting; ordered in all things, and sure.

The two former have been enlarged upon: what remains to be considered, is,

III. The nature of this covenant. It is said to be an everlasting one. That is, from everlasting to everlasting. It bears date from all eternity, and will
The Stability of the Covenant of Grace,

will continue so for evermore. It springs from the everlasting love of God to his people: that is the source of it. God hath loved his people with an everlasting love; not only with a love, which shall abide for ever; but with a love which was from all eternity; for, our Lord says to his Divine Father, Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me; and thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world *. Now this covenant of grace, springs from this love of God; and is as early as that. Jehovah said, in his eternal mind, mercy, love and grace shall be built up for ever; and in order to it, makes this covenant †. The basis and foundation of this covenant are, the purposes, decrees, and counsels of the most High; for he does all things after the counsel of his own will; and it may be depended upon, as a most sure and certain thing, that an affair, of so much importance as the covenant of grace is, could not be made any otherwise than after the counsel of his will, and depends upon that counsel: and his counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of this covenant; so he is more than once called, in the epistle to the Hebrews. As such, he was set up from everlasting; from the beginning, or ever the earth was: and therefore the covenant of grace, of which he is Mediator, must be as early. He could not be the Mediator of a covenant, without the covenant itself. Add to this, that the sum and substance of this covenant was from everlasting. David considers the promises of it, and especially that grand promise in it, everlasting life by Christ, that was made before the world was; as it is expressly said, Titus i. 2. In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. Now, there could be

* John xvii. 23, 24. † Psalm lxxxix. 2, 3.
no such a promise as this, unless there was a covenant so early. All the blessings of this covenant are of as antient date. They are titled the grace (or blessings of grace) given us in Christ before the world began.*

And as this covenant is from everlasting, so it is to everlasting, for God hath commanded his covenant for ever; Holy and Reverend is his name†: that is, he hath ordained and established this covenant of grace, so as to continue for ever; nothing shall ever be able to subvert it, or make it null and void. Notwithstanding all that is done by, or done unto, these covenant ones, God will not break his covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips. Though they sin, and he chastises them for their sins; yet his loving-kindness he will not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness, in keeping the covenant, to fail. Though they may so provoke him, by their carriage and behaviour, as to cause him to remove his face from them; yet his loving-kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed. This is a covenant that will never wax old, will never give way to another, or be succeeded by another; as the old covenant did, and was; no, it is an everlasting one, upon all accounts.

In the next place, it is ordered in all things. Ordered in all things to advance the glory of all the Three Divine Persons; who are jointly concerned therein. To advance and secure the glory of God the Father, in his eternal choice of persons to everlasting life and happiness, in all his purposes and decrees concerning them; which, through this covenant taking place, have their full and complete accomplishment. As also to advance the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; who is the Me-

* 2 Tim. i. 9.  † Psalm cxli. 9.
diator, surety, and messenger of this covenant: the federal head and representative of the body the church, and the Saviour thereof; that in all things he may have the pre-eminence. And to advance the glory of the blessed Spirit; whose office it is to be the applier of the grace of this covenant: to take of the things of God and of Christ, and shew them unto those who are interested in them; and to convey and apply all grace, needful for them in time, till they come into an eternal world. This covenant is ordered in all things, for the security of all the covenant ones; who are all, for their safety, put into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them, faultless, before the throne of his Father. In whose hands they being put, are safe; for, as he will never suffer them to fall from thence, so none are able to pluck them out of his hands. This covenant is ordered in all things: all provision is made in it, for the good of the covenant ones, in time and in eternity. In this covenant are contained all spiritual blessings, all grace, all things pertaining to life and godliness: provision is made for the sanctification of the hearts of God's chosen, the justification of their persons, and the pardon of their sins. In short, it contains all things needful for them here, and eternal glory and happiness hereafter.

And then it is a covenant that is sure. Sure to Christ, the Covenant Head; and sure to all the seed. Sure to Christ. All the promises made to him are sure: as, that he shall see his seed; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. And that he should be exalted on high; therefore, when he fulfilled the work, he said, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine ownself, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was*.

* John xvii. 4, 5.
It is sure to all the seed, and spiritual offspring: all the promises of it made to them, in him, are yea, and amen. All the blessings and mercies of it, are the sure mercies of David; and the more sure, as they are put into the hands of Christ, their covenant head and representative: so their spiritual and eternal life is hid with Christ in God; safe and secure; and because he lives, they shall live also.

But I go on to consider the latter part of the text, in which

I. David expresses his raised expectations upon this covenant; his great regard unto it, and affection for it: This is all my salvation, and all my desire.

II. All this is maintained, notwithstanding the circumstances in which he then was: Although he maketh it not to grow. Though it was not a growing time and season with him and his; yet this his covenant was all his salvation, and all his desire.

I. We shall consider his raised expectations upon this covenant; his great regard unto it, and affection for it, or to Christ, the covenant head, with whom this covenant was made: for the words may as well regard the one, as the other. The supplement may as well be, for he is all my salvation, and all my desire; as well as it may be supplied, as we do, this is all my salvation, &c. And, in as much as these two agree together, and fall in with each other, and indeed are not separated one from the other, we shall consider the words in both senses; as they may respect both the covenant, which our version directs to, and as they may respect the Covenant Head, or he that is the Ruler over the people, before described.

1. As it may respect the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: "for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." All my salvation (as if David should say), is provided for in it, and secured by
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by it; flows from it, and depends upon it. "This " is all my salvation;" or, " All my salvation is " here;" a very comprehensive phrase, which includes temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation. All salvation is of the Lord. Salvation, (says the Psalmist) belongs unto the Lord*: temporal, as well as spiritual and eternal salvation, belongs to him: he is the author thereof, and to him the glory should be given; and particularly, the salvation of his people: the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; and he is their strength in the time of trouble†. Even temporal salvation is of the Lord, as their covenant God and Father too; for he is their King and their God, working salvation in the midst of the earth: and every temporal deliverance is wrought for them by their covenant God, and in virtue of this covenant made with them. Covenant ones are saved in this covenant, in a temporal way, in order to be called. Saved they are from many evils in a providential way, while in an unconverted state, in order to be effectually called by the grace of God: and, indeed, all their temporal mercies are covenant mercies, as they come from a covenant God, and in a covenant way; when the mercies of the wicked, though the same for substance as theirs, are not covenant mercies. They are sometimes curses unto them; for the Lord curses their very blessings‡. Hence it is, that the people of God have what they have, in a temporal way, with the favour of the Lord: hence it is, that a little that a righteous man hath, it is better than the treasures of many wicked: they are blessed, and they are loaded day by day, comparatively speaking, with benefits; for God is the God of salvation, in a temporal sense, and to God the Lord belong the issues from death§. But more especially, spi-

* Psalm iii. 8. † Psa. xxxvii. 39. ‡ Mal. ii. 2. || Psa. lxviii. 20.
ritual and eternal salvation is here meant. *Spiritual salvation*; by which is meant, the salvation of the spirit or soul: that salvation, which concerns the spiritual and everlasting good of God's people, called the *salvation of the soul*: and everlasting salvation, because it always continues. The fruits, effects, benefits and blessings thereof always remain; and therefore called an everlasting salvation. *Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation*.† Now this began in the thoughts of God's heart; which were thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give them an unexpected end. In the purposes, resolutions, and determinations of his mind, who appointed his people, not unto wrath which they deserved; but to obtain salvation, by the death of his Son. He, from the beginning, even from all eternity, chose them, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, as the means, unto salvation, the end, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. In virtue of those thoughts, which were thoughts of peace, and not of evil, this salvation becomes secured unto them: for whom he predestinated to everlasting life, them he also glorifies; that is, they are everlastingly saved. The scheme of this salvation was framed in the council of grace and peace, said to be between them both; that is, between the Father and the Son. Jesus Christ acted as the *Wonderful Counsellor*. He is the angel and messenger of the great council; as in the Greek version †. God was in him, reconciling, or drawing the model and scheme, the means of reconciliation and salvation.

In the covenant of grace it was eternally settled who should be the saved ones, or partake of this great salvation; namely, those the Lord had a design of grace and mercy towards: and a love

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*1 Pet. i. 9. † Isa. xlv. 17. † Isa. ix. 6.*
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for; whom he determined to shew mercy unto, even the vessels of mercy, afore appointed unto glory. All that he hath given unto his Son, put into his hands, and made his care and charge; concerning whom he declares, that it is his will, that of all that he gave him, he should lose none, but raise it up at the last day. Even the whole Israel of God shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; consisting of Jews and Gentiles, the whole election of grace throughout the whole world; who are the all men God would have to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

It was also settled who should be the author of this salvation unto them: not angels, for Jehovah puts no trust in his servants, for he charges them with folly: nor men themselves, who are not equal to such a work as this, but the Son of God; of whom the Lord says, I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them; not in this, that, and the other way, but by the Lord their God. This was proposed to the Son of God, and he became our surety and Saviour. Jehovah said to him, Thou art my servant, O Israel: or, it is my will and pleasure it should be so; in whom I will be glorified; and, if it is a light thing for thee to raise up the tribe of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel, I will enlarge thy commission; thou shalt be a light to the Gentiles, and the salvation of my people, to the ends of the earth, or of all my chosen ones throughout the whole world. This was the proposal that was made to him; to which he agreed. When the question was put, Who shall go for the salvation of those chosen ones? he made answer, and said, “Here am I, send me:—lo! I come, to do thy will, O my God.” A covenant, a compact, and agreement was made immediately between the Father and the Son, upon this affair of so great importance; and in consequence of this, he was sent
sent in the fulness of time. Herein is love, the love of God the Father, in that he sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world; and he sent him in the fulness of time agreed upon in this covenant. Christ came to seek and to save them that were lost. This is the sum of the everlasting gospel, which is no other than a transcript of this covenant. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came unto the world to save sinners. Moreover, all the blessings of salvation were provided and secured in this covenant; and therefore it may with great propriety be said, "this is all my salvation." It was not only settled who should be the saved ones; but what blessings they should be partakers of, and should enjoy to all eternity. Now these are all spiritual blessings*, which were given us in Christ before the world began, and upon which account this covenant is said to be, in the text, ordered in all things. For instance, one of these blessings is peace; from which this covenant, as before observed, is called the covenant of peace. It was foreseen there would be a breach between God and his creature man: that peace and reconciliation would be necessary. This was provided for; Christ was proposed to be the Peace-maker. He shall make peace with me†; and accordingly he became their peace, and made peace by the blood of his cross. Pardon of sin is another blessing of this covenant, not to be had by the covenant of works; such who sinned against Moses's law died without mercy. Through the blood of this everlasting covenant is the remission of sins: one promise of it runs thus, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more; and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Justification is another blessing of salvation.

* Eph. i. 3. † Isa. xxvii. 5.
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provided for in this covenant, Jehovah the Father appointed this work unto his Son, which he agreed to, even to bring in everlasting righteousness; and God promised that he should justify many upon the foot of that righteousness, and as a covenant God he does do it. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? He is; that is, the covenant God of the one, as well as of the other. Now how does this appear? Why in this instance, in as much as he justifies the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith; so that the justification of men, by the righteousness of Christ, received by faith, is a blessing of grace, which God, as a covenant God, be- lows upon his people. Provision is also made in this covenant for the sanctification of the Lord's people. Another promise of it is, I will put my laws in their minds and write them in their hearts. I will sprinkle clean water upon them, and they shall be clean. I will give them a new heart and a new spirit. I will take away the stony heart, and give an heart of flesh. What an ample provision is here made for the sanctification of the covenant ones! Faith, repentance, and every grace are laid up in this covenant. Adoption is another blessing of salvation, and is secured in the covenant of grace. When God puts any among the children, it is a putting them into the covenant of grace; as he says, I will be their Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters. Upon this follows heirship; for, if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. Heirs, together of the grace of life. Heirs of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. Heirs of salvation as they are called Heb. i. 14.

Rom. iii. 29.
Well then, this being the case, that in this covenant it is provided who shall be saved, who the Saviour, and the blessings to be enjoyed; with great propriety may it be said, all our salvation is in this covenant. It is secured by it, flows from it, and depends upon it. Then adds David, this is all my desire: and it is no wonder that it should be his desire, when all his salvation was in it; and it is every gracious soul's desire, to see more clearly his interest in it. David saw his interest in it no doubt; but still he desired to see it more clearly, as every good man does, that he may more strongly take hold on the covenant, as it is expressed in Isa: lvi. 4. Take hold on a covenant God, on Christ the Mediator of the covenant, and of the blessings and promises of it, and claim them as his. Every good man desires to be led more and more into this covenant, into the nature, fulness and glory of it. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant. Those to whom any thing of this covenant has been shewn, cannot but be desirous of being shewn more of it; and especially their full interest in it. They desire also to have a fresh application of covenant grace, and covenant blessings to them, which God hath promised. He says, hear and your souls shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant: the meaning is, that he would manifest and apply unto them, the blessings of this covenant. It is the desire of every good man, that knows any thing of the covenant of grace, and the scheme of salvation by it, to be saved in this way; by and through the covenant of grace, and not of works. It is natural for men, until they are better enlightened, to desire to be saved by a covenant of works; first-convictions generally lead this way, as in the three thousand persons: say they, what shall we do? They talked of nothing but of doing.
ing: so the apostle Paul, when first enlightened, said, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? And the jailor, what shall I do to be saved? And it is natural for every man to think and say, he must do something to be saved. But one that is better enlightened into the covenant of grace and the scheme of salvation, desires to be saved by this covenant of grace, and no other; saved by grace, and not by works. This is all my desire; or, my delight and pleasure; so the word here used signifies. And O! the delight a good, a spiritual man, has in the covenant of grace, and in the promises of it particularly, which are exceeding great and precious; and which being opened and applied to him, are like apples of gold in pictures of silver: he rejoices in them, when they are brought and applied unto him, more than one that finds great spoil. This is all his desire, comfort, and solace, in the most trying circumstances. When he beholds his interest in this covenant, he can glory even in tribulation; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope. Covenant love is shed abroad in his heart, by the Spirit. Let it be as it will with him, whatever changes he passes through, this covenant, the blessings and promises of it, are the same; therefore he is not moved.

2. These words are applicable to the Ruler over men, before described; or the federal head with whom this covenant is made, and with his people in him; that is, our Lord Jesus Christ: so the supplement may as well be, He is all my salvation, and all my desire: i.e. Christ is so. "He is all my salvation:" He is titled "God's salvation." I have waited for thy salvation*: so called, because he is the salvation or Saviour

* Gen. xlix. 18.
of God's providing and appointing: and at other times he is called the salvation of his people, because they are the subjects of salvation; and they, under the influence of divine grace, choose him as their salvation or Saviour, and will have no other, as Job said, *He also shall be my salvation;* and David, *He is all my salvation;* that is, he is the author of it. He was appointed to this work: he came, having salvation. He came with power and authority, as Mediator, to effect it; and he came (which was his end in coming), to seek and to save them that were lost; and is become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. He is the only author of salvation. There is salvation in him and no other. Saints are not to expect it from any other: nor will a truly sensible sinner, look to any other for salvation. *All* their salvation is in him; not a *part of it only,* but the *whole of it.* A sensible sinner looks to Christ for his *whole* salvation. He is the author of *complete salvation.* The redemption which he has wrought out, is a plenteous one; for he saves his people from all iniquity: saves them out of the hands of all that hate them; saves them to the utmost. It is a complete salvation; and they that are saved are complete in him; and under the influence and witnessings of the blessed Spirit, they can claim their interest in him, and say, "He is all "my salvation:" and in this the sensible sinner glories. What would it have been to David if that little word *my* were left out? if he could only have said, "He is all salvation?" But this was his peculiar support and happiness, that he could add, "He is "all *my* salvation, and all *my* desire." The most desirable one; or, all desirable. He is said to be the *defire of all nations*; that is, he ought to be so; of right,

* Hag. ii. 7. *
he should be so. In him all the nations of the earth are blessed. He is the desire of all sensible souls: these, with the church, will say, with my soul have I desired thee; and the desire of my soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. He is desirable, on various accounts; on account of the glory of his person, the transcendent excellencies which are in him; he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His glory is as the only begotten of the Father; he is possessed of all divine perfections; he is fairer than the children of men; white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousands; or, as in our text, all desire. And he is the desire of his people, on account of that fulness of grace there is in him: not only because the fulness of the God-head dwells bodily in him; but because it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness of grace dwell, for the supply of his people; and out of which they are supplied. They may say, as the Psalmist did, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He is all their desire, as a Saviour, or on account of that salvation he is the author of; whom have I in heaven but thee (says the Psalmist) and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee. None among the angels in heaven, none among all the men upon earth, to be desired with Jesus Christ. There is such an efficacy in his blood for cleansing from sin; such an excellency in his righteousness, that a sensible sinner desires to be found in him, not having on his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God, by faith. There is such a virtue in his sacrifice, for the expiation of sin, that he has put away sin for ever; and they are perfected that are sanctified*. There is so great salvation wrought out by him; so full, free,

* Heb. x. 14.

complete
complete, perfect, lasting, and durable; so suitable to the circumstances of the sinner, that makes him all desire. He is all my desire. Truly gracious souls, that know any thing of him, they desire to know more of him: know more of his person, offices, and grace; to know more of him, and the power of his resurrection. And no wonder they should, since, this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent: hence they make use of all the means of grace, for the improvement of their knowledge; that they may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and arrive, at last, to the perfect knowledge of him; to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Here all their desire is, not only to know him, but to have more communion with him: they know the sweetness of communion with Christ, and God in Christ; and when they have it, they can say with the apostle, truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. They pant after him, as the hart pants after the water-brooks; saying, when shall we come and appear before God in Sion? His tabernacles are amiable and lovely; they long for his courts; their souls even faint for the living God, a day in his courts being better to them than a thousand elsewhere. Whenever they enjoy fellowship with Christ, it is so desirable to them, that they could wish it always continued: they say, with the disciples on the mount, it is good for us to be here; or to be absent from the body, that they may be present with the Lord. At certain seasons, their hearts are so drawn out after communion with him, that they desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.—Thus, He is all their salvation, and all their desire.

II. All this is maintained, notwithstanding the circumstances in which David was, when he said these words,
words, "All my salvation, and all my desire; although he make it not to grow." Although I am in such circumstances, am not in so flourishing a state as I could wish, yet this covenant is all my salvation: or, this Ruler over men (who is said to be as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain), is all my salvation, and all my desire.

This may be understood both literally, and figuratively. Literally, of the natural produce of the earth; and so the Psalmist may be considered in the like circumstances, and uttering the same expressions of faith as Habakkuk, when he says, Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation: I will rejoice in my covenant God, in what he is unto me, and hath provided for me. So says David here, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow:" though there might be a drought and a famine in the land, as lately had been.

Or this may be understood figuratively of a spiritual growth in grace; for there is such a thing as growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Faith sometimes grows exceedingly, love increases, hope abounds; and every grace is in lively exercise. At other times it is not so. Now, although he make it not to grow: although I am not in so flourishing a condition with respect to the exercise of my graces, yet he is all my salvation, and all my desire: or, this covenant of grace made with me, is all my salvation, and all my desire: things are all safe there, though I am uncomfortable, with respect to my frames. Salvation does not depend upon our
our frames, nor upon the lively exercise of grace in us; it depends upon the unalterable covenant.

Or this may have respect to David's family particularly, although he make it not to grow: although my family are not in growing, increasing, and flourishing circumstances; though one breach after another is made in it: first, Amnon cut off, then Absalom, and though so many uncomfortable things are there; yet this is all my salvation, and all my desire. Though the horn of David is not made to bud, as is promised; yet this is all my salvation.

Or, rather this may have respect to the Messiah, the righteous One that should spring forth. "Al-" though that branch does not spring forth as yet:" or thus, "Shall not this branch spring forth? Verily " it shall; for a rod shall grow out of Jesse." Now David knew, that though things were not so well as he could wish, yet this was his comfort, that there was an everlasting covenant made, in which his salvation was secured; though, as yet, the Messiah, the branch, had not sprung forth, which he believed would, and which the Lord promised by Jeremiah, chap. xxiii. verse 5th. So by one of the latter prophets, "Behold, I bring forth my servant the " Branch." Now this is all my salvation, and all my desire; although this branch, as yet, does not grow up out of its place, which he firmly believed, in virtue of this covenant, it would do.

But I shall now come to a close. Let us be led hereby, to adore and admire the wonderful and distinguishing grace of God; that he should make such a provision in an everlasting covenant for any of the sons of men, in Christ Jesus. God was under no obligation so to do: it all flows from his free and unmerited love, that here are such promises made in it, and such blessings of grace provided. And notwithstanding those disorders we may be un-
der at times, let not this weaken our faith in covenant interest; for, notwithstanding them, as David observes, covenant interest abides. Although my house, my family, heart, life, and every thing else, is not as I could wish; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant. Such who are interested in this covenant, need not fear wanting any good thing; it is ordered in all things. There is nothing that they need, but what is in this covenant; nor can they be in any condition of life whatever, but here is a promise made in this covenant, suited to their case and circumstances. I may say, they need not fear wanting any good thing; for here grace and glory are provided. Blessed are they that put their trust in him. And let us earnestly desire that we may be more and more led into the nature and fulness of this covenant: may the desire of our souls be more and more towards it: may we see our interest in the blessings and promises of it; and find them to be the support of our souls in all the circumstances of life, and in the views of death and eternity.
SERMON VIII.

The Character and End of the Wicked, considered.

2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7.

But the Sons of Belial, shall be, all of them, as thorns thrust away; because they cannot be taken with hands; but the man that shall touch them, must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place.

THIS is the closing part of the last words of David; and it is the reverse of what has been said before, as the adversative particle but shews, with which the words are introduced: "but the sons of Belial." These are opposed to the Ruler over men; the Messiah, who is just, ruling in the fear of God. He is said to be as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain; but these are as thorns: or, they are opposed to David, who expresses his faith in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; in which they have no interest; so far from it, that they are thrust away as thorns. He declares, that this coven-
nant was all his salvation, and all his desire; but as for these sons of Belial, they shall be utterly consumed, burned up with fire in the same place.

The words are applicable to bad rulers and governors in general; as distinguished from, and opposed unto, him that ruleth in the fear of God. They are represented as such who are not righteous in the administration of government; who have not the fear of God before their eyes, and upon their hearts. The sons of Belial, instead of being helpful, are hurtful to those over whom they rule; not like the just Ruler, said to be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth; a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain. But wicked Rulers are not like him; instead of making those they govern cheerful and comfortable, as he does, they give them pain and sorrow; are like thorns thrust into the hand. This agrees entirely with an observation the wise man makes, that when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; they are cheerful as the morning; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn; they are grievances, they are distressed, they are made uneasy by the sons of Belial, who are as thorns; and therefore, if possible, they are to be removed, they are to be thrust away. But in as much as they are not tractable, gentle, or easily managed, some violent measures must be used, as here suggested, the man that shall touch them, must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear. And though it is difficult for men to remove such sort of persons from the rule and government they are in; yet sometimes God does it for them in a remarkable way. Thus Nebuchadnezzar was driven from among men, and sent to the beasts

* Prov. xxix. ii.
of the field. And sometimes they are thrust away; both root and branch, as Saul and his family were; to which some apply this passage.

The words are applicable also to the wicked Jews in particular, and their rulers, who opposed themselves unto the Messiah; the person that is clearly described, and so much spoken of in the context, whom they received not, when he came to them; but rejected him as a King, threw off his yoke, and would not have this man to reign over them. Though many messages and kind invitations were sent, they rejected him; would not attend the gospel of peace, the external ministration of the word and ordinances: and not only so, but abused the messengers that came with these kind invitations; which exasperated the King who sent them; who, according to the parable, sent his army, the Roman army, and burnt up the city of Jerusalem; and they were burnt up in the same place. The greatest part of the Jewish nation were gathered together at Jerusalem, and were destroyed in it, at the last destruction by the Romans.

Again. The words are applicable to Antichrist; that man of sin, that lawless one; who may well be called Belial, the son of perdition, and who has many children: signified sometimes by Jezebel. Jezebel is said to have children which God will destroy*. These are the worshippers of the beast, and have his mark in their forehead; who shall be cast into everlasting burnings, and the smoke of their torment shall ascend for ever and ever: even those very kings, who formerly gave their kingdoms to the antichristian whore, will be filled with hatred to her, and burn her flesh with fire. Rome, or Babylon, the metropolis of the antichristian kingdom,

* Rev. ii. 23.
The Character and End

shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God, who judgeth her *; so that all the images in this text are suitable enough to this catastrophe.

But the words may be understood very well of wicked men in common; who may be all of them, especially the most vile and abandoned, called sons of Belial; as they often are in Scripture: those who were so vile as to go about to seduce the inhabitants of any city in Israel to idolatry, are called children of Belial *. The sons of Eli are said to be sons of Belial, being very wicked persons, given up to lewdness, and abandoned to all manner of wickedness. So Nabal, a vile, churlish and ill-natured man, is, by his servants, called a son of Belial. Our master, say they, is such a son of Belial, there is no living with him: nay, Abigail his wife, gave him the same name. Those who stood up as witnesses against Naboth, are called men of Belial, who made no conscience of any thing; having no fear of God before their eyes. So many others of like complexion are thus called in Scripture.

In this light we may understand the passage before us: "But the sons of Belial," wicked men, who are enemies to Christ, the King before spoken of, "shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands; but the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." In which words we may observe,

I. The descriptive character of wicked men, by their name, Sons of Belial; and by a comparison made of them, as thorns.

* Rev. xvi. 8.  
† Deut. xiii. 13.

II. The
II. The issue, end, punishment, and utter destruction of these; thrust away, and burned with fire in the same place. This will be the end of the sons of Belial.

I. We shall consider the descriptive character given of wicked men, sons of Belial. Belial is thought to be a name of satan. This is generally supposed to be the sense of that passage, 2 Cor. vi. 15. What concord hath Christ with Belial? that is, with satan: and the etymology of the word, as differently given, well agrees with him; whether it signifies one without a yoke, or one that is unprofitable, or one that is in a low estate and never rises higher; all agree with satan and his angels.

Belial, one without a yoke. Satan and his principalities and powers, cast off the yoke of God; would not be subject unto him, and to his laws; threw off their allegiance to him, and apostatized from him; left their first state and habitation, set up a kingdom for themselves, and set a prince over them, who in Scripture is called, Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils*. These, by their apostacy, became unprofitable to God, and hurtful to men; as in many instances appears: and they, by their sin, were brought into so low a state and condition, as never to rise from thence: they have been cast out of heaven down to hell, there they are, and will never regain their former state, or rise up to that honour and dignity they before possessed; as there is no place, we are told, found for them in heaven†.

Belial, (as the original word signifies that which is very wicked, abominable, and abandoned) is a name which well suits this grand apostate, who is emphatically in Scripture called, the wicked one‡. Now

* Mat, xii, 24. † Rev. xii, 8. ‡ 1 John v, 18.
this Belial has sons or children, seed or offspring: It was threatened immediately upon the fall of our first parents, in which he had the chief hand, that God would put enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; the old serpent the devil, this Belial: and we read of the children of the devil. In this the children of God are manifest, says the apostle, and the children of the devil, by such and such things there observed*. They are evidently distinguished one from the other, and may be known from their different actions and course of living. Children of the Devil. Particularly this title is given to the worst and vilest of men, such who are notorious for any crime or crimes; so the apostle Paul gave it unto Elymas, who endeavoured to pervert the Roman pro-con sul from the right ways of God; thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness†. And as children are of the same nature, and often appear to be of the same disposition and temper as their parents, and alike in their practices; this appears in those who are called the sons of Belial, or children of the devil: they are of their father the devil, and they appear to be so, because the lusts of their father they will do. Is he a liar, and the father of lies? they are children that will lie; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies‡. Is he a murderer from the beginning? malicious, revengeful, bloodthirsty? this is their character, living in malice, hateful, and hating one another§. Cain is is said to be that wicked one, a child of Belial, as appears by the slaying his own brother.

But, as I have hinted, this word Belial admits of various significations, according to the different etymology given of it by learned men, and all agree

* 1 John iii. 10. † Acts xiii. 10. ‡ Psalm lvi. 3. § Titus iii. 3.
of the Wicked, considered.

with wicked men: as when it is thought to signify one without a yoke, or one that is unprofitable, or one in a low estate, and rises not from that estate; all well agree with wicked men, the sons, or children, of Belial. They are without a yoke. In whatever sense we may take this word, or find it used in Scripture, (as sometimes it signifies the chastening hand of God, which he lays upon his own people, and which it becomes them to bear quietly and patiently), it is good for a man, Jeremiah says, that he should bear the yoke in his youth*; that is, the correcting, chastening hand of God. He should be innured to it, by which he may learn many things to his profit and advantage. This yoke sometimes presses hard, and is grievous to the flesh; for no affliction is joyous, but grievous; especially to a carnal man, and even to the people of God, when they are first exercised therewith. Thus Ephraim complains, that he was like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; impatient, and unwilling to bear it, desirous of shaking it off, and being delivered from it. Now wicked men, even in this sense, may be said to be sons of Belial, without a yoke; for the rod of God is not upon them†. The chastening, correcting rod of God is not upon them; that rod which is upon the back of the righteous, which a wise man hears, and who hath appointed it, and receives instruction from it, that rod is not upon the wicked; they are without this rod, without this yoke. They are not in trouble, as other men‡; not chastened as other men are, even good men. These are the wicked that prosper in their wickedness, as Asaph and Jeremiah observe, Psalm lxxiii. Jerem. xii. 1. God does not deal with these sons of Belial, as with his own children; he lays his rod, his yoke upon them; he scourges every son whom he receives. If ye be with-

* Lam. iii. 27. † Job xxii. 9. ‡ Psalm lxxxiii. 5.
out chastisement, (says the apostle) whereof all are partakers, (that is, all the children of God), then are ye bastards, and not sons*; then ye appear to be sons of Belial, and not children of the living God: for the sons of Belial are without this yoke, without the fatherly chastisements, and corrections of God.

Or rather, we may consider the yoke in a figuraiive sense, as signifying rule and dominion, whether human or divine. Sometimes it signifies the rule and government of masters over servants. Let as many servants as are under the yoke, under the rule and government of their masters, count their own masters worthy of all honour†. Sometimes it signifies rule of an higher kind, even regal power and government; so the people of Israel requested of Rehoboam, when he came to the throne, that he would make their yoke lighter, or his government easier, than was the yoke or government of his father. Now this yoke, or government, taken in a civil sense, is to be submitted to; and all good men will be subject to principalities and powers. They will submit themselves to every ordinance of man, that is not contrary to the law of God and their own consciences: but sons of Belial, children without a yoke, are such as despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities‡; and such as do so, are in Scripture expressly called the children of Belial. When Saul was chosen king, we are informed the children of Belial said, How can this man save us§? and they despised him, and gave him no presents, which was usual at the accession of a king to the throne, by way of acknowledging him as their king, and of their submission to him; but the sons of Belial would not do that.

Divine rule or government, may be signified by the yoke; but wicked men, sons of Belial, are without

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* Heb. xii. 8. † 1 Tim. vi. 1. ‡ Jude 8. § 1 Sam. x. 27.
The ceremonial law is sometimes called a yoke, which neither the Jews nor their forefathers were able to bear, as it consisted of various commands, the breach of which rendered persons liable to death; and hence many were, through fear of death, all their life-time subject to bondage; therefore, it is no wonder it was to men, especially to wicked men, a weariness; as it is said to be, what a weariness is it? And not only that, but the moral law may be called a yoke; it is binding upon all mankind. Our first parents had this law written upon their hearts, which was the rule of their obedience to God. They broke it, they cast away this yoke, and apostatized from God; yet, nevertheless, there are some remains of it to be found, even in the Gentiles themselves; who appear to have the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another. This law is of such a nature, that every man is obliged by it; for the sum and substance of this law is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul; and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

A good man, a man that has the grace of God implanted in him, is very desirous to be under this yoke; for though those who believe in Christ are delivered from the law, in which they were held, as it is a covenant of works (for they are not under the law, but under grace, and are delivered also from the curse and bondage of it); yet they are under it as a rule of walk and conversation, in the hands of Christ, delight in the law of God after the inner man, and serve it with all their hearts; though with the flesh they serve the law of sin. But

* Mal. i. 13.
as for wicked, carnal, and unregenerate men, chil-
dren of Belial, they are without this yoke; they
cast it off, and do not chuse to have any thing to
do with it. As for the wicked, says the Psalmist,
*they are far from thy law*: far from it, indeed! they
do not care to come nigh, or be under it; they
despise it, and cast it away from them. Instead of its
being before them, to read it, and meditate on it;
instead of having it before them as the rule of their
lives and actions, they cast it behind their backs,
determined to have nothing to do with it. God has
wrote unto them the great things of his law, but
they are reckoned by them as strange things. Such
is the enmity of the carnal mind against God and
his law, that it is not subject unto it, neither indeed
can be; there is such a contrariety between the law of
God and a wicked man. The law is holy, just, and good;
but he is carnal, and sold under sin, in the worst sense of
this expression: it is, I say, quite contrary to him, and
therefore the natural man disapproves of it, despises
it, casts it away from him; and every thing he does,
thwarts and contradicts this law. The thoughts and
the imagination of the thoughts of his heart, are
everil, and that continually, which this law con-
demns. His words and actions, as they are against
the will, so they are against the law of God; every
sin whatever, in thought, word, and deed, is a trans-
gression of this law: no carnal man is subject unto
it; however he may be externally, yet not internally,
from the heart. He cannot be so, unless his heart is
changed; unless the flinty heart is taken away, and
an heart of flesh is given: unless a new and right
spirit is renewed within him, and the Spirit of
God enable him to walk in the statutes and judged-
ments of the Lord, to do them. A man must have
this law written in his heart, by the Spirit of God,
or he will never be willing to obey it: he must
be made willing in the day of the Lord's power, or
he
he will never be contented to bear the yoke of the law, but will be a son of Belial, one that is without a yoke.

If this be the case of a wicked man, as it certainly is, that he is without the yoke of God's righteous law; then we may be sure he must be without the yoke of Christ, and cannot bear that, though our Lord says, *Take my yoke upon you, and I will give you rest for your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*. Now let this be understood either of the gospel, or the ordinances of Christ, or indeed of both, a son of Belial is without the yoke; he cannot bear the doctrines of it. The gospel, when it comes in power, and not in word only, into the heart of a poor sinner, brings light and life along with it: such an one receives the truth in the love of it, and receives the love of the truth; rejoices at it, is greatly delighted with it, yields a professed submission to it; and, from the heart, obeys that form of doctrine delivered to him; for which the apostle expresses so much thankfulness with respect to the Romans †. But to a wicked man, a son of Belial, this is a galling yoke; he cannot bear it. Of this, and the other truth, he says, "This is an hard saying, who can "bear it?" as the doctrines of distinguishing grace, the doctrine of election, and others; particularly the doctrine of a sinner's justification before God, without the works of the law, by the imputed righteousness of Christ, is such a yoke he cannot put his neck under; he cannot take it upon him. Self-righteous persons cannot. It is said of the Jews, they went about to establish their own righteousness, and submitted not to the righteousness of the Son of God; they could not bend their necks to this doctrine, this yoke, as it may be called, even a sinner's

* Mat. xi. 30. † Rom. vi. 17.
justification before God, by Christ's imputed righteousness. The doctrines of the gospel strike not only at those principles that men value, but at such practices as they are fond of, and therefore they cannot bear this yoke: "For the gospel of the grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, teaches, that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, men should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world:" but these sons of Belial do not approve of it.

A wicked man cannot bear the ordinances of Christ, though they are not grievous. None of his commands are fo to a good man, one who has received the grace of God; no, he readily yields obedience to them; he makes haste (as the Psalmist says he did), to keep his commandments; he readily obeys them from the heart; willingly, cheerfully, from love, and in faith, and without trusting to, or depending upon, a submission to these ordinances in the business of his justification before God, and acceptance with him. But wicked men cannot bear this yoke of Christ's ordinances; their language is, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. They reject the counsel of God against themselves, as the scribes and Pharisees did, who defiled the baptism of John. Thus we see, that this character Belial, as it signifies one without a yoke, agrees with wicked men in common; they are without the yoke of the chastening hand of God; without the yoke of the moral law; and without the yoke of the gospel, and the ordinances of Jesus Christ. Neither the one nor the other do they care to submit their necks unto. Again,

This word Belial, according to others, signifies one that is unprofitable. And this is the account the apostle gives of all men in general, Jews and Gen-
tiles, that they are together become unprofitable*. A wicked man, a son of Belial, is unprofitable to God, unprofitable to men, unprofitable to himself; and indeed every man is unprofitable unto God; for, can a man be profitable unto God? says Eliphaz, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself†? no, he cannot. Even a wise and good man, with all his goodness, cannot be profitable unto God; for his goodness does not extend to him. David says, My goodness extendeth not to thee‡, can be of no avail unto thee; for if a man's way is righteous, what gain is it to the Lord? what does he receive at his hands? Nothing at all that can be really beneficial to him, so as to lay him under any obligation; for who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again§? When a man has done all he can in a way of righteousness, he has done but what was his duty, and must sit down and call himself an unprofitable servant with respect to God. Now if good men cannot be profitable to God, certainly wicked men cannot. Good men may be profitable in glorifying God, and causing others to glorify him; or promote the interest of religion by their purses, or the gifts bestowed upon them, but still no man can be profitable unto God, to yield him such benefit as can add to his essential glory and happiness; for if any addition could be made to his happiness, he would not be a perfect being as he is. Now, if good men, with all their goodness, cannot be profitable unto God, surely wicked men cannot: they are sons of Belial, they are abominable in themselves, and to every good work reprobate: nor are they profitable unto men. One good man may be profitable to another, even to wicked men: "the righteousness of

* Rom. iii. 12. † Job xxii. 2. ‡ Psalm xvi. 2. § Rom. xi. 35.
"a man may profit the son of man," as Elihu owns†; and that is the reason the apostle gives, why those who believe in Christ should be careful to maintain good works, because these things are good and profitable to men‡. Though they are not profitable to God, they are profitable to men; they set good examples to them: besides, there are many things in them that are really beneficial unto men. Saints are the salt of the earth; and if there were no such persons, the earth would lose its savour, and be in a sad condition. Many temporal advantages wicked men enjoy, by means of good men; and saints, in various ways, are capable of serving one another in love: but a wicked man, a son of Belial, is good for nothing; he is unprofitable to the generation in which he lives. Evil communications corrupt good manners: or men of evil communications, that are bad in their lives and conversations, are hurtful among those with whom they live, and with whom they converse.

They are also unprofitable unto themselves. One that is wise and good, may be profitable to himself, as Eliphaz suggests in that afore-mentioned text, Job xxii. 2. A truly wise man, that is so in a spiritual sense, may be profitable to himself; for godliness hath gain annexed to it: it has the promise of this life, and of that which is to come. A wise and good man, building his house upon a rock, it is to his advantage; the house stands against blustering storms and rains. A man that hath an interest in Christ, as is the case with every wise and good man, has gain thereby; gain that is greater than that of gold and silver. The wise virgins, having oil in their lamps, it is profitable to them; for, when the bridegroom comes, they will not be at a loss for a

* Job xxxv. 8. † Titus iii. 8.
lamp or oil, but be invited to come into the bride-chamber with him. But wicked men, the sons of Belial, are not profitable to themselves; for what fruit (says the apostle) had ye in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? none at all, but quite the reverse. Though a son of Belial, a wicked man, may be able, by various means, licit or illicit, to obtain a large share of the things of this life, what will it be unto him? what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? He is a son of Belial, unprofitable.

There is another sense of the term Belial, at which I have hinted, and that is, it may signify one that is very low, and never will rise up from that state to a higher one. Man, by the fall, was brought into a low estate, a very low estate, indeed; which may be hinted at in the cxxxvith Psalm, Who remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth forever. Man was upon the pinnacle of honour, but is become like the beasts that perish. He is fallen from that pinnacle into the pit wherein is no water, into an horrible pit of mire and clay. Some are raised out of it, to an high estate: the children of God are. The Lord lifteth up them that are cast down; he raiseth up them that fall: he raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory. These were raised up in Christ, when he was raised from the dead: are raised up in effectual vocation, when their feet are set upon a rock; and their goings established; and will be raised to glory and happiness, and sit on the same throne with Christ. But these are the children of God: as for the sons of Belial, they will never rise; they are left in that low estate into which sin has

* Rom. vi. 21,
brought them. One is taken, and the other left *. These are the ninety-nine left in the wilderness: they are left in this low estate, and here they will live and die; and in hell they will left up their eyes, and behold Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. Saints in heaven are in a raised condition; but the sons of Belial will never rise thither. No, there is a gulph fixed, the immutable decree of God, which they cannot pass; so that they will never rise from their wretched state, to that high estate of glory the saints are in: they are sons of Belial, without a yoke; low, and will never rise to that high estate of honour and dignity.

These, in our text, are compared to thorns. The sons of Belial shall be as thorns: to which wicked men are often compared in Scripture. Though (says the Lord to Ezekiel), briars and thorns be with thee, be not afraid of them †: though thou be among wicked men, comparable to briars and thorns. So the church of Christ is said to be as a lily among thorns‡. Thorns bear no fruit. Can men gather grapes of thorns? they cannot expect it. Wicked men are called the unfruitful works of darkness §: they bear no fruit, have not the fruits of the Spirit of God, neither his grace in them, nor his righteousness upon them. Like thorns they are hurtful, pricking, and grieving to the saints and people of God. They are so, by their lives and conversations: so Lot's righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; so the lives of Isaac and Rebecca were made grievous and uneasy by the daughters of Heth, by their manners and behaviours; so David was in very distressing circumstances when he dwelt in Meshech, and sojourned in the tents of Kedar;

* Mat. xxiv. 40. † Ezek. ii. 6. ‡ Sol. So. ii. 2. § Eph. v. 11.
and so the prophet Isaiah, by being among a people of unclean lips, of which he complains, Isa. vi. v.

Wicked men are like thorns to the people of God, by their evil words, their ill speeches to them: this is what is suggested in the passage referred to in Ezekiel; “Be not afraid of their words, though ‘briars and thorns be with thee;’” though the men thou art with are like thorns, pricking, grieving, and distressing as briars and thorns; yet be not afraid of them; or of their words. The words of wicked men are sometimes very sharp and cutting to the people of God; especially when they reproach them on the account of their religion and their God, as David says, *As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;* while they say unto me daily, where is thy God? So by their persecutions, in one shape and another, they are like thorns, pricking and piercing the saints: and even there are many sons of Belial, who are professors of religion, that are like thorns too; compared to the thorny ground, among whom the seed of the word is cast, and which becomes unprofitable, through the cares of the world over-topping the seed sown. Such are all those who will be rich; and who are over-reaching in their business and occupation of life; of whom it is said, *the best of them is a briar; the most upright of them is sharper than a thorn hedge.* All slothful professors of religion, who are slothful in business, not fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, are like the field of the sluggard, covered with nettles and thorns. So all such, whose lives and conversations are not as becomes the gospel of Christ, these are as pricking thorns, very grieving to the true professors of religion, the children of God; of whom (the apostle says) *I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping,*

* Psalm xlii. 10.  
† Micah vii. 4.
ing, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*. In a word, all those who, by evil principles and bad notions of religion, apostatize from the truth of the gospel, are by the apostle compared to the earth which bringeth forth thorns and briers, who are nigh unto cursing and their end to be burned †. This brings me to consider,

II. The issue, end, punishment and utter destruction of these sons of Belial. They are said to be thrust away, and at last to be utterly burnt with fire in the same place. They shall be all of them as thorns thrust away. But now thorns, in order to be thrust away, must be rooted up, or cut down, or they cannot be thrust away; they must be rooted up, as wicked men will be. The wicked, says the wise man, shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it ‡; so David declares, the Lord shall destroy them, and root them up out of the land of the living, as thorns may be rooted up. And these must be cut down as cumberers of the ground; for if a barren fig-tree cumbersthe ground, then much more briers and thorns. These are cut down, sooner or later, and they are thrust away with contempt and indignation. Nigh unto cursing: who will be, and are, cursed by the righteous law of God; for cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Thrust away out of time into eternity, suddenly, hastily, in a moment, and in wrath. A tempest shall bear them away; the storm and tempest of divine wrath; for it is God that thrusts them away. He drives the wicked man into darkness, and chases him out of this world. A son of Belial is driven away in his wickedness; while the righteous hath hope in his death. And he will be thrust away in the great day, from the presence

* Philip. iii. 18. † Hebr. vi. 8. ‡ Prov. iii. 22.
of the Lord, as Adam, when he apostatized, was driven out of Eden's garden; and as Cain, when he had been guilty of that shocking sin of murder, was driven from the presence of God; so wicked men will be driven from his presence. They will hear him say, depart from me, ye cursed, I know you not. Then they will be burned with fire in the same place: with the fire of God's wrath; for his fiery indignation shall devour the adversaries.

Wicked men, whenever their consciences are awakened, are apprehensive there is nothing but a fearful looking-for of judgment, and of fiery indignation: now this will break forth at the last day, and consume them. This indignation is sometimes compared to a furnace of fire, and sometimes to a lake of fire; into each of which, thorns and briers are sometimes cast. Thus, as the tares are bound up in bundles and cast into the fire, so the wicked, the sons of Belial, will be gathered by the angels, and cast into a furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth*. This is also expressed by a lake of fire; a lake which burns with fire and brimstone, into which the sons of Belial will be cast, and where they will be burnt. This is called in Scripture, everlasting fire. Everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; that will be always burning, and never shall be quenched. And it will be intolerable, so that language imports, Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? This will be the end, this will be the punishment of those who are the sons of Belial.

You see now from hence, of what account wicked men are with God. They are no other than sons of Belial, children without a yoke, unprofitable, low

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* Matt. xiii. 42.
creatures, and will never rise from that state; and like thorns, are only fit to be burnt. You see what will be the end, the issue of these persons; everlasting destruction. They will be burnt with the fire of God's wrath, which will endure for ever; the smoke of their torments will ascend up for ever and ever. There is no escaping this, but in, and through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by applying to him for life and salvation. If any of you are seeking to flee from the wrath to come, which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men; and should be asking, Whither shall we flee? Not to rocks or mountains, whether in a literal or figurative sense. Not in a literal sense; they will do no service. Nor in a figurative sense, your own works of righteousness; these will not screen you. There is no other way of escaping the wrath to come, due to the sons of Belial, but by fleeing for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the everlasting gospel; by fleeing to Christ, turning to him, the strong hold, as prisoners of hope; and, being justified by his blood, you shall be saved from wrath; through him. It is he, and he only, who delivers from wrath to come.
Jehovah's Prerogative, and his alone, to put away the Sins of his People.

2 Sam. xii. 13.

—And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy Sin; thou shalt not die.

In the preceding chapter we have an account of the sin of David, which is here recited. I need not name it, it is too well known; and from which we may learn, what men, the best of men are, when left to themselves: the Lord's people, not only before conversion, but even after they are called by grace, and have tasted that the Lord is gracious. What awful instances are Noah, Lot, Peter, and others. O how sinful is the heart of man, how deep the iniquity in it! What wickedness is there! If even a good man is left to himself, what will he not do?

Now, such examples as these are recorded, not for our imitation, but for our caution; and from hence we learn this useful lesson, Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall*. And, moreover, these things

* 1 Cor. x. 12.
things stand upon record for the comfort and relief of such who have backslidden, fallen into great sins, and are brought to true repentance for them, such need not despair of the grace and mercy of God; for the sin of David, notorious as it was, and though attended with such dreadful aggravations, yet, according to the message brought him in our text, God put it away, that he should not die.

David, for a considerable time, as it appears, was under great stupidity of mind; quite insensible of the evil he had committed; did not appear to have any remorse of conscience, or at least, not to be humbled before God for his sin, and make an acknowledgment of it, or discover any true repentance for it, not for a year, or thereabouts, as is plain from the history; but God will not suffer sin to lay upon any of his people, and especially not upon such an eminent servant as David was, unrebuked, without taking notice of it. The Lord will rebuke man for his iniquity some way or other; either by impressing a sense of guilt upon his conscience, by some awakening providence, or by the ministry of the word, or by sending his servants to reprove for it, and convince of it; which was the case here. He sent Nathan the prophet: one whom David was familiar with, and who had been brought up in his court; a very proper person to be a messenger to him; a man that knew how to speak to a king, and address him in a decent and becoming manner; as appears from the context. He does not take upon him to speak in an abrupt, or use him in a rough way; but by a fable, an apologue or parable, leads him into the nature of his sin, and fulfills the message that God had sent him with. He delivers out a parable unto him, concerning two men in one city; a rich man and a poor man. The rich man had many flocks and herds; the poor man had
had but one ewe lamb. A traveller came to the rich man's house, and he thought fit to entertain him; but instead of taking a lamb or kid out of his own flock, he takes the poor man's lamb, and dresses that for his guest. So Nathan represents the case to David; who was so enraged, that this man should behave in such a manner, that he at once pronounces him worthy of death; As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing, shall surely die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold: upon which Nathan says to him boldly, Thou art the man, Thou art the man that hast done this, or what is equivalent unto it: and then sets forth his sin in its proper colours; threatens, in the name of God, what should be done to him; that the sword should not depart from his house, because he had shed innocent blood; that one of his own family, a son, should rise up and ravish his wives and his concubines. David was then smote to the heart, and cried out, as in the former part of the verse, I have sinned against the Lord. "I own my sin, acknowledge it, and repent of it. I am sorry for it." It is but a short confession that he here makes, but it was a full one; attended with brokenness of heart, contrition of soul, real contrition and sincere repentance; as is plain from the fifty-first Psalm, that penitential Psalm, which was penned on this occasion. Nathan, who was thoroughly satisfied with the genuiness of David's repentance, being under the impulse of the Divine Spirit, and directed by the Lord, then said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die. He hath put away thy sin: he will not impute it to thee, or place it to thy account: he will not charge thee with it, or punish thee with death, though thou deservest to die. Thou shalt not die, either a bodily, spiritual, or eternal death. It is as much as if he had said to him, Thy sin is forgiven thee. He had authority
from God to say this to him for his comfort, under the conviction and distress of mind which he now was fallen into. So sometimes God makes use of a gospel minister for the declaring of pardoning grace and mercy to his people. We have an instance of this in the sixth chapter of Isaiah; when the prophet, sensible of his iniquity, confessed it with a great deal of concern and trouble; and, perhaps, in some sort of despondency, said, Woe is me, for I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*. Now to relieve the prophet, under a sense of his impurity and the consequences of it, one of the Seraphim (who may be considered as an emblem of a gospel minister), flew to the altar, and took a live coal from thence (an emblem of the sacrifice which our Lord Jesus Christ has made for sin), and applied it unto the lips of the prophet, saying, Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Thus gospel ministers are made use of, in the hand of the blessed Spirit, for the relief of his people under a sense of sin, to direct them to the pardoning grace and mercy of God to sinners.

It is the will and pleasure of Jehovah, that when his dear children are distressed on account of sin, that they should be comforted; and the ministers of Christ are charged to do this. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, to her heart, and cry unto her that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins†. In this light, I apprehend, we are to understand the words of the text: from which I observe the following things.

I. That it is the work of God, and his only, to put away the sin of his people. The Lord also hath put away thy sin.

* Isa. vi. 5. † Isa. xl. 2.
II. That those whose sins are put away by the Lord, shall not die; either a spiritual or eternal death, *The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.*

I. It is the Lord's work, and his only, it is his act, and deed, to put away sin from his people. Of this, they themselves are sensible; and therefore, under a sense of sin, apply to him for the removal and putting of it away: hence Job says, *I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?—Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity*? plainly intimating, that no other could pardon and forgive, or take away his sin, but the Lord himself, against whom he had sinned: and hence David, when he was under a strong and full conviction of the sin he had been guilty of, here referred unto, in the fifty-first Psalm, that penitential Psalm penned on this occasion, intreats, that God would blot out his transgressions, and cleanse him from his sin; which is the same thing as in the text, putting away his sin from him. This is the Lord's act, and his only.

And sometimes we may observe, Jehovah puts this plea into the mouths of his people, and encourages them to ask it of him: thus he speaks to backsliding Israel, *Take with you words and turn to the Lord; say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously*. And the Lord does so: as he did to Joshua the High Priest, represented as clothed with filthy garments, to whom he said, *I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee; and I will clothe thee with change of raiment*.

That we may the better understand what is contained in this part of our text, which concerns the...

* Job. vii. 21. † Psalm li. 1, 2. ‡ Hosea xiv. 2. § Zac. iii. 4.
act of God in putting away the sin of his people, we shall consider,

1. What that is which is put away. Sin.

2. What is meant by putting it away. And then,

3. Shall shew that this is God's act and deed, and his only to put away sin. Nathan the prophet does not take it upon himself: he speaks of it clearly as the act of God, THE LORD hath put away thy sin.

1. What that is which the Lord puts away from his people, and that is iniquity. "The Lord hath put away thy sin." Sin, which is that abominable thing that he hateth; which he cannot bear the sight of. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity": so far is he from taking any delight and pleasure in sin; and therefore to put it away, must be most agreeable to himself. It is loathsome and abominable in the sight of his people; they loath it, and they loath themselves for it: it is what is hateful to them; the things which they do, they hate, as the apostle did. Wherefore, to put away this from them, which is so abominable to God, so loathsome and hateful to themselves, must be a desirable thing; quite agreeable to them.

The Lord has put away thy sin: sin, which sets men at a distance from God. Man was in fellowship with his Maker, and continued so till sin entered; then he was driven out of Eden's garden, that pleasant spot, and a state of separation from God took place. In this state are all men, by nature; and they must have eternally continued so, they must have been everlastingly separated, and heard that dreadful sentence, Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, had not sovereign grace interposed.

* Hab. i. 13. † Rom. vii. 15. ‡ Mat. xxv. 41.
Men, even all men, through sin, are in a state of estrangement, alienation and distance from God: even God’s elect themselves, as in a state of nature, are so; but they are reconciled, made nigh by the blood of Christ, and brought into open and near communion with God, through the power of divine grace upon them. And yet, even those who are brought into such nearness, and have communion with him, may, through sin, be set at a sort of distance from him; though not separated from him with respect to union and interest; yet with regard to sensible communion and fellowship they may. Your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*. Now to have that put away, that whisperer, which separates chief friends, must be a desirable thing by the saints themselves.

* Isa. lix. 2.
† 2 Cor. v. 4.
Sin is the cause of all soul sorrow and distress to God's people, as it was to David. It was the occasion of the breaking of his bones, and by reason of this he had no rest; no soundness in his flesh, because of his sin*. His loins were filled with a loathsome disease, and he was in great distress of soul on that account; which makes even the most holy man upon earth to say, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Now to have sin, the cause of all soul sorrow and distress, put away, is a desirable thing.

"The Lord hath put away thy Sin." The sin which he had been guilty of, and which was only chargeable upon himself, was not to be attributed to God, who had suffered it, or to Satan, who had tempted him to it; for it was his own sin; for "every man is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed." He had no one to charge with it but himself. Thy sin, which thou hast owned and acknowledged to be thine, confessed it with sorrow, humiliation, repentance, and contrition; thy sin, who hath said, my sin is ever before me‡; thy sin the Lord has put away. And all this may, in the first sense, respect the sin he had been guilty of with respect to Uriah; yet it is not to be restrained hereunto, but takes in all other sins. David had an application of pardoning grace and mercy, with respect to all his sins, and therefore he calls upon his soul, and all that is within him, to bless the Lord, who had forgiven him all his iniquities§: and indeed, where one sin is forgiven, all are forgiven. God forgives all manner of iniquity for Christ's sake; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses from all sin||. But,

2. What are we to understand by putting away sin? "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die."

* Psalm xxxviii. iii. † Rom. viii. 24. ‡ Psalm ii. 3. § Psalm ciii. 1, 2, 3. || 1 John i. 7.
This is not to be understood of removing sin as to the being of it. God does not put away the sin of his people in this sense, in the present state of things. He could do it if he would; that is not to be doubted. He could have dispossessed the Canaanites from the land of Canaan at once; but he chose not to do it: he drove them out by little and little. And he could, at first conversion, clear his people of all those corruptions of nature which are in them; for this he does at death, when this earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolved; this house that is infected with leprosy when the timber and stones are removed and carried into the grave; all sin is removed, and there is nothing left but the spirits of just men made perfect. I say, he that can do it at death, could do it at first; but that is not his pleasure. No. As he left the Canaanites in the land for wise reasons, so he does the corruptions in the hearts of his people; for if there were no corruptions in them, there would be no trial of their faith. Well then, God does not put away sin, the being of sin from his people: it dwells in them, it did in an apostle; sin dwelleth in me. A most awful soul-deception some are under, who imagine they are free from sin. What will they say to that text which must stare them in the face: if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. God puts away the sins of his people; but not as to the being of it; no, that continues. There is such a thing as the weakening of the power of sin in them; or, there is a putting off the old man, though there is not a putting him away. A putting him off, according to the former conversation, and a putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness; but then

* Rom. vii. 17. † 1 John. i. 8. ‡ Eph iv 24.
this is their own act, under the influence of the Spirit of grace. They are exhorted to put off the old man, and to mortify the deeds of the body; and, to encourage them, it is said, If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*. But what I am speaking of, and what our text speaks of, is, what is God's work entirely. The Lord hath put away thy sin. The promise is, sin shall not have dominion over you†; and it is made good: but sometimes sin overcomes them; and it had been so with poor David. It could not then be said, that the Lord had put away his sin, as to the being of it; for perhaps his lust never was stronger than at that time. He found what the apostle said, to be his own experience (though the apostle never sinned as this good man did). I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members‡. Poor David, with a witness, was brought into captivity to the law of sin and death, through the prevalence of in-dwelling corruption. It could not be said of him then, "the Lord hath," as a past act, "put away thy sin;" i.e. as to the being of it, as it never was stronger in him than it had now been. Nor is this to be understood of the taking away a sense of sin from him. He had been in a strange stupor of mind for many months; insensible of the evil he had been guilty of; but now, awakened with the message of the prophet, attended with the power and Spirit of God, he had such a lively sense of sin as perhaps he never had before. O what a heart-felt sense of it must he have had when he said, I have sinned! Now his sin stared him in the face, and his conscience was stung with it: he had a strong sensation of it indeed. Now he "found no rest in his


"bones
"bones because of his sin." The hand of the Lord pressed his conscience sore in impressing his sin on his mind, which impression was a lasting one.

But this must be understood of a discovery of pardoning grace and mercy to him. The Lord sometimes comes and says to a poor sinner, labouring under a sense of sin, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins*. Or, as our Lord Jesus Christ himself said to the man sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee†; to backsliders Jehovah is pleased to say, I will heal your backslidings‡. And sometimes he sends such a message as this by a servant of his, as he did to David by Nathan; the Lord hath put away thy sin; that is, he will never charge it upon thee, nor punish thee for it.

Various are the ways the Lord takes to put away the sins of his people: I will just run them over. The first of these is, his determination, and resolution not to impute sin unto them. This was a resolution and determination taken up in his divine mind from everlasting. God was in Christ reconciling the world (of his chosen people) unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them§. It was his determined will, not to impute their trespasses unto them; that is, not to charge them upon them, or place them to their account. And if God will not, who dare lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? O happy man, whom the Lord will not charge with sin! "Blessed is the man whose transgression is for-given, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man "unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity||." This is Jehovah's first step; the resolution of his mind from eternity was, not to reckon sin to his people, or charge them with it.

* Isa. xliii.25. † Mat iii. 2. ‡ Hosea iv. 4. § 2 Cor. v. 19. || Psa. xxxii. 2.
Then he has promised, in the everlasting covenant of grace, that he will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities, he will remember no more*. And this promise of grace is made known in all ages for the comfort of his people; for, to him (that is, to Christ) give all the prophets (all from the beginning of the world) witness, that through his name, whoever believes in him, shall receive remission of sins†. And he has proclaimed his name, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin‡. Moreover, he set forth his own Son to be a propitiation for sin, or foreordained him (as the word signifies) to be a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of his people: and in consequence of this purpose, he sent him, in time, to be this propitiation, that is to make reconciliation for their sins, and bring in an everlasting righteousness.

In order to this, he took off all the sins of his people from them, and put them upon Christ: transferred them all upon him; so, faith the Scripture, the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all§. And so made him sin for us, who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

This mystery and wonder of divine grace is emblematically held forth to us by the High Priest putting all the iniquities and all the transgressions of the children of Israel upon the head of the scape goat. It is said, And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send them away by the

* Heb. viii. 12. † Acts. x. 43. ‡ Ex. xxxiii. 6, 7. § Isa. liii. 6.

hand
hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited. *

Now just so, Jehovah put all the sins of his people upon his Son, who agreed to it, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself: as it is said, Once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself†. To put away sin, to abolish it, to make it null and void, as the word signifies, so that it shall have no power to condemn those for whom Christ suffered: hence there is said to be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus ‡. Yea, Christ, by the sacrifice of himself, has to put away sin, that it shall be no more. It is finished; the body of sin is crucified and destroyed §: and it is put at a distance, removed from them; the Lord removed the iniquity of that land in one day||. The iniquities of all his people in that one time, when Christ bore their sins in his own body on the tree, and made full satisfaction to divine justice for them, were removed as far as the East is from the West, to the utmost distance; signified by the scape goat bearing the sins of Israel into the wilderness, and a land uninhabited: removed so as not to be seen by the avenging eye of God's justice. Having regard to this work of Christ, God sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel †: when their sins are sought for, they shall not be found, because he has pardoned those whom he hath reserved **; which is the same thing as putting away sin. He has cast them behind his back, and into the depths of the sea, so as never to be remembered.

remembered any more; that is to say, never to be charged upon them. They are justified by Christ's righteousness and satisfaction, from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. All their iniquities are pardoned, they are justified, and so shall most certainly be glorified. These are the steps Jehovah has taken for the putting away the sins of his people. Now,

3. This is God's own act and deed. None can put away sin but himself. There is a sense indeed, in which it may, and is, put away by others; thus, sin may be put away by the civil magistrate's punishing a malefactor for his sin; so the judges of Israel were directed, by various laws, to put away the iniquity of Israel; as may be seen in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, where mention is made of a false prophet, who, upon conviction, was to be put to death; and it follows, so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee*. Put the evil man away, and so put away the guilt of his sin from the nation, on which it would have laid, had they not punished the man with death, as the law required.

So, with regard to idolatry, and other sins. When a person was convicted of idolatry, he was to be put to death†; and it follows, "so shalt thou put the evil away from among you‡." So the man that dealt presumptuously, and would not hearken nor submit to the sentence of the court of judicature; he was to be put to death, that so they might put away evil from Israel. Hence, you see, there is a sense in which sin may be put away by man; the civil magistrate.

So also sin may be put away by heads of families: by not conniving at it, but severely rebuking for it, and checking it. It was more than once suggested

* Deut. xiii. 5. † Deut. xvii. 5. ‡ Deut. xvii. 7.
by Job's friends, when they thought him a bad man, that he had connived at sin in his family; hence says Zophar, If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away; and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle.* What is meant by putting away sin is, not suffering wicked men to dwell in his house. So likewise Eliphaz, says, If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles †; thou shouldest not connive at sin, but put it away. In this sense, sin may be put away by man.

Also, as it respects the forgiveness of sin. One man may forgive another. Good men ought to do it: as they have received pardon themselves, they ought to forgive others, for Christ's sake; nor can any expect forgiveness at the hands of God, that will not forgive the iniquities of their fellow christians.

Ministers of the gospel, they are to remit sin; but this is to be understood only declaratively, publishing the full pardon of sin to the Lord's people: otherwise, it is not in their power to forgive sin; they can do no more than Nathan did. He does not say, "I have put away thy sin;" but the Lord, hath put away thy sin. The utmost the ministers of the gospel can do, is to declare, that whosoever believes in Christ, shall receive the remission of sins. To attempt more than this, is Antichristianism: this is what Antichrist assumes, and is a part of what is delivered by that mouth which speaketh blasphemies‡.

It is the Lord's act, and his only, to put away sin in that sense which has been considered. It is his prerogative, against whom it is committed, whose righteous law is broken; and who is that Law-giver, who is able both to save and to destroy. The word used in the Hebrew language for forgiveness of sin

* Job. xi. 14. † Job xxii. 23. ‡ Rev. xiii. 5.

signifies,
signifies, a lifting of it up. Now this is what God only can do. Sin is such a heavy thing, God only could lift it up, and put it upon his Son; and he only can lift it up from the conscience of a sinner labouring under a sense of it. A man himself cannot do it; and all the friends he has in the world cannot lift it up from the conscience, when it lies heavy there. It is God's work; all that man can do will not move it. Neither the blood of bulls nor of goats, under the legal dispensation, could take away sin. All humiliation, repentance, tears, duties, and the like, cannot take away sin; no, it is the Lord alone that must do it: souls, therefore, are directed to him for the putting it away. He does (as before observed) put words in their mouths, and bids them say, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously*

This is God's act, and it is a past act too; so Nathan speaks of it as such, "the Lord hath put away thy sin." He does not say the Lord will, but the Lord hath put away thy sin. Forgiveness of sin is a past act; it was made in eternity, as it respects a non-imputation of it; and, as it regards the removing and putting it upon Christ, this is God's act; and this is a past act of sovereign mercy, an act of special grace and abundant goodness. Yea, I may add, it is an act of justice, as it is founded on the blood, righteousness and sacrifice of Christ; If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness†. Now I am to observe,

II. That those whose iniquities the Lord puts away, shall not die. This may, in a sense, respect a corporal death, which David might be in some fear of; for the sin that he had committed required such a death. He had shed blood; and it is said, Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be

* Hosea xiv. 2. † 1 John i. 9. shed.
The sin of adultery, which he had been guilty of, demanded death; The man that commit
teth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. Now
though David, being in so high a station as he was, and so greatly esteemed of the people, might have
nothing to fear from a court of judicature, or of being called to account, or dealt with according to the
rigour of the law of God, yet he might be in fear that God would, by his own hands, strike him dead,
as he did Nadab and Abihu, Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, or Annanias in the New Testament; for
though the magistrate might not do it, he knew God could do it, and he might think he would do it;
therefore, says Nathan, "The Lord hath put away " thy sin, thou shalt not die," a corporal death.—I
do not see there is any reason to omit this sense.

And we may observe, the Lord's people, though they do indeed die a corporal death, good
men, as well as bad men, "Our fathers, where are " they?" yet those from whom God hath put away
their sins, do not die this death as a penal evil. Though they die, they do not die under the
curse; the sting of death is taken away, and death is a blessing to them. Blessed are the dead,
which die in the Lord.

But this may rather have reference to spiritual and eternal death. Those whose iniquities the Lord has
put away shall not die a spiritual death: they may be in such circumstances as look like it; things that
remain may seem ready to die; they may reckon themselves as free among the dead; but true grace
cannot die, it is an immortal seed, a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life. Nor shall
such persons die the second death; that shall have

no power over them: *whosoever believeth in me* (says Christ), *shall never die*; believest thou this*? Those, whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are put away, in the sense we have been speaking of, they shall never die an eternal death.—But, to draw to a conclusion,

A soul that is made sensible of sin, whose conscience is burdened with it, and wants to have it removed, and to be comforted, let such make their application to God; for it is he only that can put away sin. And when souls are brought to a true sense of sin, make an ingenuous confession of it, and have true repentance unto life that needs not to be repented of; these have a great deal of reason to hope and believe that God will put away their sins; that he will manifest his pardoning grace unto them, as he did to David. When he owned he had sinned, then he had a message brought him from the Lord, by one of his servants; “The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.”

And when souls are favoured after this manner, with applications of pardoning grace and mercy to them, what obligations do they lay under to love the Lord, who has shewn so much love to them. What reason have they to be thankful unto him, and with David, to call upon their souls, and all that is within them, to bless his holy name, who has forgiven them all their iniquities, who hath redeemed their life from destruction, and crowned them with loving kindness and tender mercies.

SERMON X.

To remember all the Way in which the Lord hath led the Believer, both in Providence and Grace, a Duty incumbent on him.

Deut. viii. 2.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart; whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

This chapter begins with an exhortation to keep the commandments of the Lord, even all his commandments; and to this end, that such might live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of Canaan, which the Lord swear unto their fathers. All the commandments of God are to be kept; one, as well as another; whether those of the first, or second table of the law; whether such that respect God or man; whether greater or lesser, all are to be kept. The law requires perfect obedience; and, in case of failure, it curses and condemns.
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demns. Its language is, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

A good man, from a principle of grace, is desirous of having respect unto all God's commandments, to do them, in faith, and from a principle of love, and with a view to his glory; without trusting in, or depending upon, obedience to that law, for justification before God. He esteems all his precepts, concerning all things, to be right; and hates every false way. Really good men are enabled, in some measure (though not in an absolute, yet in a comparative sense), to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, as Zachariah and Elizabeth did.*

Such is the exhortation in the beginning of the chapter, which is repeated in verse 11th. "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day." Wherefore the people of Israel were directed to bind them upon their hands, and place them as frontlets between their eyes. Not in a literal sense; but by such expressions they were taught to have these laws and precepts continually in their view, as persons have any thing that is bound upon their hands, or between their eyes; that so they might always have respect to them, and walk according to those rules given. The end of which was, that they might live, multiply, and go in and possess the land which God swear unto their fathers; that is (as this respects the Israelites), that they might live comfortably and safely in the land of Canaan; a land flowing with milk and honey. Possess it with all the benefits and blessings of it; for they held the te-

* Luke i, 6
nure of that land by their obedience to the commandments of God. Spiritual and eternal life were not to be had in this way, or by obedience to these commandments: no, not spiritual life; for if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the law cannot give life, spiritual life, to a dead sinner; and if so, then not eternal life, which is the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and not the merit of men's works.

What Moses, under divine direction, exhorts the people of Israel to, in the words of the text, is, to remember all the way in which they had been led in the wilderness. They had been forty years, or thereabouts, travelling therein; and they had there received many mercies from the Lord, had a large and long experience of his goodness, in all his ways towards them; and now they are called upon to remember all that was done to humble them, to prove them, to make known what was in their hearts, and whether they would keep his commandments, or no.

In this direction we may observe,

I. The place wherein these people were led. The time when, and how long they were led in the wilderness; even for forty years.

II. The way, all the way that they were led by the Lord, in the wilderness; for though a trackless wilderness, yet there was a way which God made for them in it, and led them in this way.

III. The duty which is represented as incumbent upon them; and that is, to remember all the way in which the Lord had led them, these forty years in the wilderness.

IV. And lastly. The end that was to be answered by the Lord's leading them in this way; which was,

* Isa. i. 19.

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to humble them, to prove them, to know what was in their hearts, and whether they would keep his commandments, or no.

I. The place wherein they were led, and the time in which they were led in this wilderness; Thou shalt remember all the way in which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness. As soon as the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, they came into a wilderness; when they had passed through the Red Sea, they came into the wilderness of Shur*. There they travelled for three days to find water: after that, we hear of their coming to the wilderness of Sin †: and from thence to the wilderness of Sinai ‡, where the law was given them; and where they took instructions for the tabernacle, and made all things pertaining thereunto. They stayed there for some time; and from thence they went to the wilderness of Paran§: and so they went from one wilderness to another; and indeed were always in a wilderness from first to last. From Paran they sent forth spies into the good land, (for they were then very near it); but these spies, in general, bringing a bad report of the land, the people murmured against God and his servant; which was so highly resented, that the Lord gave orders that they should return and go into the wilderness by the Red Sea again. As it was threatened them, so it was, that they wandered about in the wilderness forty years; that is, thirty-eight years more, making up in all that period.

At this time they were in the plains of Moab, and the forty years were almost up. They were in the fortieth year of their travels, when these words

* Exod. xv. 22. † Exod. xvi. 1. ‡ Exod. xix. 1. § Numb. x. 12.
were expressed by Moses, which we are about to improve.

Now the wilderneſs which they had been led in, for forty years past, may be considered either as an emblem of an unregenerate state, or of this world. Of an unregenerate state (in which the Lord’s peo-

ple are, by nature, as well as others; and out of which they have been brought by grace). This is like a wilderneſs, which is uncultivated: here is nothing fown or planted in it; there is nothing but the mere produce of nature: so in an unregene-
rate man’s heart, there is no seed of grace, no en-
grafed word, no fruits of righteouſness. In a wilderneſs there is a want of provisions; so a man

that is in a state of nature, has no spiritual provi-
jons, no heavenly food, no divine refreshments;
there is no bread of life here, only hufks which
ﬁnue do eat; therefore, souls which are in such a
state, are in a starving and famiſhing condition;
hence it is called, a pit wherein is no water. In a
wilderneſs there are many by-paths, and perplexing
ones; which may express the bewildered state
men are in by nature, not knowing where they
are, or whither they are going. In short, the wil-

dernelfs is expressive of a state very uncomfortable
and forlorn, hopeleſs and comfortleſs; which is the
state of the unregenerate. Now in this state and
condition God finds his people, when he calls them
by his grace, as he did Israel of old; of whom it is
said, He found them in a desart land, and in a waſte,
howling wilderneſs: but he does not leave his peo-
ple here, he brings them out of it; which is an in-
stance of his distinguishing and surprizing grace.

But perhaps the wilderneſs may rather be con-
idered as an emblem of this world, where the Lord
finds his people, and calls them forth from the men
of it; and yet, nevertheless, they are in the world,
though they are not of the world. Though called

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by grace, they are in a wilderness: this is the argument Christ makes use of with his Divine Father to keep them: "I have given them thy word, and the world hateth them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world; but that thou wouldst keep them from the evil." Though they are called powerfully by the grace of God, out of this natural state, and from the men of the world, they are in this wilderness, and they are led about in it: they are led by the Lord in various ways, until he brings them, at length, safe unto his everlasting kingdom and glory.

This world is like a wilderness. The land of Egypt is called the wilderness of Egypt, and the wilderness of the people: so the whole world may be called, where are, for the most part, beasts of prey, wicked men, comparable thereto. Those beasts, which the apostle Paul fought with at Ephesus. What is in the world but the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? These are what natural men feed upon; but these are not food for the saints. There are many by-paths in this wilderness; and in it the Lord's people are led, are instructed, and kept as the apple of his eye.

II. I come to consider the way, all the way, the Lord leads his people, his spiritual people, in this wilderness. The way that he leads them in may be considered,

1. More generally.
2. More specially,

1. More generally. It may be called a way that is unknown; that is unbeaten, and trackless. The way in the wilderness, in which the people of Israel were led, was unknown unto them; it was trackless

* John xvii. 14, 15.
and unbeaten, which perhaps none had ever gone before; however, they had not, therefore the Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. In a pillar of cloud by day, not only to direct their journey, which way they should take, but to shelter them from the scorching heat of the sun; and in the night, in a pillar of fire, to guide and direct them in the way.

It was sometimes proper, and most convenient to travel in the night, in those sultry regions. Now, as the way in which the Lord led the people of Israel in the wilds, was an unknown, trackless path to them; so is the way the Lord leads his people in this world, to them, till they are led in it. **I will**, says Jehovah, **bring the blind by a way that they knew not**, **I will lead them in paths which they have not known; I will make darkness light before them** (alluding, perhaps, to the pillar of fire, by which he directed the Israelites), **and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them**. And they, being led in this way, have but few to accompany them. It is an unbeaten road. The way, the road to destruction, is a broad road, and there are many that walk in it. The whole world lies in wickedness, under the power of sin, and under the influence of that wicked one, Satan: but there are few travellers in the way in which the Lord leads his people; it is altogether an unknown way to the men of the world. This is a **path which no fowl knoweth**, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen; the lion's whelps have not trodden in it, nor the fierce lion passed by it, as in Job, chapter xxviii. verses 7, 8. What is there said by him, perhaps may have a literal meaning; yet, in a figurative and spiritual sense, is true of this path and way I am speaking of. Almost the

* Isa. xlii. 16.
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same thing is said of this way of holiness the people of God are led in. And an high-way shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those, the way-faring men, though fools shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there*. This is a path which, as wicked men are unacquainted with, so they do not chuse to walk in it. So far as they have any notion of it, it is quite disagreeable to them: and if any of them do take a step or two in this way, in an external manner, by taking upon them a profession of religion, they are soon tired and wearied of it. They meet with rugged paths that are not grateful to them. If tribulation arise because of the word, presently they are offended and gone. The things of this world, profits and pleasures, draw them off from an external walk in these ways. The apostle says of Demas, that he forsook him, having loved this present world. It is a path, unknown to natural men, and altogether disagreeable to them: yet it is a way which is plain, easy and delightful to the Lord's people. David put up this petition to God; Lead me in a plain path†. Indeed, the ways of the Lord are right, plain and easy; and the just walk therein comfortably, and pleasantly; but the wicked stumble and fall therein. Yea, it is such a plain way (though so little used, and unknown to them before they are led in it), that even fools shall not err therein‡.

2. It is a way in which they should go. I am the Lord thy God which leadeth thee, by the way that thou shouldst go§. Man, originally, when he came out

* Isa. xxxv. 8, 9. † Ps. xxvii. 11. ‡ Isa. lviii. 17.
of his Maker's hands, was put in a right way, and he walked in that way for a while, during his state of innocence, and then he forsook it. He went out of this way, and all his posterity have followed him. It is said they are all gone out of the way*. They have left the way of uprightness, purity and holiness, to walk in the ways of darkness: and their ways are crooked and froward. There is no judgment in their goings. They go by no rule, and they have made their ways crooked; not at all agreeable and conformable to the rule of God's word. Every man turns to his own way †; for though there is a way which seemeth good to a man, pleasing to his carnal heart, yet the end thereof is death. The broad road leadeth to destruction: yea, destruction and misery are in all the ways of sinful men.

Now the Lord, by his Spirit and grace, convinces his own people of the evil of their ways, in which they have walked in an unregenerate state, and turns them from these evil ways, directs them to walk in the right way; and when they attempt to turn to the right hand or to the left, they hear, as it were, a voice behind them, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it. This way they find to be pleasant and profitable. Pleasant: Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace. Profitable: for godliness, or the way of godliness, hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come.

It is a right way in which the Lord leads his people. It is such as they should walk in, though it is often a rough way; because of the ill usage they meet with from the men of the world, the violence of Satan's temptations, the divine desertions, and the

* Rom. iii. 12. † Isa. liii. 6.
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various afflictions which attend them: for through many tribulations, from different quarters, the children of God enter into the kingdom of heaven. Yet, after all, it is a right way: it is the way in which they should go; and it is their heavenly Father's pleasure they should walk in it.

3. This way is called the way of holiness, in that before-mentioned text, Isa. xxxv. 8. Men are naturally walking in different paths; in the ways of impurity and unholiness: even God's people, in a state of unregeneracy, walk in these ways. They walk after the course of this world, and according to the influence of the prince of the power of the air; fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; gratifying their carnal senses; and giving up themselves to work wickedness. "The time past of your lives (says the apostle, speaking to converted persons) may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles:" suggesting, that in the former part of their lives they walked as the Gentiles did, in all manner of sin and wickedness.

Now the Lord, by his Spirit, convinces his people in due time, of the evil of their ways; of the evil nature of them, and of the evil tendency of them, and gives them repentance unto life that needeth not to be repented of: turns them from the evil of their ways, and leads them in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. The gospel of the grace of God appears to them, comes with power and influence upon them, teaching them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. Once more.

4. The way in which the people of God are led in this wilderness is, the way of truth: for though

*I Pet. iv. 3.*

they
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they have been misled heretofore, and carried away with the error of the wicked, yet now the Spirit of the Lord leads them into all truth as it is in Jesus. Hence we read of persons walking in the truth. John rejoiced that he saw his children walk in the truth. Truth is set before the Lord's people in a most amiable manner, and they choose to walk in this way, and abide therein. They have their conversation more or less agreeable to the truth of the gospel of the grace of God. They abide by the truth, and make that the rule of their conversation. But in the

Second place, more particularly. The way in which the Lord leads his people in this wilderness, is Christ. He is the way. He is the way, by way of eminence. The way, the truth, and the life. They are led to him as the way, and they are led in him as the way. They are led,

1. To him as the way, as the only way of salvation. They are, through the power of divine grace, brought to see their undone state and condition by nature. They are shewn the evil of their way, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin; what it deserves at the hands of God, even eternal damnation. They are shewn, that they are unable to make satisfaction for the sins they have committed, and that they cannot save themselves from wrath to come. The law works wrath in their consciences, and there is in them a fearful looking-for of judgment and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. They are cut to the heart and cry out, what must we do? what will become of us? We are wretched, miserable creatures, obnoxious to the wrath of God, the curses of his righteous law, and everlasting damnation. What must we do to be saved?

Now these persons, awakened and convinced by the Spirit of God, are led to Christ for salvation. Not
Not only in a doctrinal way, or through the ministration of the gospel, are they shewn the way of salvation by Christ. (For Christ’s faithful servants, are the servants of the most high God, who shew unto men the way of salvation: and happy it is for souls in such circumstances I have described, if they are cast, by divine providence, under a gospel ministry that will direct them in the way of salvation, Christ Jesus). But this is not all; for not only are the Lord’s people shewn, in a ministerial way, the way of salvation by Christ; but the Spirit of Christ takes of the things of Christ and shews them to them; takes the salvation of Christ, which he has wrought out, and sets it before them in a proper light. He shows them how suitable to their case and circumstances it is; how free, and how full; and what an able and willing Saviour Christ is. Now a poor, sensible sinner, finding there is hope concerning the salvation of his soul by Jesus Christ, and being exhorted and encouraged to hope, because in him there is plenteous redemption, a fulness of salvation, that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, he goes, and looks to him, as he himself bids him; Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else*. He goes and says, as the disciples in a distressing case, Lord save us or we perish. Finding salvation in him, he renounces all other foundations of hope, and resolves, in the strength of divine grace, that he, and he alone, shall be his salvation. Thus the Lord’s people are led to Christ as the way of salvation.

More particularly: They are led unto his righteousness as the way of their justification before God. They may have trusted in themselves that they were righte-

* Isa. xlv. 22. ous
ous, and despised others, as even the apostle did, who thought himself, touching the righteousness of the law, blameless: so the whole nation of Israel went about to establish their own righteousness, and submitted not to the righteousness of God. And frequently so it is when the Lord's people are first awakened to see their bewildered state and condition by nature. They are for doing something to avert divine wrath, to appease an angry God, to obtain his favour, and acceptance with him. They think by some works of righteousness of their own to do this. The Spirit of God convinces them of the insufficiency of their own righteousness, shews them the impurity and imperfection of it; shews them that it will stand in no more stead, than Adam's fig-leaves would protect him from the eye of God, and his justice. Their own works are a covering too narrow to wrap themselves in, and a bed too short to stretch themselves upon: they will be of no avail in their justification before God: and not only so, but the Spirit of God takes the righteousness of Christ, and sets that before the eyes of these persons. Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, and far from righteousness: a character which not only agrees with carnal men, but with God's people at their first awakenings. They are, at first, stout-hearted, and are far from true righteousness, the righteousness of Christ; they do not care to submit to it. Hearken unto me, behold I bring near my salvation, and my righteousness shall not tarry. Now this is not only revealed in a doctrinal, but also an experimental way, from faith to faith; from a small to a greater degree of faith. Faith is wrought in the soul, to look unto, and receive this righteousness, as the alone justifying one; and the soul is enabled to say, Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; and desires to be found therein, living and dying.
They are led also, under a sense of their impurity, to the blood of Christ. They may, and do, in their natural state, fancy themselves pure: and they may, upon what sense they have of the impurity of their nature, think of some ways and means to cleanse themselves; but the Spirit of God not only sets before them the wretched impurity of their nature, the plague of their own heart, what a sink of impurity it is, but shews them the insufficiency of every thing of their own to help them; their repentance, their tears, and the like. Therefore they, as it were, put a covering upon their upper lip, and cry, unclean, unclean. They are like the poor leper in the gospel, who said, Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean. They flee to that fountain, the blood of Jesus, which cleanses from all sin. They are led (and the Lord leads all his people) to the fulness of grace in Christ for a supply. They, in their natural state, may think they are rich, and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing; but when they come to be convinced by the Spirit of God, they find they want every thing; and that their wants are only to be supplied by Christ: to him they come, and find supply, and with joy draw water out of these wells of salvation, or receive out of Christ's fulness, and grace for grace.

2. They are not only led to Christ, as the way of salvation and righteousness, but they are led in him as the way; and to walk on in him, as they have received him; to live by faith upon the Son of God. Christ is the way; he is the way to the Father, No man (says he) cometh to the Father, but by me*. Now the Lord's people make use of him as the new and living way to the Father; by whom they have access, with some degree of

* John xiv. 6.
boldness, when faith is in exercise. They make use of him as the way to the throne of grace, considering him as an high priest over the house of God, and as their advocate with the Father; they come with an holy boldness, and ask for grace and mercy; not in their own names, but in the name of Christ, making mention of his righteousness, and of his only.

They consider him as the way to the covenant of grace, and to the enjoyment of all the blessings of that covenant. He is the Mediator, surety, and messenger of it; his blood is the blood of the everlasting covenant, by which it is confirmed. All the blessings of it come to them that way; and all the promises of it are yea, and amen, in him.

He is the way to eternal happiness. There is no enjoying the kingdom of heaven, unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit. No man can be possessed of that heavenly state without a righteousness. Except a man's righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, he shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Christ imparts grace in regeneration, and his righteousness is imputed for their justification; so they have both a meetness and a right, through him, to eternal glory. He is the way they are led into. There are other lesser ways God's people are led in; namely, the ordinances of Christ. These are ways the Lord leads his people in, which he makes to be ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace unto them, and they delight to walk in them: they say, come, let us go up to the house of the Lord, he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.

But now let it be observed further, that this passage respects not only the way in which the children of Israel were led in the wilderness, but all the occurrences of the way; all they met with in the way,
way, and which they were to remember. So there are various things that the people of God meet with in their way, which are worthy of their notice, and should be remembered by them. "Remember all the way," or all thou meetest with in the way. Israel met with many things in the way, for the trial of their faith and obedience; and so they met with many things for their encouragement, their relief, deserving of their remembrance: so do the spiritual Israel of God find many things worthy of their notice and remembrance in this wilderness.

"Thou shalt remember all the way." O believers! you that are effectually called by the grace of God, turned out of the wrong way, the evil ways in which you were; remember, remember how the Lord met with you in your career of sins: remember what a condition you were in, when you were called by the grace of God; what schemes you were forming, and methods you were devising for the gratifying your lusts. That it was in the height of your sin and rebellion against God, that he met you, and led you in the right way; as the three thousand who were converted under Peter's sermon, that had embued their hands in the blood of Jesus, and at that very time were come to mock at the disciples, and charged them with intemperance, because of the gifts of the Spirit poured down upon them. In this condition they were, when the Lord met with them, convinced, and converted them: and as Saul, afterwards the great apostle of the Gentiles, when he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the saints; when he had letters from the high priest to take up those at Damascus, that were followers of Jesus. In the midst of all this, the Lord met him, and said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Now
Now something like this may have been your case; and God met with you when you were in the height of sin, when you were forming to yourselves schemes how to go on in a course of iniquity. Remember this: remember how the Lord brought you to Christ, as poor perishing sinners; as the chief of sinners, which you then saw yourselves to be; what encouragement you had to come unto him, and venture your soul upon him; how you were encouraged by such kind declarations as these, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.

Remember what exceeding great and precious promises have been made to you in the way; what discoveries of the love of God were made to your souls very early; such as those, when the Lord appeared to you, and said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” What applications of pardoning grace and mercy were made to your souls, in a view of all your iniquities, with all their aggravated circumstances; when a declaration was made like this, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression, for my own name’s sake; and will not remember thy sins. When you have been in the view of enemies, and of danger from them, attended with fears of falling away, of coming short of heaven and happiness at last (things not being right with you), and Jehovah has graciously appeared, and said, Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness.

Remember, soon after the Lord commanded light to shine out of darkness, what joy, peace, and comfort
To remember the Leadings of the Lord,

fort he afforded you, such as Job speaks of, and wishes it might be again; as it had been; *O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me: when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness*. Remember what communion with God, what fellowship with the blessed Jesus, you were indulged with, when you could, in an exulting manner, say, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. Remember what spiritual pleasure you had in the worship and ordinances of the Most High; when you (like the children of Israel, who were led to Elim, where were twelve fountains of water, and three-score and ten palm-trees) found the ordinances to be like those wells of water. Jehovah hath caused you to lie down beside the still waters, and led you into green pastures, where you have met with refreshings from the presence of the Lord: remember how you at times have sat down under the shadow of Jesus with great delight, and his fruit has been sweet unto your taste: and when, like the apostles, you could have wished to have had tabernacles built and to have remained there: remember the food you have been fed with all the way in which you have been led in the wilderness. As the children of Israel were fed with the corn of heaven, with angels food, so you have been fed with the heavenly manna, the bread of life, and the water of life; nourished up with the words of faith and sound doctrine: how often have you found the word and eat it; and it has been the joy and rejoicing of your heart.

Remember the temptations you have met with in the way, and how you have been delivered out of

*Job xxix. 2, 3.*
them: how many have been the temptations you have been beset with to apostatize from God, for-sake his good ways, call in question all that God has done for you; to murmur against God and his pro-
vidence, and even to deny the Most High, with many other things of this kind. Remember also, how the Lord has been with you, and supported you under these temptations; how the blessed Jesus hath succoured you; how, when the enemy hath come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord has lifted up a standard against him: how have you found the grace of God sufficient for you, and the Lord hath upheld you under the temptation, and at last delivered you from it.

Remember the afflictions you have met with in the way, and how you have been brought out of them; as the children of Israel when they came to drink of the waters of Marah, and found them bitter, had a tree cast in, and they became sweet to them. The Lord has been with you, when passing, as it were, through the fire: remember how he has carried you through, and made all things work together for good; been with you in six and seven troubles, and delivered you out of them; and here you are at this day. Remember how the Lord has led you, some ten, some twenty, some thirty, some forty years, as in the text. I now proceed,

III. To the duty enjoined, which is, to remember all the way in which the Lord leads his people.

In some respects we are to forget the things which are behind, pressing towards the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus; that is, we are so to forget former things, as not to rest, or to be contented, without seeking a further increase of grace, and an enlargement of experience. This, however, is quite consistent with its being our duty to remember what
To remember the Leadings of the Lord,

God has done for us, and all the way in which he hath led us; in order to express before him our gratitude and thankfulness. Though the blessings bestowed upon us are more than we can number; yet in the best manner we can, we are to reckon them up, and lay them before him: we are so to remember them as to call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to bless his holy name; so as not to be charged with forgetting the Rock of our salvation. We are to remember these things so as to declare them to others, to the glory of God's grace: we are to act the part the Psalmist did, who says, *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.* How he met with me, how he called me by his grace, how he led me on, and brought me hither-to; and what experience he hath given me of his divine favour. Thus we should remember and declare these things for the benefit of others.

We are to remember these things for our own instruction and advantage, while we are yet in the wilderness. The Psalmist says, *My soul is cast down within me; therefore I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizah*:

meaning, that he would remember those places and times where, and when, the Lord had graciously appeared to him, and indulged him with some comfortable visits, and some enlarged experience of his grace. Now these he called to mind, to encourage his faith and hope under present discouragements and perplexities. It is good to do so, and with this view gracious souls may reason, as Manoah's wife did, *If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have shewed us all these things.* So may you say, "If the Lord had had a mind to have destroyed me, he would never

* Psalm xlii. 6. *
“have led me all the way in the wilderness, as he hath done.” The soul may reasonably argue from grace to glory; “If God hath called me by his grace, if I am justified and sanctified, I shall be glorified.”

Last of all, believers should remember all the way they have been led to quicken them to obedience; which seems to be the sense here. And indeed there is nothing more quickening than a calling to remembrance what he hath done for us. The love of God and of Christ, has a constraining power to engage souls to a ready and cheerful obedience to the commands of God. Good old Jacob, when he reflected upon his journey from Padan-aram to the land of Canaan, said to his family, *Let us arise and go up to Bethel (to offer sacrifice), and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.* I remember his presence with me, how graciously he dealt with me; come now, arise, and let us go to Bethel, &c. Thus a recollection of the way the Lord hath led us, has a tendency to quicken to obedience. I proceed to consider,

**IV.** The end of the Lord’s leading his people in this way; and that was to humble them and prove them, to know what was in their hearts, and whether they would keep his commandments, or no.

To humble them. This is the design of all God’s ways in providence with his people, that they, being clothed with humility, might be exalted in due time. This was God’s end in dealing with Job, and it was fully answered: so this is the end and design of God, in mercy to his people, that the pride of man may be brought down, and the haughtiness of man may be laid low, and God be exalted in their salvation. It was to prove them also, as God proved and tried Abraham; though it was in a very severe way, by requiring...
To remember the Leadings of the Lord

quiring him to offer up his only and beloved son. He complies: by this the Lord proved his faith, and love, and fear too. The Lord leads his people all the way in the wilderness to prove their graces: their faith, which is more precious than gold tried in the fire: their patience, their hope, and every other grace. *Also to know what is in their hearts.* As Hezekiah was left of God, to know what was in his heart, in the case of the messengers from Babylon; so the Lord leads his people in the way he does, to know what is in their hearts. Not that He hereby gains knowledge; for he is the searcher of the hearts, and trier of the reins of the children of men; but to make known to themselves, how great is the plague of their own hearts. *Also to see whether they will keep his commandments, or no.* Israel had at Sinai declared very strongly that all the Lord had said, they would do. *"They have well said," says the Lord. "Oh, that there were such an heart in them, "that they would fear me, and keep all my command-
ments!"* Now he leads them about in the wilderness, and that for forty years together, to try this, to prove this, to let it be seen whether they would keep the commandments of the Lord as they promised to do.

But I shall conclude with a word or two. Upon the whole, let us enquire whether we have been led by the Lord, and in what way. Has the Lord met with us in the way of our transgressions, and hath he turned us out of the way in which we were, and led us in the right path, the way of salvation? let us enquire whether we have been led by the Lord in his way. As many as are led by him, led in that way which the natural man knows nothing of; as many as are led in the way of holiness and truth (and particularly in the way Christ Jesus, led unto him.)
him, and led in him) are the sons of God. Let us enquire whether this be our case, or no. If we are led by the Spirit of God, we may conclude, that we are the sons of God; and if this be the case, what reason have we to admire the grace of God in leading us in this way! He might have left us in our sins, in the wilderness in which we were; yet he has not done so, but hath led us in the right way to a city of habitation. How should this engage to a cheerful obedience to him, as well as to put our confidence in him! for he that hath led us, some ten, some twenty, some thirty, and some forty years, and perhaps some more, in the wilderness, he will be our God for ever and ever, and our guide even unto death.
SERMON XI.

Covenant Interest in God, and a View of what is in him, as a Covenant-God, a sufficient Encouragement to his People, in the worst of Times.

1 Sam. xxx. 6. last clause.

But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

David was at this time in as great distress, if not greater, than ever he was in all his life. He had been persecuted from place to place by Saul, and his life often in imminent danger; but then he had friends along with him, to comfort and encourage him, to protect and defend him to the utmost of their power; but now it was otherwise: yet he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Ziklag, the place where he and his men had dwelt for some time, the Amalekites taking the advantage of his absence came and burnt and destroyed it; carried captives the wives and concubines of his men, and his own wives also. This occasioned a general discontent, and even a mutiny among the people; so that David’s people, his own friends, spake of stoning him: but notwithstanding all this, David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.
At this time of distress, he was at the eve of his outward grandeur and glory: for much about this time, very likely at the very time, that battle, from whence he was very providentially withdrawn, was fought between Saul and the Philistines, in which Saul and his sons were slain; which paved the way for David to ascend the throne of Israel. So sometimes it is, that when God is about to work salvation for his people, to bestow upon them great favours, whether in a way of providence or grace, he suffers them to be brought into the greatest straits; that his power, wisdom, and goodness may be the more visible.

But David knew nothing of this for the present; his state was very distressing, hopeless, and helpless, as to human appearance: nevertheless he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. He encouraged himself, for he had none to encourage him; they all spake of stoning him. He encouraged himself, not by virtue of any power of his own, but through the influence of the divine Spirit; which impressed his mind, directed him to God, and enabled him to exercise faith upon him: he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. In the Lord; not absolutely considered, for God is a consuming fire; but he strengthened, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God, his covenant God and Father.

The observation I make upon this, is, that covenant interest in God, and a view of what is in God, as a Covenant God, are sufficient encouragement to his people, in their greatest distresses; and, in enlarging on this observation, I shall consider,

I. That the people of God have their times of trouble and distress.

II. That
II. That God is their covenant God; and this is a source of support and comfort to them under their troubles. And,

III. That a view of what is in God, is enough to encourage the saints in the worst of times. David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

I. The people of God have their times of trouble and distress. The apostle Paul seems to distinguish between trouble and distress, when he says, *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed*. Troubled on every side, from every quarter, all around; look which way we will, there is nothing but trouble, and yet not distressed: that is, not so distressed as to be reduced to despair, as is afterwards explained; or to be brought to ruin and destruction; for it follows, perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.

The people of God, in all ages and periods of time, have been poor, and afflicted with divers sorts of afflictions, temporal and spiritual; but this is the favour bestowed upon them, that they shall trust: they are enabled to trust, they do trust in the name of the Lord their God. Their afflictions and troubles are partly outward, and partly inward: some are outward afflictions; such as affect their bodies, their families, and estates; or arise from the world, and the men of it, their reproaches and persecutions; and these come not by chance, but are by divine appointment. They are appointed to these afflictions, and these afflictions are appointed for them; these are a legacy their great Lord and Master hath bequeathed them, *In the world ye shall have tribulation*. There are many tribulations through which the saints enter the kingdom: they attend them all the way, more or

* 2 Cor. iv. 8.  † John xvi. 33.
lefs, to the heavenly glory. They follow them to their entrance into the kingdom; then they leave them, and not till then. These troubles and afflictions are all in love, and are directed by the hand of a tender Father; yet, nevertheless, no affliction is joyous, but grievous to the flesh.

There are other troubles, trials, and exercises which are internal, and more especially affect the soul, or the spiritual state of God's people; I mean, their comfortable spiritual state. Nothing can affect, so as to destroy, their state and standing in Christ; but there are many things which distress them, with respect to their spiritual frames, and comfortable spiritual state. Sometimes they are under the hidings of God's face; and, as his presence gives them the greatest pleasure; so his absence, the greatest pain and uneasiness. When he hideth his face, their souls are troubled; and upon this follows darkness, and sometimes such darkness, that they can see no light. This being the case of good men, that they walk in darkness, and have no light; no joy, comfort, and peace in a sensible manner; hence follows many doubts and fears in them, relative to their case. They are ready to fear that a work of grace was never begun in them, or that they shall never hold on and out unto the end, but fall short of heaven at last: without are fightings, and within are fears. Unbelief sometimes prevails to a very great degree, and their language is like that of the Psalmist, *Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies*? Unbelief reads all this in the affirmative. You may well imagine God's people are in distress, when this is their case. Sometimes their distresses arise from

* Isa. 1. 10. † Psalm lxxvii. 8, 9.
the temptations of Satan; who is a very busy adversary, and goes about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; though he cannot do this, with respect to the people of God, yet he can, and is, often suffered to distress them. Yea, he is said to desire to winnow one as wheat, as Peter; and he buffets another, as in the case of Paul, he throws his fiery darts thick and fast, and these give a great deal of pain and uneasiness. To all these may be added, the corruptions of their nature, which are suffered sometimes to prevail very much in them: they find a law in their members, warring against the law of their minds, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin and death; which makes them say, "Oh! wretched men, that we are." These old Canaanites left in the land, are as pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides, that give them great distress.

II. God is the covenant God of his people, and that is a source of support and comfort to them under all their troubles and distresses. David says, "Fear was on every side; but I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, thou art my God," Psalm xxxi. 13, 14." God is the God of his people, not only in a general sense, as he is the God of the spirits of all flesh; not in a national sense, as he was the God of the Jews. He avouched them to be his people, and they avouched him to be their God; but he is the God, the covenant God of his people, in a more special sense, in the covenant of grace, ordered in all things, and sure; the tenor of which runs thus, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." This covenant interest is made manifest in effectual vocation, when God calls his covenant ones effectually by his grace; which makes it clearly appear

* Jerem, xxxii. 28.
that they are his covenant ones. Then, they who were not a people, that is, who were not known to be the people of God, either by themselves or others, openly appear to be his people; for the application of covenant blessings unto them is an undeniable proof of their interest; for, to whomsoever covenant blessings are applied, such must be most certainly interested in the covenant of grace.

Now this covenant interest always continues, it never can be dissolved, let the faint come into what condition he will, let him be in what trouble or distress he may, covenant interest always abides. Afflictions that are laid upon him, of one kind or another, are no arguments at all disproving his covenant interest; rather are proofs of the same: for in the covenant it is provided, that when the Lord's children forsake his law, and walk not in his statutes, he will visit their transgression with a rod and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless his loving-kindness he will not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. His covenant he will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips*. Even the sins and corruptions of God's people, the temptations of Satan, and the snares of this world, do not, cannot dissolve covenant interest; for Jehovah knew beforehand, when he took his people into this covenant, what they would be; that they would be called transgressors from the womb; that their neck would be as an iron sinew, and their brow as brass; and yet this did not hinder their admission into this covenant; and consequently cannot be a reason for dismissing them from it: besides, in this covenant of grace there is provision made for the forgiveness of the sins of God's people. One principal promise run thus,

* Psalm lxxxix. 30, 34.

"I will
I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. That darkness and desertion, those doubts and fears, and unbelief, which attend God's people, cannot destroy their covenant interest; that still continues the same, whether they are in the light or in the dark, whether in comfortable or uncomfortable frames, covenant interest is always invariably the same. As it was with the head, so it is with the members; as it was with our head, Christ Jesus, when suffering, withdrew his presence from him, and he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Forsaken he was; but God was his God still: so it is with the members, they may be forsaken, God may hide his face from them, they may be in darkness, and in the deeps; yet they may say my God still. So says the church, My God will hear me; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me: he will bring me to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Covenant interest always abides; and this is a source of comfort to the saints in all their distresses; for he, that is their covenant God, will be their God and their guide unto death.

III. There are such things in God, as are sufficient encouragement to his people in the worst of times: and they may, through the strength of divine grace, as David did, encourage themselves in the Lord their God. Thus, for instance,

1. There are the mercy, grace, and love of our heavenly Father, of our covenant God: he has proclaimed his name, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin. Upon this declaration of grace, David might well, and so every believer also, with the greatest assurance, affirm, Gracious is the Lord, and righteous: yea, our God is merciful.

* Jerem. xxxi. 31. † Micah vii. 7, 8, 9. ‡ Ps. xlviii. ult. § Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. ¶ Psalm cxvi. 5.
Now this yields relief to the people of God, when first awakened to a fight and sense of their state and condition by nature. This relieves them in their first soul trouble; namely, the declarations of the grace, mercy, and love of God. As Behadad's servants argued with their master, *We have heard, that the kings of the house of Israel, are merciful kings; let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes on our heads; and go out to the king of Israel; peradventure he will save thy life.* So poor sinners, when they are first awakened to a fight and sense of their vileness, the just demerit of their sins, and the consequences of them, having heard, through the report of the gospel, that the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, is gracious and merciful; they are encouraged to go and throw themselves upon his grace and mercy, and say, as the publican did, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* Not that they cast themselves upon the absolute mercy of God; but upon the mercy of God, as it streams through the blood and righteousness of Christ; which is the sense of that request of the publican, *"God be merciful to me,"* through the propitiatory sacrifice of thy Son. It is a view of this that encourages sinners in their first distress of soul, to go to God, and venture their souls upon his mercy. *Let Israel (and so let every sensible sinner) hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy; and with him there is plenteous redemption*; that is, there is mercy streaming through that plenteous redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a declaration of the grace and mercy of God, that is a relief to poor sensible souls, under the first workings of the Spirit of God upon their hearts; whereby they are encouraged to hope for pardoning grace, and to obtain it, as the apostle says, he did,

*I Kings xx. 31.*
*†Psal. cxxx. 7.*

* I, who
in the Lord his God.

I, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy*. So likewise it is a relief unto them, after having fallen into sin, and when brought again to repentance; when they stand in need of fresh discoveries of forgiving love. In affliction the Lord is pleased to reveal himself unto them in this manner, and apply his pardoning grace unto them: they find him to be a kind, merciful, and tender-hearted Father to them: like as a father pitieth his children; so the Lord pitieth them that fear him+. He sympathizes with them in all their troubles; in all their afflictions he is afflieted; his bowels yearn towards them when they are in distresse; and though he may seem sometimes to frown upon them in his providence, yet he changes his dispositions towards them, in love, saying, Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? verily he is, for since I spake against him, in a providential way, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.

God, the covenant God of his people, is full of mercy, grace, love, kindnels, and tenderness unto them at all times; and this is an encouragement unto them to trust in him. In a view of this, they may do as David did, encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and the rather, in as much as this mercy, grace, and love always continue the same. The mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him: his love to his people is an everlasting love: his loving-kindness never departs from them; nor can any thing separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.

* 1 Tim. i. 13.  † Psalm ciii. 13.  

O Well
Well then, let the saint be in what trouble and distress he will, if he can but be directed and is but enabled to look unto the grace and mercy of God, as a covenant God, always the same; it will yield him relief in the worst of times.

2. There is the power of God, which is great and unlimited. "Twice have I heard this, (says the Psalmist) that power belongs to God." There are not only one, or two, but there are many instances of the almighty power of God: he, who is almighty, is able to save his people, when in the greatest distress. His hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear. When they cry unto him in their distress, pray to him for deliverance, they pray to a God that can save them to the uttermost; save them out of all their troubles. This poor man cried (says David, and it may be, he means himself particularly), and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. So this poor man, and the other poor man, and thousands of poor saints, in all ages, have cried unto the Lord in their distress, and he has saved them out of all their troubles.

He has power and ability to fulfil all the promises which he has made unto his people; and they are many, exceeding great, and precious. Abraham had a special promise made to him, and the fulfilment of it was attended with many difficulties, insurmountable to carnal reason; yet he staggered not at the promise, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And what was it kept up his faith in the view of those difficulties that attended the accomplishment of the thing promised? Why, it was this, he was persuaded that God was able also to perform*. God, the covenant God of his people, is of such power,

* Rom. iv. 21.
that he is able to supply all their wants, let them be what they will; to supply all their need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus. He is able to support them under their greatest trials, and he has promised to do it; he has said, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not discouraged, I am thy God; I will help thee; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will upheld thee, with the right-hand of my righteousness." And when he puts underneath everlasting arms, they are a sufficient support. He is able to protect and defend them from all enemies. They that trust in him, as their covenant God, are as mount Sion, that can never be removed; for as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about his people, from this time forth, even for evermore. He is a wall of fire round about them, to preserve them, and to annoy their enemies: he is a glory in the midst of them. They are kept, as in a garrison, by his power, through faith unto salvation: he is able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among all them that are sanctified, by faith, in Christ Jesus. He is able to keep them from falling; from a total and final falling away, and present them faultless before the throne of his majesty; and he will exert his power in the preservation of them safe to his everlasting kingdom and glory. Now a view of this power in God, of his ability to do these things, and much more, is a sufficient encouragement to saints in the worst of times.

3. There is the unchangeableness of God; which also, when believers have a view of, it relieves them under the greatest distresses. He is the Father of lights, with whom their is no variableness, nor shadow of turning: not the least appearance of a change in him. He is the Lord, that changeth not; and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed: O 2 they
they cannot be consumed; they cannot be destroyed who are interested in an unchangeable God. He is unchangeable in his love to them: he never varies in that, let them be in what condition they will, or let his appearance to them be what it may, in the external dispensation of things, his love is always the same. If he chides them, if he chastises them, in a providential way, on account of their sins, yet his loving-kindness he doth not take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. If he hide his face from them, to rebuke them, on one account or another, because of some misbehaviour of theirs; yet still he loves them; his loving-kindness does not depart from them; having loved them, he loves them to the end. His love is everlasting; as it commenced in eternity, it will continue to all eternity; invariably and unchangeably the same. There may be different dispensations towards them, as I have suggested; they may be in different frames of soul, and not always have the like apprehensions of the love of God; yet that in itself is the same.

He is unchangeable in his counsels and decrees; particularly in that relative to the everlasting salvation of his people. This is a foundation of solid comfort, even of everlasting consolation; so says the apostle, "Wherein God, to shew the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things (his counsel, which is immutable; and his oath annexed to it, which is likewise so) in which it was impossible for God to lie; we might have strong consolation, who have fled, for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us."**

God is unchangeable in his promises, which he hath made to his people. He is not a man, that he

* Heb. vi. 17, 18.

should
should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent, or change his mind. What he hath said, he will do; what he hath purposed, he will most certainly fulfil. Not one of the good things he hath promised, in covenant, has ever fallen to the ground, or ever shall. For all his promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us.

He is unchangeable in the blessings of his grace. These are the sure mercies of David; sure to David's son, and sure to all his seed. They are irrevocable ones. Upon whomsoever they are bestowed, they remain; they are never revoked; God never repents of them. His Son also is as unchangeable as himself. The eternal Word. The Chaldee paraphrase upon the text respects this, and reads it thus; "And David strengthened himself in the Word of the Lord his God." In that eternal Logos, that Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God. Strengthened himself in Him; or, to use the apostolic language, he became strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, who is the same, yesterday, to day, and for ever; unchangeable in his nature, person, offices and grace. He hath, particularly, an unchangeable priesthood; an unchangeable virtue in his righteousness, to justify from all sin; in his blood to cleanse from it; and in his sacrifice, to make expiation for it. A view of this unchangeableness in God, and Christ, is a sufficient encouragement to the saints under all their distresses, be they what they may.

4. The faithfulness of God. This is a wonderful attribute. Who is like unto thee, says the Psalmist, or to thy faithfulness round about thee? God is faithful to himself; faithful to his promises and counsels. His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. All

* Pf. lxxxix. 8.

O 3 true,
true, and faithfully fulfilled. He is faithful to every promise of his. Hence the apostle describes him as faithful who hath promised, who also will do it. He is faithful to his covenant. He will not break his covenant upon any account whatsoever, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. He is faithful to his Son. As Christ is faithful to him that appointed him, even his divine Father; so Jehovah the Father is faithful to his Son with respect to all the promises he made to him, concerning his own glory as Mediator, and the good of his covenant people. And he is faithful to his covenant people, notwithstanding their unfaithfulness and unbelief; for though we believe not, says the apostle, he abides faithful.

Now a consideration of this perfection of our covenant God, is sufficient to support and encourage us under the greatest distresses in life. The same may be observed indeed of every perfection of his; as, his omniscience, omnipresence, and the like. He is omniscient. He knows all persons and things; and the knowledge he has of his people is special and particular. It is not merely a general knowledge, as he knows all his creatures; but is joined with the greatest affection to them. In this sense we are to understand it, when he is said to know them that are his. He knows all the world, and all the men in it; but not in the sense in which he knows his covenant ones. His knowledge, being connected with the greatest affection to them, his eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cries, in a different manner from what they are upon, and to others. Indeed the eye of his providence is particular. "He is the Saviour" of all men, especially of those that believe*;" and the eyes of the Lord, run to

* 1 Tim. iv. 10.
in the Lord his God

and for, to shew himself strong in a remarkable manner, on the behalf of those whose hearts are upright towards him. He knows their persons, and their wants. Their desires are before him, and their groanings are not hid from him. This is a great encouragement to them.

So the Omnipresence of God. He is a God at hand, and not a God afar off. He is nigh to all them that call upon him in truth. It was the peculiar privilege of Israel of old, that they had God so nigh unto them in all things they called upon him for *: so have all the saints and people of God. He is the eternal God, from everlasting to everlasting: He which was, and is, and is to come; and he has been, and is, the dwelling place of his people in all generations. He is the ever-living God, to protect, preserve, and bring them safe to the everlasting enjoyment of himself. Thus, a view of what God is, in himself, and of what is in our covenant God and Father, are a sufficient encouragement in the worst of times. David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

But I must draw to a conclusion. You may be directed from hence where to go, and to whom to apply in times of trouble: not to the creature, or an arm of flesh; but to the Lord as your covenant God. When refuge fails you, and no man cares for your soul, then say, as David did, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living †. This doctrine may serve to support the people of God under all the vicissitudes that attend them in this life, in body, soul, or estate. This may be a relief to them, that they have to do with, and are interested in a covenant God; whose love and covenant are unchangeable, and therefore the sons of Jacob shall not be consumed. What may not such persons expect,

* Deut. iv. 7. † Psa. cxlii. 5.
who have Jehovah for their covenant God? They may say, as Jacob did, they have all things; they have enough. The Lord is their shepherd; he is their shield, and their exceeding great reward. They have nothing to fear from their enemies, spiritual or temporal. They may say, as David did, *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear*? If God be for them, if he is on their side, if he is their covenant God and father, who shall be against them? or what does it signify who are against them? Happy that people whose God is the Lord! they may expect every blessing of grace here, and eternal glory hereafter. His grace will be sufficient to carry them through all the trials of life, and bring them safe to glory. He, who is their God, is a sun and shield; he gives grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

*Psalm. xxvii. 1.*
SERMON XII.

The infinite Condescension of Jehovah, manifested in dwelling on the Earth.

1 Kings viii. 27.

But will God indeed dwell on the Earth?

Solomon, having finished the building of the temple, and placed all the vessels thereof in their proper situation, the Lord took up his residence therein; which was signified by the cloud filling the temple, a symbol of the glorious presence of God; and Solomon observes upon it, the Lord had said, that he would dwell in the thick darkness.

Solomon and the people of Israel, being gathered together for the dedication of the house of the Lord, he begins it with blessing the people; congratulating them upon the building of the temple; wishing them all happiness in such an enjoyment; and praying for them, that they might have the presence of God therein. He informs them that David, his father, had it first in his heart to build this house, which was acceptable to the Lord; but for some
some reasons, he was not suffered to do it. It was
the pleasure of God, that he, Solomon, his son,
should do it; which was accordingly performed.
Then he spread forth his hands in prayer unto God,
and addressed him as the One only living God, and
said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in
heaven above, or on earth beneath; who keepest covenant
and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all
their heart. He addressed him as the only living and
true God; none like him, or besides him. None to be
compared with him for his nature, and the perfections
of it: for the works of his hands, and the blessings of his
goodness. He addresses him as a covenant-keeping
God, and as a merciful God; as he had proclaimed
himself long before. He takes notice of the pro-
mises he had made; of one he had already fulfilled,
as to the building of the temple; and he makes men-
tion of another, concerning a succession of the
kings of Israel in the house of David; and doubted
not of the performance of it, since God was faith-
ful that had promised. Then, in the words I have
read, expresses his admiration, that God should dwell
upon the earth, Will God indeed dwell on the earth?
Is it fact? Will he truly and really dwell on the
earth? Is there no doubt to be made of it? May it
be credited? Is it not a thing almost incredible? at
least, how wonderful and amazing is it, that he
should dwell upon the earth! for we are not to un-
derstand these words as expressive of any diffidence,
hesitation, or doubt in Solomon concerning it; but
as expressive of admiration; Will God indeed dwell on
the earth! Will he, who dwells on high, and who
humbles himself to look upon things in heaven and
upon the earth; will he deign to dwell with men
upon earth! It is amazing that he should; con-
sidering his immensity, for he adds, Behold, the hea-
ven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee!
He
He is that God, who fills heaven and earth with his presence; and is not circumscribed in place, or by space: no; he is the immense and infinite Being. As he is not bounded by time, so neither by space; and how much less, says Solomon, in this house that I have built. This magnificent, as it was; this, though very spacious, and probably more grand than any building in the known world, before or since; yet even this could not contain the Most High, who dwells not in temples made with hands; that is, in such sense as to be circumscribed by them.

God is an immense Being: he is everywhere: in heaven, earth, and hell. There is no fleeing from his presence: let a person be where he will, in any part of the universe, he is not out of the reach of God, or at a distance from him. If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. God is everywhere, by his power; upholding and maintaining the works of his hands. He is everywhere, by his providence; taking care of, and governing all his creatures. He is everywhere, by his Omnipotence; for it reaches to all places and things. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good: and more especially, his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth; the various parts of the globe, where his people are, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose hearts are perfect towards him. He is everywhere; yet heaven is more especially the place of his residence; or where he displays his glory, and makes it the most manifest; hence it is called his habitation, Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness*. The Lord dwelleth in his

* Isa. lxiii. 15.
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temple, and his throne is in the heavens: yea, heaven itself is his throne, on which he sits. There is his palace, there he keeps his court; there are his attendants, his ministering servants wait upon him: his angels are all around him; they behold the face of our Father, which is in heaven, and therefore are styled the angels of heaven. It is therefore amazing, that this God, who is immense, and whose glorious presence is more especially in heaven should dwell upon earth. Will God indeed dwell upon the earth? He hath formed the earth to be inhabited; but by whom? not only by the beasts of the field, but more especially by man, the chief of the lower creation; yet, surely, not for himself. He hath made both the heavens and the earth; but the former he hath retained for his own dwelling place, and the latter he hath allotted to the sons of men. The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men. It is, therefore, wonderful that he should dwell upon the earth, which he hath given to the children of men, to be inhabited by them; and the rather, since the earth is his footstool. The heaven is his throne, on which he sits: and the earth is his footstool. It is not usual for kings and great princes of the earth, to sit upon their footstool; well, therefore, may the question be put in the manner it is, Will God indeed dwell upon earth? and especially, upon earth, in its present situation; and as it has been ever since the fall of Adam? By sin the earth is defiled and corrupted, is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned. Will God indeed dwell on such an earth as this? It was defiled by the sin of man; it was cursed for his sake; Cursed is the ground for thy sake (says the Lord to Adam); thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth. It was more and more defiled

* Isa. xliv. 18. † Psalm cxv. 16. ‡ Gen. iii. 17, 18.
and corrupted by the sins of men in after times; as by those of the men of the old world. The whole earth was corrupted, and filled with violence; for all men had corrupted their way in the times of Noah; for which reason a flood was brought upon the earth. In after times corruption increased; and indeed in all periods of time, there has been abounding of sin, whereby the land mourns; because of cursing, swearing, lying, shedding of blood, and the like. The earth, therefore, is reserved to fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men*. Will God indeed dwell on such an earth as this? How amazing it is!

Will he dwell with the inhabitants of such an earth as this? It was his pleasure, and has been his condescension at one period of time, and another, to look down upon the earth, to see if there were any that did understand what was good, if they were any that followed it: and the result of such a survey, has been this: There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; there is none that doeth good; no, not one. Now is it not amazing that a God of purity should dwell on earth with such persons as these? It is marvellous condescension in him to look upon things in heaven and in earth. It is a wonderful instance of his goodness, that he should regard sinful man in a providential way: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Visitest him in a providential way. How much more astonishing is it, that God should dwell with men, in a spiritual way and manner! that God, who inhabiteth eternity, who dwells in the high and holy place, and whose name is holy; should dwell also with such who are of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spi-

* 2 Pet. iii. 7.  † Psalm viii. 4.
ri of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. These words may be referred either,

I. To the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; his tabernacling in human nature, upon this our earth; in order to work out the salvation of his people. This is a most amazing instance of his condescension; and with respect to which, such words as these may well be used. Very probable it is, that Solomon had a view unto it; since the temple that he built was a type of the human nature of Jesus Christ.

II. They may be referred also to God's dwelling among his people; or his divine presence in the churches of Christ; which is also an instance of amazing grace; and with regard to which, such words may well be used, *Will God indeed dwell with men upon earth?*

I. This passage may very well be referred to the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; his dwelling upon earth among men, in order to work out their salvation: "*Will God indeed dwell upon earth?*"

God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly God: he was to dwell, and he has dwelt upon earth; but it is marvellous! it is astonishing indeed!

1. He is God: yet he tabernacled in our nature. He is *the Word, that was with God, and was God.* This, may have respect unto that event, when *the Word was made flesh, and dwell, or tabernacled, among us* *:* in allusion to the tabernacle of Moses, which was a type of Christ's human nature. His human nature is the *true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.* So the temple of Solomon, built in some respects after the model of the tabernacle, was a type of Christ's human nature. *Destroy* (says our Lord).

* John i. 14. † Heb, viii. 2.
this temple (meaning his body), and in three days I will raise it up. It was the Word of God that became incarnate and dwelt among men. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*; truly and properly God. The true God; for says the apostle John, We know that the Son of God is come; that is, come into the world in our nature; and we have understanding of him, that he is the true God, and eternal life+: the author and giver of eternal life; having obtained it through his obedience and death. He is the great God, as he must needs be; since he hath obtained eternal redemption for us. "Looking for the bleft fed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ" He has all the perfections of the Godhead in him. All the Father hath, he has; so that he that sees the one, sees the other; Christ being the express image of his Person, thought it not robbery to be equal with him; the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him. All this could not be said with any propriety, had he not been truly and properly God.

He is the Maker of all things. By the Word that was made flesh, all things were made, and without him was not any thing made, that was made.+ All things were created by him, whether visible or invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. He hath laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands. He is over all, God blessed for evermore.§ He is high above all nations, and great above all creatures: he has obtained a more excellent name than they, being of a more excellent nature: for to which of the angels did he ever say, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" All the Angels of God are call-

* John i. i. † John vi. 20. ‡ John i. 1, 2, 3. § Rom. ix. 5.
ed upon to worship him*; and for very good reason, because they are all his creatures. All men, good and bad men, are subject unto him: he dwells, and ever did, in the highest heavens. In the sixty-eighth Psalm, which is a Psalm concerning Christ, it is said of him, that he rides upon the heavens by his name Jah; therefore he is called the Lord from heaven. He is said to come down from heaven, to do the will of his Father; and is said to be in heaven, whilst he was here upon earth†.

Now it is amazing, that this great, glorious, and illustrious person should dwell upon earth. Will God indeed dwell upon the earth? God, the Word, the Maker of all things, who is over all, God blessed for evermore, who dwells in the highest heavens; and will he dwell on the earth? Verily he will; and most certainly he has dwelt upon the earth. It was proposed to him in the antient council, and covenant of peace, that he should assume our nature, and dwell upon earth with mortal men: he agreed to it, and said, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God‡. I come in human nature: I come into the world, and among men; I delight to do thy will; that is, to obtain redemption for lost sinners. This, was proposed; and to this he agreed: thenceforward he is represented as rejoicing in the habitable parts of this earth; in that part of the world, where he himself had agreed to dwell; and upon those spots of ground, where he knew those people would dwell for whom he became a surety and a Saviour. His delights were with the sons of men: and we have various instances of his appearing on the earth, long before he dwelt upon it. He appeared in Eden's garden im-

*Heb. i. 6. † John iii. xiii. ‡ Psalm lx. 7.
mediately after the fall of our first parents. "They "heard the voice of the Lord, God:" or, as the antient Jewish paraphraxe has it. "They "heard the voice of the Word of the Lord their "God:" of that eternal Logos, that Word which was in the beginning with God, was God*; and was to dwell with man upon earth.

He appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, and gave him, not only an assurance that he should have a son born to him at such a time; but predicted the immediate destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He appeared in the form of a man to Jacob, wrestling with him till the break of day. Under the emblem of flaming fire, he appeared to Moses in the bush, and sent him to be the deliverer of Israel. He appeared to Manoah and his wife, declaring his name to be secret, or wonderful; and so to many others. Now those appearances of his, were presages that he would dwell upon earth: they were pledges and earnefts, affuring the saints, that thus it would be: they seemed to indicate a kind of delight and pleasure the Son of God had in this, as it were, desirous of the time when he should tabernacle among men.

Besides these appearances, which gave hints of what would be, there were certain prophecies concerning it. The first prophecy and promise was, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head†. Eve, perhaps, had reference to this, when she said, upon the birth of her first-born, I have gotten a man from the Lord‡: or, as it may be rendered, I have gotten the man, the Lord: which many Jewish interpreters understand of the Messiah; imagining (though she was mistaken), that she had got the man, the Lord Messiah. However,

* John i. 1. † Gen. iii. 15. ‡ Gen. vi. 1.
it is certain that in the times of Job there were assurances of this. Job expresses his full assurance of it: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth*. So various other prophecies indicate the same, and point out even the very land in which the Messiah should dwell. Salvation is nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land; that is, the glorious person promised to be the Saviour, who would work out the salvation of his people, and who is the brightness of the Father's glory, is coming to dwell in this our land, the land of Canaan. For which reason it is sometimes called Immanuel's land; because he was to be born, dwell, and suffer in that land. Sometimes particular parts of that land are pointed out; as Galilee and the parts adjacent; yea, the mount of Olives is said to be a place whereon his feet should stand: and it is well known, from the Evangelical history, that he was frequently upon that mount in prayer; and it was from that mount he ascended to heaven.

In the fulness of time, according to all these hints and predictions, he came into this world; was made flesh, and dwelt among us. He came, not by any change of place, for that is impossible; but by taking to his divine person, the human nature. For we are not to entertain such gross sentiments of him, as though, when he became incarnate, he moved from place to place, from heaven to earth; for even when he had assumed our nature and dwelt among us, he was in the bosom of the Father: *the only begotten Son, which is (it is not said, which was in the bosom of the Father, and is now come from thence; but which is) in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared*.

*Job. xix. 25. †Psal. lxxxv. 9. ‡Isa. viii. 8. §Isa. ix. 1. ¶Zach. xiv. 4.
him *. Now it was, that he tabernacled in the flesh, as before observed: And among sinful men chiefly did he dwell when here upon earth; which gave umbrage to the scribes and Pharisees, those self-judiciaries, who could not brook that one who set up for a prophet, and appeared to be a holy man, should have conversation with profane sinners. It is said of him, by way of reproach, this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them †. Hence the objection made by the scribes and Pharisees; Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners ‡? which being reported to him, he made this reply; They that be whole, need not a physician; but they that are sick §. Signifying, that these proud Pharisees were whole, in their own esteem; and so stood in no need of him as a physician. But there were others that were sick; distressed persons, that were brought to a sense of themselves. To them he was a physician; and thus he vindicates his character. As if he should say, I am a physician, and I act in character. I have nothing to do with those that are whole: my business lies with those that are affected with soul maladies, and are sensible of them. With whom should I be, as a physician, but with them? But after all, he could not shelter himself from their opprobrious language, calling him a friend of publicans and sinners.

The persons whom he conversed with upon earth were sinful men. Upon earth he was sometime. He was not (as in his former appearances, under the old testament dispensation) here for a few minutes, or hours at most; but he dwelt among men. He was not as a way-faring man, that continues only for a night; but dwelt many years among men upon earth. We read of him at different periods of his

* John, i. 18. † Luke, xv. 2. ‡ Mat, ix. 11. § Mat. ix. 12.
life. When he was about two years old, as we may suppose, that shocking massacre was made by Herod, of infants of two years old and under. Supposing him to be about that age, he ordered the infants of that age to be slain. We hear of him at twelve years of age, when he went with his parents to Jerusalem to keep the passover; and was found among the Doctors in the temple. We hear of him again when he was about thirty years of age, when he came from Galilee to John, to be baptized of him. How long he lived after cannot be said with any exactness; but at least he must abide upon earth four or five years more, since we read of four passovers that passed between the time of his baptism and his death. When he had done the work he came about, which was the salvation of his people, then his life was taken away, and he was received up into heaven, by his divine Father, in the sight of his apostles. There Stephen saw him sitting at the right hand of God*; and every believer, by faith, beholds him crowned with honour and glory, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. There he must be till the time of the restitution of all things; and then he will come again, according to his promise. We expect Jesus our Saviour from heaven, and he will most certainly come. To them that look for him, he will appear the second time, without sin unto salvation. When this earth has been refined and purified by fire, he will descend, and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell among them.

But, is it not amazing that the Son of God, the Word of God, he who is truly God, should dwell upon earth, as he did at his first coming? to which this passage chiefly refers; that he should dwell upon earth, who says, "I was set, up from everlasting, from the beginning,

* Acts. vii. 56.
"or ever the earth was! When there were no depths,
I was brought forth: when there were no foun-
tains abounding with water; before the mountains
were settled; before the hills, was I brought forth:
while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the
fields, nor the highest parts of the dust of the
world, then I was by him." That He who was
before the earth existed, should dwell upon this
earth, how astonishing! He must have a place of re-
sidence before, and where was he? It may be an-
swered, He was with God. "In the beginning was
the Word, and the Word was with God:" with
his divine Father; in his bosom, as it is elsewhere
said. Yet, in the fulness of time, he came forth
from the Father, and came into this world. Is it
not amazing that he should dwell upon earth, by
whom the earth was made? He was in the world,
and the world was made by him, and the world knew
him not; even the same glorious person that was
made flesh and dwelt among us, with whom, and in
comparison of whom, the whole earth, and all its in-
habitants, are as nothing, less than nothing and vanity.
He fits upon the circle of the earth, and all the in-
habitants of it are as grasshoppers before him; yet
such has been his condescension and goodness as to
dwell with men upon earth. He who is the great
God has been manifest in the flesh. He who is the
mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince
of Peace, has been the child born and the Son giv-
en. He who thought it no robbery to be equal
with God, has been found in fashion as a man, and
in the form of a servant, walking up and down upon
this earth of ours. How astonishing is this! Will
God indeed dwell on earth? So it was to be; so it

* Prov. viii. 23—30. † John i. 1. ‡ John i. 18. § John
i. 10. || Isa. ix. 6.
The infinite Condescension of Jehovah,

has been. And the wonder is the greater, when we consider what it was he came into this world to do! It was, not merely to instruct men in divine and spiritual things. He was indeed a teacher sent of God, as Nicodemus justly observes*. He taught the way of God in truth, plainly and perfectly. Never man spake like him. He spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes and pharisees. He was sent to preach the Gospel to various cities; for which he was abundantly qualified, being anointed with the Spirit of God, without measure, to preach glad tidings to the meek.

He went about throughout Judea and Galilee, preaching the gospel of God; but this was far from being the principal thing for which he came and dwelt upon our earth: it was to work out the salvation of his people. He came, as he himself says, to seek and to save that which was lost: loft men, loft in Adam; so loft, that they could never find the way to heaven. He came to save sinners, even the worst and chief of sinners. This is the glory of the gospel, the fulness, the marrow of it: This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief†. He became our Goel, our near kinsman, and dwelt among us, in order to redeem us from sin, from Satan, and from the curse of the law: this was his errand into the world. In order to this, he spent his life, attended with the greatest poverty and meanness, difficulties and sorrows, which issued in death itself. He spent his life upon earth in much poverty and meanness, being born of poor parents, brought up in a mean manner: when arrived at man's estate, and entered on his publick ministry, he had not where to lay his head; as he himself ex-

* John iii. 2  † Luke xix. 10. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 15.
He was, in a sort, behelden to others for his support, though Lord of all. How amazing is this! yet so it was: for he came not to be ministered unto, to be served in state, as princes are; but to be a servant to others. He spent his life upon earth, attended not only with meannesses, but with great affliction; for he was a man of sorrow, from his cradle to his cross. Many were the troubles he met with from the temptations of Satan, from his own disciples, and still more from the Jews; according to that prediction, **Who shall declare his generation?** or the men of that generation in which he lived; their barbarous and ill usage of the Messiah, which issued in the shameful and painful death of the cross. All this he underwent to work out our salvation. How amazing is this! **Will God indeed, the God of heaven and earth, God over all, blessed for ever, dwell upon earth?** and for such a purpose?

II. This may also be referred to God’s dwelling among his people, or his divine presence in the churches of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says, of them that love him and keep his commandments (by which they shew that they love him), that his **Father will love them**, as well as he, and adds, **We will come unto them, and we will make our abode with them.** More than one divine person must be here intended; for our Lord says, **We will make our abode with them.** The Father comes and makes his abode with his people, in a spiritual sense, as he promises; “ **I will dwell in them, and walk in them.**” Who says this? God: he that says, **He will be their Father, and they shall be his sons and daughters.**

The Spirit of the Lord dwells in the saints on earth. **Ye are the temple of God,** says the apostle; **and**

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* Mat. viii. 20. † Isa. liii. 8. ‡ John xiv. 23. § 2 Cor. vi. 16.
| P 4 | 1 Cor. iii. 16. |
and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. This distinguishes the regenerate from the unregenerate man; ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*

The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, dwells in the saints, in their hearts by faith†. Whoever believes in Christ, eats his flesh, and drinks his blood; dwells in Christ, and Christ in him‡. He dwells in all his churches, as in his proper house; according to that saying, Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end§. He dwells among them as his family, and provides for them food, raiment, and every thing they stand in need of; or that is for their spiritual pleasure and delight. He dwells among them, as in his palace; they being the city of the great king. He dwells among them as in his kingdom: for a gospel church state is called the kingdom of heaven||; where Christ is acknowledged as king by his saints; and where he reigns as king; and his dominion is, for ever and ever. Here he dwells, and here he will dwell for evermore; for he has promised to be with his churches and ministers to the end of the world.

But particularly, he dwells in the hearts of true believers; dwells with them upon earth: not in such a general way as he may be said to dwell with all men; in as much as all live, move, and have their being in him!; nor in so special a sense, as the divine Logos, or Word, dwells hypostatically in the human nature: nor yet in so sublime a sense, as he is in the Father, and the Father in him; but he lives in them, as the author of life; and he dwells in them in order to revive them, to revive the spirit

* Rom. viii. 9. † Eph. iii. 17. ‡ John vi. 56. § Heb. iii. 6. || Mat. xxv. 1.
of the humble. He dwells in their hearts, not merely in their heads, as in some: dwells not upon their tongues, as in them who profess to know him, and do not, experimentally; but he dwells in their hearts, these everlasting doors being thrown open by his grace: there he sets up his throne, and reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life. He dwells (and O, how astonishing is it!) where sin dwells; for sin dwells in the saints. Christ dwells where no good thing dwells but himself; for in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing*. What good thing there is in his people, is put there by himself. He dwells (and how astonishing is it!) where he is often slighted; as he was by the church when he stood at her door and knocked; and desired she would open to him, when she said; I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?†. He dwells, I say, where he is often slighted, where he is provoked, where his holy Spirit is grieved, where he is rebelled against; which sometimes occasion him to withdraw his comfortable presence.

This is expressive of union between him and his people, who are members of his body, and one spirit with him. It is also expressive of communion with him; fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And this communion they may expect to experience in the use of means; for where the shepherds pitch their tents, or where the word is preached, and the ordinances administered, there he is. He is held in these galleries, and here believers behold him in his beauty. Where he records his name he comes and blesses; and where two or three are met together in his name, there he is in the midst of them. He dwells with his people for ever more;

* Rom. vii. 18. † Sol So, v. 3.
The infinite Condescension of Jehovah.

for though they may be at a loss for his sensible presence, at times, and enquire where he is; yet he is not really withdrawn from them. He dwells with them still; as with Mary, when she said, they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. Christ was at that time just at her elbow, but she knew him not. Christ never leaves nor forsakes his people: he dwells in them and they in him.

But I shall now come to a close. How astonishing, then, are the grace and condescension of our Lord Jesus Christ, in dwelling among men upon earth! You that know Christ, and have believed in him, know this to be true. Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor; that ye through his poverty might be rich.

If you enjoy spiritual communion with him, and know the sensible inhabitation of him in your hearts by faith, make use of those means which he has directed unto, an attendance upon his word and ordinances: for our Lord hath assured those that love him and keep his commandments; that is, observe his word and ordinances, from a principle of love to him, that he will come unto them, and make his abode with them.

S E R-
SERMON XIII.

The Plague of a Man's own Heart, what it is; to whom discovered; and the Encouragement given to such Persons to expect the Pardon of all their Sins.

1 Kings viii. 38.

—Which shall know every man the plague of his own heart.

The whole verse reads thus: What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart; and spread forth his hands towards this house: (to complete the sense, it follows) then hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, &c.

These words are part of the prayer which Solomon offered up to God, at the dedication of the temple. After he had addressed the divine Being, by mentioning several of his attributes, and expressed his admiration that he should dwell upon the earth among men; he requests of God, that not only the present prayers might be graciously answered;
ed; but that all the future supplications of the Isra-
elites, whether as a body of people, or individuals,
might be regarded. In a more particular manner he
intreats of the Lord, that when thofe who shall be
fenisible of the plague of their own hearts, and distres-
fed by it, apply to him for relief, that he would hear
and forgive. Thus the words I have read are in-
troduced: now, what I shall endeavour to do, will
be,

I. To shew you what the plague of the heart is:
what is meant by it, and what may be learned from
it.

II. The knowledge that some persons have of the
plague of their own heart. I say, some persons;
because it seems clear, from the very manner in
which the words are expressed, that all do not know
the plague of their own heart.

III. What those persons may do, who are thus
fenisible of the plague of their own heart. They
may spread out their hands to the Lord, and look
towards his holy temple, in hope of having relief
from thence; and even the forgiveness of their
fins.

I. I shall enquire what is meant by the plague of
the heart; and what we may learn from this ex-
pression, Which shall know every man the plague of his
own heart.

In the first place, this plainly suggests, that the
heart of man is not whole and sound. It is un-
healthful; it is ditempered; it is attended with a
very grievous disease; for what more grievous than
the plague? The disease of the heart of man is sin,
and particularly in-dwelling sin; the sin of our na-
ture, which has its seat in the heart. Every sin is
a disease, as is clear from what the Psalmist says,
Who
The Plague of a Man's own Heart, considered, 221

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases*. Here diseases and iniquities are represented as the same; and the healing of these diseases is signified by the forgiveness of iniquity.

Now as every sin is a disease, so more especially in-dwelling sin, or the sin of our nature. This is a natural and hereditary disease to the sons of men: there are some bodily diseases, which come immediately from parents to children; and of this sort, in a moral sense, is the sin of our nature. We are, by nature, children of wrath; and the reason is we are by nature, sinners; otherwise, we could not have been by nature children of wrath. Sin is natural to us: it is as natural for one of Adam's fallen race to sin, as it is to do any act whatever. It is natural to men; it is derived to them in a natural way. It is hereditary: we are conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity; born in sin, and so are called, transgressors from the womb. As our first parent Adam was, and as our immediate ones are, so in course must their offspring be; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.

This disease is epidemic and universal; all are tainted and affected with it. There are diseases in a natural sense which are called epidemic, which, when they come into a village, a town, or a country, go through them; but then, be they as epidemic or universal as they may, there are always some that escape; but in this case, there is not one, no not one of Adam's race. For almost six thousand years there has not been one of Adam's posterity that has escaped this disease; except the man Christ Jesus, who descended not from him, by ordinary generation; otherwise, all mankind have been infected

* Psalm ciii. 3.
with this plague, this pestilential disease, sin. All, says the apostle, are under sin. We have before proved, says he, that both Jews and Gentiles; which is a division of all mankind into its proper parts, and includes the whole; we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin*: all under the power of sin; involved in the guilt of sin; and liable to punishment for it. This is the case of all mankind: all have sinned in their first head, Adam. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Yea, Jehovah himself is represented as looking down from heaven, taking a survey of the children of men, of their qualities and actions; and the result of this survey is, that they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one†. Now if there were any person free from this infectious disease, sin; undoubtedly the omniscient eye of God would observe it. It is most manifest, then, that there are none of all the individuals of human nature that have escaped it: all are infected with it: all; the body, and the members of it: the soul, and all the powers thereof. It may be said, of men in general, as it is of the body of the people of Israel, that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. It is an epidemic disease.

It is a very nauseous and loathsome disease: the Psalmist speaks of it as such, My loins are filled with a loathsome disease‡. He had respect to sin, or the fruit, and effect of it; for he had before observed, that there was no soundness in his flesh, nor any rest in his bones, because of his sin§. This disease makes a person loathsome to Jehovah; who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. This is a disease that man-

* Rom. iii. 9. † Rom. iii. 10, 11, 12. ‡ Psalm xxxviii. 7. § Psalm xxxviii. 3.
kind are very early infected with; therefore, the apostate sons of Adam are represented by an infant cast out into the open field, to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born. Being infected with such a disease as this, it cannot but be loathsome in the eyes of God: and sin, that makes us loathsome in the sight of God, makes us loathsome in our own sight too, when we are led to take a proper view of it. Hence those words of the apostle Paul, who had a large experience of the nature, force, and power of in-dwelling sin; O wretched man, that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? or from this dead body, which I carry about with me. Do but represent unto yourselves how loathsome it must be for a living man to have a dead body fastened to him, and be obliged to carry it along with him wherever he goes; and to have it wherever he is. Just so it is with the people of God, who have any knowledge of this pestilential disease, this body of death, which they continually carry about with them.

This is a disease, also, that is mortal in itself, a deadly disease; as the plague is generally supposed to be. There are diseases which are not unto death; but the disease of sin is unto death. We read of one sin in particular which is unto death. It is emphatically so, namely, the unpardonable sin; because it is not forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. But every sin is, in its own nature, deserving of death. The wages of every sin, is death; eternal death. This disease is incurable, except by the grace of God and the blood of Christ. What Jeremiah says of the people of Israel, that their bruise was incurable, and their wound grievous, because there was none to plead their cause that they
might be bound up, and they had no healing medicines, may be said of all mankind, with respect to this disease of sin. It is incurable by any methods they themselves are capable of making use of, or others for them: When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound; then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound*. So let a sinner, that is diseased with sin, use whatever means he can, short of Christ, and his blood, they will be all ineffectual. Christ is the only physician that can cure the plague of the heart; and his blood is the sovereign balm. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? yes; and that Physician is Christ, that balm is his blood.

Now the disease I am speaking of, is called the plague: the plague of the heart. The plague is a distemper which, you all know, is very threatening, wasting and destroying; and exceeding shocking and distressing. It is called the pestilence that walks in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noonday†. It destroys its thousands and ten thousands, when God gives it a commission; as in the case of David's numbering the people. It was sent at his own choice, and no less than seventy thousand persons were immediately destroyed by it. Whenever we hear of the plague breaking out in any of the countries abroad, to which our ships trade; we are always alarmed, lest they should, with the goods brought from thence, bring that dreadful distemper along with them; and all proper caution is taken to prevent it. Whenever we hear of it nearer our borders, in a neighbouring country, what an alarm does it give us? About forty years ago,‡ or it may be somewhat more, some of you may remember it

* Hosea v. 13. † Ps. xci. 6. ‡ This sermon was preached, Sept. 19, 1762.
The Plague of a Man's own Heart, considered.

broke forth in Marseilles, in France. What a consternation were the inhabitants of this city in! How many meetings for prayer were set up; and held for some time! But there is a plague nearer than this it is in the heart of every man, and yet little or no notice is taken of it. A plague of more fatal consequences than a temporal disease is. The latter only destroys the body, but this destroys the soul to all eternity, unless it is cured by the grace of God, and the blood of Christ. It is the plague of the heart; and we carry it about with us.

The word here made use of, is sometimes used of the plague of leprosy; as in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of the book of Leviticus. Persons infected with that plague (after it was a clear case that so it was with them), put a covering upon their upper lip; and cried, unclean, unclean*. All sinners, likewise, who are made sensible of the leprosy of sin, and that they are infected with it, humbly flee to Christ, the great physician, and say, as the leper in the gospel, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. This leprosy of sin, is not only like that, which was outward in a man; but like that got into a house, which could not be removed 'till the house was pulled down. Of this kind is the plague of the heart; the leprosy of sin in us: for it is an inward, spreading one; there is no removing of it 'till this earthly house of our tabernacle is taken down. Hence, says the apostle, We, in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened.

These hints may serve to give you some idea of the plague of a man's heart, in-dwelling sin and corruption. But,

Secondly. I shall give you a fuller view of this plague of the heart, by laying before you the state

* Levit. xiii. 45.
and condition of the heart of man, according to the scriptural account of it; which is this: A man's heart is wicked; yea, wickedness itself. So it is said in Psalm v. 9. Their inward part, that is, their heart, is very wickedness. It is not only wicked, but wickedness itself; not only wickedness, but extreme wickedness; that is, extremely wicked. The carnal mind is said to be enmity against God*: not barely an enemy to God, but enmity itself; which expresses the great degree of enmity in the carnal mind of man, to God and all that is good.

Sin is not only sinful; but it is exceeding sinful: and it is made so to appear to a truly enlightened mind, as it was to the apostle Paul; who tells us, that sin, by the commandment, became exceeding sinful. Such is the heart of man. It is wicked, wickedness itself: it is sinful, exceeding sinful; yea, it is the seat of all sin.

The corruption of nature, most properly the plague of our heart, is represented by the apostle, as that which dwells in us; It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me†. By sin that dwelt in him, he means not any particular sin, distinct from others; but an assemblage of sins, corruptions, lusts, and iniquities; for he afterwards represents it, not only as a person, but as a law, having power and authority; and, as a body, consisting of divers members, divers lusts, and pleasures‡. The heart of man is like Babylon; a cage of every unclean and hateful bird, and the hold of every foul spirit. It is the seat and source of all sin. It is the forge, where all is hammered; for the evil heart devises evil imaginations. There is the mint of sin; it comes from thence. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphimes.

* Rom. viii. 7. † Rom. vii. 17. ‡ Tit. iii. 3.
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Phemies; these are the things which defile a man*. Out of the abundance of the wickedness of the heart, the mouth speaketh bad things. All the evil actions of life have their rise from hence; and you may judge hereby of the malignity of man's heart, what a plague is there. It is so bad, that Jeremiah says, it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked†. It is deceitful. There is deceitfulness in every sin; particularly in inwelling sin, the corruption of our nature. The apostle cautions the Hebrews to exhort one another daily, lest any of them should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin‡. The old man is said to be corrupt according to the deceitful lusts of which he consists. So deceitful is man's heart, and the lust that dwells there, that even the best of men have been deceived thereby. Not only the apostle Paul was deceived by it, before his conversion, agreeable to that saying, Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me; and by it slew me: but even after conversion, the best and wisest of men have been deceived by their own hearts, and the deceitfulness thereof. For a man promises himself that in sinning, which he never enjoys. He promises to himself a great deal of pleasure in sinning: hence divers lusts and pleasures are joined together, as if they were one and the same; or, as if men, in serving the one, enjoyed the other. This is proposed, this is expected; but is it enjoyed? No; the pleasures expected from sin, are all an illusion, all a dream: that fantastic pleasure which is enjoyed, is a short-lived one. The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and issue, at last, in bitterness and death. Sin, though it is rolled in the mouth, and kept under the tongue

* Mat. xv. 19, 20. † Jerem. xvii. 9. ‡ Heb. iii. 13.
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as a sweet morsel, proves, in the end, as the poison of asps.

Men promise themselves much profit in sinning, which they never enjoy. This was the temptation of our first parents, with which they were imposed upon, and deceived. Satan suggested they should be as Gods, knowing good and evil. This was the bait, more knowledge; whereas, by dallying with the temptation, instead of gaining more knowledge, they lost, in a good measure, what they had. A man's heart promises him much profit in sinning; that he shall gain much riches in the way of illicit trade, and other unlawful practices; but how frequently is he disappointed: and were it otherwise, What would it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Sometimes men propose to themselves and expect a great deal of honour among ungodly men, by following their examples, and complying with their customs; but how often are they disappointed! Besides, when the conscience comes to be awakened, and when the apostle's question is regarded, What fruit had ye in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? they will readily acknowledge, they had none at all.

A man proposes to himself liberty in sinning: but does he enjoy it? No: he is brought into more and more bondage. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption*. Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage†. Whoever commits sin, is the servant of sin, the slave of it: Is Ephraim a servant? is he a home-born slave? Verily he is: and so is every ungodly man.

* Pet. ii. 19. † Ibid.
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They promise themselves peace; that they shall have peace, though they walk every man after the imagination of his own evil heart to add drunkenness to thirst: but do they enjoy it? No: for while they are crying, peace, peace, sudden destruction comes upon them. How deceitful is the heart of man! That is promised which is never enjoyed. There is nothing in a man's heart to be trusted to; he that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool: even he that trusteth in the goodness of his heart, in the supposed integrity of his heart, and of his conversation, which he supposeth springs from thence. Persons of this character, trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others. They trust in themselves, that they are rich, and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing: when, at the same time, they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and will find themselves most miserably deceived another day. The heart of man is deceitful: the plague is in it; in-dwelling sin, and corruption. There is nothing more deceitful than the heart of man. It is exceedingly wicked; wicked to the highest degree of wickedness: which seems to be the meaning of the expression.

All that is in the heart of man is wicked. The thoughts, and the imagination of the thoughts of the heart are so, according to Gen. vi. 5. So in Matthew, chapter xiv. ver. 19. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts. Men's thoughts are evil. The thought of wickedness is sin; abominable in the sight of God. The apostle therefore exhorts Simon Magus to pray that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven. The sensible sinner has reason to hope for this; therefore the wicked man is encouraged to forswake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and to turn to the Lord, who will

† Acts viii. 22.
have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*; both evil thoughts and evil actions. Yea, the imagination of the thoughts is evil: the first formation of evil thoughts; or those motions, as the apostle calls them, of sin, which are in our members†, are evil. You read of some that thought themselves wise men, and good men; but became vain in their imaginations, and their evil hearts were darkened‡; and of others, more openly profane, that resolved to walk according to the imagination of their evil hearts§. Every thought, and every imagination of the heart of man are evil. God is not in all their thoughts||; nor, indeed, in any of their thoughts. His thoughts are not like theirs. His are holy, theirs are unholy: his are thoughts of peace, theirs are thoughts of evil. No good thoughts arise from the wicked heart of man. No good thing comes out of this Nazareth; for there is no good thing in it. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is evil; only so, and always so. The imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is said to be evil from his youth¶: hence he is represented as like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, continually casting up mire and dirt**. The affections of the heart are inordinate; all out of course; run in a wrong channel, and to wrong objects. Men are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.

Their hearts are set upon the world, and the things of it; the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. The mind of man is corrupted, depraved, distempered. There is vanity in it; hence men are said to walk in the vanity of their minds. They are empty of all that is good; yea, they are avercel thereunto; for the carnal mind

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is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The mind is darkened by sin; has no light into divine and spiritual things; is darkness itself; calls evil good, and good evil; puts darkness for light, and light for darkness. The understanding being depraved, it passes a wrong judgment on things. Conscience being darkened, does not perform its office: being in many feared, as it were, with a red hot iron; and in every one it is evil. Happy those who have their hearts sprinkled, by the blood of Jesus, from an evil conscience. Their will is stubborn and inflexible. It is not subject to God's law, nor to his gospel. It is like the adamant, and called a 

Further. The plague of the heart is very deep and secret: it is an evil which none are acquainted with but a man's own conscience and God. Secret sins, heart sins, these may be called the plague of the heart. Lord, says the Psalmist, thou hast set our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. Secret sins, which are in their own hearts; or, if committed, none but God and their own hearts are privy to them. Yea, there are some sins that a man himself is not privy to; they pass through his heart, and he, not being always upon his guard, cannot take notice of everything that is done. Even a good man cannot; hence David says, Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

* Ezek. xi. 19. † Psalm xc. 8. ‡ Psalm xix. 12.
Or, the plague of the heart may denote such sins as are in a particular manner predominant in a man's heart. There are some sins which may be termed a man's own way*; constitutional sins, or sins which most easily beset †. In some pride, in some the lust of impurity; in others ambition, and so on. These are common and prevailing sins in the heart of men, and may be called the plague of their hearts; and which give great distress to those who have the grace of God. They find them to be a plague indeed: their daily experience proves it.

There is an expression in a parallel text where the same thing is intended, though in somewhat different language. Then (says Solomon) what prayer, or what supplication forever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore, and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hand in this house; then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive ‡. What is called in Kings, the plague of his own heart, is here deminated his own sore, and his own grief. This may a little enlarge our idea of the plague of the heart. A man's own sore, and his own grief. His sore; that which gives him a great deal of pain and uneasiness, as a sore does. So the corruption of nature does to a sensible sinner; when he is pricked to the heart, wounded through a sense of sin, how grievous and intolerable is it! The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, the outward infirmity of his body; he may be able to bear it, with some degree of patience; but a spirit wounded with a sense of sin, who can bear? This is a sore which is very painful indeed! Every man his own sore, and his own grief. Sin causes grief; and nothing more than the inward corruption of nature. David, we find, expressing his grief on this

* Isa. liii. 6. † Heb. xii. 1. ‡ 2 Chron. vi. 29, 30.
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account. I go mourning all the day long; for my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh*; and so all good men do. They are like the doves of the valley, every one mourning for his own iniquity; especially the sin of his nature, which is his own. Hence Jabez's prayer to the Lord, was, Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me†: the corruption of nature, and its breakings forth.

This is what Solomon calls a man's sore and grief; because it produces grief to the people of God. They are grieved, because it is contrary to the holy nature of God, and his righteous law; against the Lord, who is their Maker, their Benefactor, their God, and Father: against him who hath shewn so much favour to them, and expressed so much love towards them. It cuts them to the heart that they should sin against this God; and that his name should be dishonoured in any measure by them, as it is by sin. It causes the enemy to open his mouth; and the way of truth is evil spoken of. This grieves the people of God: and because hereby the holy Spirit of God is grieved. Grieve not the holy Spirit‡: and then the apostle goes on to mention various sins whereby the Spirit of God may be grieved. He who convinces them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; he who hath been their comforter, and is the Spirit of faith in them, the Spirit of adoption to them, and the earnest of their heavenly inheritance; that he should be grieved by them, is grievous to themselves. So, likewise, because hereby they are deprived of communion with God. Iniquity, in this respect, separates between God and the soul. They are filled with confusion, distress, and contrition of mind, as Peter was through his fall.—But thus much may suffice for the opening of the

* Psal. xxxviii. 6, 7. † 1 Chron iv. 10. ‡ Eph. iv. 30.
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plague of the heart. From all this somewhat may be gathered and your own experience will furnish you with more, upon this humiliating subject. But

II. There is a knowledge of this. Some persons have a knowledge of it, and some have not. This is supposed in the text, by "All thy people Israel, which shall know, every man the plague of his own heart." That is, as many of them as shall know the plague of their own hearts; suggesting, that all do not. Some do not know this. Carnal men do not. Only spiritual persons, that are under the influence of the Spirit of God, who convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. As for others, they know nothing of the plague of their own heart. They may possibly know something of the nature of sin, the difference between moral good and evil, by the light of nature, the laws of men, and the general notions obtained among men; but they know nothing of the spring of evil actions, of in-dwelling sin, the fountain of iniquity. To this they are strangers; and more especially such as are grown up to work all iniquity; whose consciences are cauterized, or feared with a hot iron. All those who are whole, know not the plague of their own hearts. The whole need not a physician, but those that are sick. The former need a physician as much as the latter; but they know not that they stand in need of one. The reason of which is, they do not know the plague of their own hearts; and therefore, in their own apprehensions, they need no physician. It is quite the reverse, however, with those that are sick; that is, who are sensible of their sickness: for, otherwise, all men are sick; but our Lord means, them that are sensible of it, as Ephraim was: "When Ephraim saw his sickness."* Now those who are sensible of

* Hosea v. 13.
their sickness, feel their need of a physician; but those who are insensible of sickness, are like him, whom the wise man describes as upon the top of a mast; who says, They have stricken me, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not*. So it is with such insensible sinners as are whole in their own esteem. Those who think themselves increased in goods, and in need of nothing, do not know the plague of their own hearts. Those who imagine they need no repentance, do not know the plague of their own hearts. The Pharisee knows not the plague of his own heart: for his language is, I am not as other men are. The apostle Paul did not know the plague of his own heart, at the time to which he refers, when he says, Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. The perfectionist knows not the plague of his own heart; if he he did, he would not say, he is free from sin. Job says, If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own cloaths should abhor me†. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves‡: but good men know the plague of their own hearts; being enlightened by the Spirit of God, convincing them of sin, of righteousness, and judgment. Such as are made light in the Lord, and made acquainted with salvation by him; are made light, so as to know themselves, and the plague of their own hearts. Those in whose hearts God has commanded the light to shine, not only see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; but they see the vileness of their nature, and the corruption of their hearts; and that they know this, appears from the ingenuous confession of sin, which they make; not only of the outward actions of sin, which they commit; but also of in-dwelling sin. For while they are confessing

* Prov. xxiii. 35. † Job. ix. 30, 31. ‡ 1 John i. 8.
the one, they are naturally led to the other; as the Psalmist was, *I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*. This appears from the groanings of the saints; for they groan, *being burthened, burthened with in-dwelling sin*. So David says, (when speaking of sin, on which account he had no rest in his bones), *My groaning is not hid from thee*. Saints, under the New Testament, speak the same language (for the people of God, under different dispensations, have the same experience in this respect). *O wretched man that I am,* (says the apostle), *who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* It appears by the feeling they have of a law in their members, warring against the law of their minds; fighting one against the other; so that they cannot do the thing that they would. It appears from their non-dependance upon any religious duties performed by them; for however outwardly religious they may appear, in the sight of others, they are sensible of imperfection in their services; they know there is not a just man upon earth, that does good, and sinneth not; that there is strange distraction of mind, wanderings of thoughts, and a mixture of sin, even in their most holy things. They cannot, therefore, depend upon any thing done by them; but acknowledge, when they have done all they can, that they are but unprofitable servants. It appears also, by their prayers against the plague of their own hearts. This leads us to consider,

III. What those persons may do, who are sensible of the plague of their own hearts. They may spread out their hands to the Lord, and make supplication to him, under a sense of their great depravity. They may pray that the Lord would keep them from the plague of their own hearts; that it may not break forth to the grieving of their souls, or the dishonour

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* Psalm li, 5. † Psalm xxxviii. 9. ‡ Rom. viii. 24.
of the divine name; and that they be not destroyed thereby. Was David, when reflecting on the power of his enemy, induced to say, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul? So the faints, when they behold the force of corruption in them, fear they shall some day perish thereby: yet in the midst of all their discouragements, they can spread out their hands to God, and pray that he would mortify those corruptions of nature. Though the Lord hath said, he will subdue their iniquities; it becomes them to pray that no iniquity may have dominion over them: that this house of Saul might grow weaker and weaker, while that of David grows stronger and stronger: that the inward man might be renewed day by day, and the old man put off, according to the former conversation: that though it be not destroyed, it may be weakened; and also, that the Lord would grant fresh manifestations of forgiving love, for sins of heart, as well as of life and conversation.

Upon the whole, this may serve to humble us before the Lord; when we consider what we are, what we have about us, and what is in us; namely, the plague of the heart. It is enough to humble the proud heart, when sensible of it; and cause the words of Job to be adopted, Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer? I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes see thee: wherefore I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes.

This also may lead us to wonder at the grace of God, that he should have any regard to such diseased and corrupted creatures as we are; and that God should dwell upon earth, in the hearts of sinful men, as in verse the twenty-seventh. This is marvellous grace, indeed! This may lead us, who know the plague of our own hearts, to be thankful to God, that he has not left us to that blindness persons
sons are under the influence of, who talk of the
goodness of their hearts; and see no need of the
cleansing blood of Jesus, that healing balm. Blessed be God, he hath not left us to this. Such neither know the disease, nor the physician; neither know the plague of their own hearts, nor how they are to be cured of it. God, blessed be his name! hath opened our eyes to see our disease; and hath shewn us who the Physician is. Let it then be our great concern, to shew forth the praises of him, who hath called us out of darkness, into his marvellous light.
S E R M O N XIV.

A Principle of Grace in the Heart, a good Thing; always tending towards the Lord God of Israel.

1 Kings xiv. 13.

Because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.

The whole verse reads thus, And all Israel shall mourn for him; for he only, of Jeroboam, shall come to the grave; because in him was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.

These words are spoken of Abijah, son of Jeroboam, king of Israel. He was now sick, and Jeroboam was concerned for him. He wanted to know what would become of him; whether he would recover from his sickness, or not. Therefore he sends his wife to Ahijah the prophet, upon this errand: but, as he knew the prophet had no good opinion of him (a dislike to him, indeed, because of his idolatry),
A Principle of Grace in the Heart,

try), he orders his wife to disguise herself, and go as a country-woman, with presents to the prophet, to know what would become of the child. She goes; but as soon as she enters the prophet's house, he, being before apprized of it by the Lord, gives her to understand he knew who she was: told her, he had a message from the Lord, that would be disagreeable to her, and her family; namely, that God, for the idolatry of her husband, had determined to cut off her whole family: that such of them as died in the city should be eaten with dogs; and such as fell in the fields, should be devoured by the fowls of the air: and that, as to the child she came to enquire about, he should die as soon as she got home, or before her feet entered the city. But inasmuch as he was a promising youth, he informs her, there would be a general lamentation for him by all Israel; and also, that he was the only one of the family that should be interred in a decent manner, for the reason given in the text: Because in him there was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel. It seems, there did appear in him some dislike of that idolatry his father had set up in the kingdom, and in his own family; and he had some regard to the pure worship of God; which raised the expectations of the people of Israel, that when there should be a change, things would be for the better, both with regard to civil and religious affairs.

Those things which they observed in him, arose from a principle of grace, which the Lord had implanted in his heart, called, some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.

The observation that I make upon these words, is, That in every regenerate person there is some good thing towards God; let him be of what family he will, or in what place he may. This child was the son of a king, brought up in a palace, educated
eated in a family very idolatrous; and yet there was some good thing in him toward the Lord God of Israel.

The apostle Paul says indeed of himself, that in him, that is in his flesh, dwelt no good thing; even when he was a regenerate person. How then must we understand the apostle, seeing it is manifest there is some good thing in every regenerate man; and no doubt was in him. It may be replied, there was no good thing in him naturally; for there is none that doeth good, no not one; and the reason is, because there is no good thing in them. If there was, there would be some good thing done by them; but there is no good thing in them naturally, and therefore there is none done by them. Paul means, there was no good thing in him, except what grace had produced: for if there be any good thing in man's heart, it is not by the power of man, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts. It is he that works in all good men, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. There was no good thing in him, that he could call his own; whatever good thing was in him, it was from the Lord. Was he spiritually alive? it was not he that lived, but Christ that lived in him. Did he perform so many great and good things, more than others? it was not he, but the grace of God, that was with him. Besides, there is a restrictive clause in that passage; In me, that is, in my flesh; which signifies there was some good thing in another part of him, though not in his flesh; or the old man, in whom there is no good; from whom nothing good comes; and by whom nothing good is done. But, in the inward man of the heart, there dwelt some good thing; and so it is, in every regenerate man.

I shall now endeavour to shew,

* Rom. vii. 18. † Psalm xiv. 3. ‡ Gal. ii. 20.

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I. What
I, What that good thing is, which is in every regenerate man.

II. That this good thing, is something in them.

III. That it is but some good thing, not every good thing; or however, that it is not every good thing complete.

IV. That this good thing in regenerate men, will be found in them, sooner or later. For in him is found some good thing.

V. That this good thing is sometimes found in a child, the child of a king; and one that comes from a bad family. Some good thing was in this young man in the house of Jeroboam. There is an emphasis upon that, in the house of Jeroboam; that sinful, vile, idolatrous family.

VI. Wherever there is a good thing in any, it is always towards the Lord God of Israel.

I. I shall enquire what this good thing is, that is in the heart of every regenerate man. In my last discourse I have shewn you what wickedness there is in the heart of man; and what the plague of a man's heart is; and now I shall shew you what goodness there is in a regenerate man's heart. This, in general, is no other than the good work of grace in the heart; which the apostle calls a good work: Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: The efficient cause of it is good, even God; who is good essentially; independently good; and from whom every good thing comes. Whatever is done by him, must be good, whether in nature, providence, or grace. The work of creation, when he reviewed it, was declared to be very good. The work of the new

* Philip. i. 6.
a good Thing towards the Lord God of Israel.

creation, the spiritual workmanship of grace upon the soul; is also good, very good. The moving cause of this is the goodness, grace, and mercy of God, who, for the great love wherewith he loved us; hath quickened us; when dead in trespasses and sins*. The mean, by which this work is generally wrought, is the good word of God. Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth†. The effects thereof are good. It makes a man good: it enables him to do good works. It is productive of every thing that is good. The grace of God, not only as a doctrine, but more especially as a principle, influentially teaches men, that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. Now it is this good work, in general, which is the good thing that is found in every regenerate man.

In particular it may design the various graces of the Spirit of God, which are wrought in the souls of those who are born again. Indeed, the Spirit of God himself has a place in the hearts of such persons, as the author and finisher of this good thing, the work of grace; and who himself is good. Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness‡. He is good himself, essentially good. Good in his influence, operations, gifts, and graces. He is promised in the covenant of grace; I will put my Spirit within them. He has, in conversion, a place in the hearts of his people; received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith§? And; indeed, this in-dwelling of the Spirit of God in the hearts of his people, is the grand criterion which distinguishes a regenerate from an unregenerate man: Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Ye are not in a carnal and unregenerate state, but in a spiritual and regenerate one; if so be that the Spirit of God

* Eph. ii. 4, 5. † James i. 18. ‡ Psalm cxliii. 10. § Gal. iii. 2.

R 2 dwell;
dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

The Spirit of God is in his people, as the author of the good work of grace upon their souls. In consequence of his being there, a new heart is given them; a new spirit is put within them, in which are new principles of grace, holiness, life, love, joy, peace, and comfort; new desires, new affections, new resolutions; all things are become new. This is the new creature, the new man the Scripture speaks of; which is no other than an assembly of the several graces of the blessed Spirit. The fruits and graces of the Spirit are many; the principle of which are these three, Faith, Hope, and Charity, or Love; but the greatest of them is Love. Where one is, there are the others. Where Faith, the principal, cardinal, leading grace is, there is Hope: for Faith is the substance of things hoped for †: and there also is love; for faith works by love ‡. There are besides these, several other graces, which, altogether, make up this good thing that is found in every regenerate man, and which is towards the Lord God of Israel.

Thus, for instance, there is the grace of repentance towards God. In Acts xx. 21, the apostle uses this phrase of the doctrine of repentance, and so of faith; but what he says of either of these, as a doctrine, is true of them as a grace; Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. For true evangelical repentance, is no other than a godly sorrow, or a sorrow after a godly sort, and for sin; because it is committed against a God of love, grace, mercy, and goodness. The Spirit of God convinces every man, that he powerfully works upon, of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; shews him

* Rom. viii. 9. † Heb xi. 1. ‡ Gal.v. 6.
the evil nature of sin, and the just demerit of it; shews it to him in the glass of the divine law, where he sees it in its proper colours; and thereby it becomes exceeding sinful unto him: fills him with shame and confusion of soul; brings him to God in an humble manner to confess it, and causes a self-loathing and abhorrence, on account of his offences. Thus it was with Job, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*. There is no doubt to be made, of his having some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel, when he said these words. So there was undoubtedly in the poor publican, when he stood, and dared not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, God be merciful to me, a sinner. There was in him repentance towards God.

There is the fear of God, and that is a good thing. This the Lord, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, puts into the hearts of his people, when he calls them by his grace. I will put my fear in their hearts†. This appears as early in conversion, as any grace whatever; for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom‡. As soon as ever a man is made, in any measure, wise to salvation, the fear of God appears in him. There is a tenderness of heart and conscience. He cannot do the things which others do, or which he himself before had done: as Nehemiah says of some that governed before him, that he did not, as they, because of the fear of the Lord. There is a fear implanted in their hearts of offending God; for the fear of the Lord, as the wise man defines it, is to hate evil, and depart from iniquity§.
There is love towards the Lord God of Israel. God appears in his amiable perfections, in the declarations and promises of his grace, and the expressions of his love. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and that causes him to love God. We love him, because he first loved us. Christ appears in all the loveliness of his person, offices, and grace; and in his love in dying for his people. Thus he becomes the object of such a soul's love, to such a degree, that he cannot but say as Peter did, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. There is also love to the brethren, to the saints, upon whom the image of Christ appears: and by this it is known that such are passed from death to life; that they are born again, because they love the brethren. There is also love to the good word and ways of God, the worship of God, and ordinances of God, and to every thing that is good.

There is also hope of happiness in another world. Though a man before conversion was without hope; yet being regenerated, he is begotten again to a lively hope. Christ being set before him as the object of hope, and he encouraged to flee to him, and lay hold upon him; he expects everlasting life. His hope is as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the vail. This must be allowed to be some good thing surely; for it is called a good hope through grace.

There is faith also; and that is another part of this good thing towards the Lord God of Israel. A sinner that is wrought upon, as just now described, trusts in God as his Saviour, and says, as Job did, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; and he also shall be my salvation. Now this faith is the gift of

* 1 John iv. 19. † John xxii. 17. ‡ 1 John iii. 14. § Heb. vi. 19. || 2 Thess. ii. 16. ¶ Job xiii. 15, 16.
God unto him; it proceeds from the operation of the Spirit of God upon him, by the instrumentality of the word. Faith comes by hearing*; and it is productive of good works: for faith without works is dead†. Now this is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.

There are other graces also which I might mention: such as patience, under afflictive dispensations of providence. For though no affliction is joyous, but grievous; yet it works the peaceable fruits of righteousness, to them who are exercised therewith: and the chief of these is a peaceable frame of soul, or quietness of mind under the rod. Tribulation, to regenerate persons, sometimes is of use; to increase their patience, rather than to destroy it. Tribulation worketh patience‡; is a mean of increasing it. The apostle James says, Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations§. He means, not the temptations of Satan; but afflictions, which are temptations, or trials, of the graces of God's people. For, he adds, The trying of your faith worketh patience; and let patience have its perfect work||. When this appears in exercise, it is a clear case there is some good thing in such a person, towards the Lord God of Israel. When, like Aaron, they hold their peace under trying circumstances; and with David, are dumb because the Lord did it; are still and know that he is God, a sovereign Being, who does whatsoever he pleases.

There is also resignation to the will of God. Those who are not inured to afflictions, are like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; fret and are impatient under it. But where there is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel; there will be, more

* Rom. x. 17. † James. ii. 20. ‡ Rom. v. 3. § James. i. 2 || James. i. 4.
or less, of submission to the will of God. Such will say, as Eli did; *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. Not my will, but thine be done.*

In a word, this good thing, found in the heart of a regenerate man towards the Lord God of Israel is, the *sanctification of the Spirit,* in all the several branches thereof, of which those that I have mentioned are some. It is called the *sanctification of the Spirit,* because he is the author of it; for if we are sanctified, it is in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the *Spirit of our God.* This, in the present state, is imperfect; but is carrying on, and will be brought to perfection in all those in whom it is begun. The God of truth will sanctify us throughout, and will preserve our whole souls, bodies, and spirits, blameless, to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Where this is, there will appear many good things. The text says, *some good thing:* several good things it may be truly said. *Good thoughts will arise in the hearts of such.* For though the heart of man is bad, and so wicked as I represented unto you in my last discourse, though the thoughts of a carnal man's heart are only evil, and that continually; and though regenerate persons have a great deal of reason to complain, of the vanity of their minds and the sinfulness of their thoughts; yet there are good thoughts arise in them, which are of God. I say, *of God;* because we cannot think a good thought, *of ourselves.* But there do arise good thoughts concerning God, his being, perfections, and purposes; his love, his everlasting love to his people. *We have thought of thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.* And O, how pleasant are the thoughts, how sweet the meditations of God's people, upon the everlasting love of God, and the fruits

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* 1 Cor. vi. 11. † 2 Cor. iii. 5. ‡ Ps. cxviii. 9.
of it! It is pleasing to the Lord, when his people are thus thoughtful of him. A book of remembrance was written for them that thought upon his name *; upon his name as proclaimed, a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth.

There are also good desires in the hearts of regenerate persons. The desires of their souls are to the name of the Lord, and to the remembrance of him. There are spiritual breathings after him, as the heart panteth after the water brooks. There are holy resolutions which are formed in their minds, under the influence of divine grace. In the strength of divine grace, they resolve to make mention of the Lord, of his righteousness, and of that only. In the strength of divine grace, they are enabled to resist sin; to strive against it, and to abstain from all appearance of evil: to resist Satan's temptations, and to do every good work. It was the holy resolution of Joshua, and it shewed some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel, when he said, As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord. Resolutions indeed, taken up in a man's own strength, signify nothing; but when they are made in the strength of divine grace, arising from an internal principle, they are of worth, and come to something. In short, where there is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, the good word of God dwells in the heart. The matter of this word is good, and the effects of it are good. Now this comes, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, in the hearts of regenerate persons; where it works effectually, and where it dwells. It abides, it dwells richly in all wisdom. It is received in the love of it, and is highly esteemed.

* Mal. iii. 16.
more than necessary food. It is more, to the Believer, than thousands of gold and silver. If now we put all these things together, and others that your own experiences may dictate, you will know, in some good measure, what is that good thing that is in the heart of every regenerate man.—But I go on,

II. To observe, that this good thing, possessed by regenerate persons, is something within them. The text says not, some good thing done by them; but some good thing in them, towards the Lord God of Israel: this good thing is all internal; nothing external. It is not an outward form of godliness: there may be that, where there is not the inward power. The apostle speaks of some that had a form of godliness, that is, the outward form, but denied the power {*}; that is, the inward power upon the heart. There may be a notion of things, where there is no grace. There may be an outward profession of faith, where there is no true faith; and an external obedience to the ordinances of the gospel, and yet this good thing may be wanting; as in Simon Magus, who professed to believe, but was destitute of true faith and was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity †.

This good thing is not an outward reformation of manners. There may be this, and no good thing in the heart. Herod heard John gladly, seemed to have a great flow of affection for what he heard; yea, it is said, he did many things; that is, agreeable to what he heard preached: he did them externally. There was an appearance of good things done by him, and yet there was no good thing in him. So the scribes and Pharisees were outwardly righteous: looked like good men; made a fair shew in the flesh; and thought themselves very holy.

* 2 Tim. iii. 15. † Acts. viii. 29.
and religious; but inwardly, as our Lord says, were full of all manner of wickedness. So that there is a great difference between some good thing in a man, and such good things as may appear outwardly.

This good thing, is not an outward humiliation for sin; such as was in Pharaoh, while he was under the terror of the plagues of thunder, hail, and lightning; who cried out, The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked*; but, as soon as the storm was over, he returned to his former hardness of heart. Such a disposition was in Ahab, concerning whom the Lord says, See how Ahab humbleth himself†: yet it was only an external humiliation; for there was no good thing in him. There may be a great many tears shed by persons, seemingly on account of sin; but these are no true mark or sign of good things in them. Esau sought the blessing with tears, but found no place for repentance. Judas made a confession of sin, and yet there was no good thing in him.

An abstinence from the gross enormities of life, is not this good thing. Restraints may be laid upon persons, by their parents, masters, or civil magistrates; or thro' the force of conviction in an awakened conscience; which when over, they return like a dog to his vomit, and like a sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire. But this good thing is within a man: some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel; something in a man's heart. This appears by all the names that it goes by in Scripture. Sometimes it is called the inward man: I delight in the law of God, after the inward man, says the apostle‡. The inward man is renewed day by day§. The hidden man of the heart||; or that which is

* Exod. ix. 27. † 1 Kings xxii. 29. ‡ Rom. vii. 22. § 2 Cor. iv. 16. ¶ 1 Pet. iii. 4.
out of sight. For he is not a Jew that is one outwardly. Circumcision is not that of the flesh, but of the heart. It is sometimes called spirit; not only from the author of it, the Spirit of God, (whatsoever is born of the Spirit of God, is Spirit *) but from the seat of it, the spirit or heart of man. He is renewed in the spirit of his mind †. It is sometimes called seed, which lies under ground; and is not to be seen: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible ‡: the seed of the word; the seed of divine grace, which remains. Hence the apostle John says, such cannot sin, (that is, live in a course of sin) because their seed remains in them: that is, an inward principle of grace, which forbids them so to act. It is sometimes called a root. The root of the matter is found in me, says Job §. The root of the righteous, which is a hidden principle of grace in them, and brings forth much fruit. The reason why the stony ground hearers relinquished their profession, was, because there was no root ¶. Sometimes it is called oil in a vessel †. The lamp is an outward profession; the oil is an internal principle of grace in the heart. Sometimes it is signified by an epistle. Ye are our epistle, says the apostle **. God inscribes, upon the hearts of his people, his laws and his word. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ††. All which shews, that this good thing is within a man.

This also is clear from the several parts of which this good thing consists. It includes in it, the illumination of the understanding, raising the affections to things above, where Jesus is; renewing of a man in the spirit of his mind; making of him willing, in the day of God’s power, to submit unto his way of

* John iii. 6. † Eph. iv. 23. § 1 Pet. i. 23. ¶ Job xix. 28. ¶¶ Mat. xiii. 6. †† Matt. xxv. 4. ** 2 Cor. iii. 2. ††† Jer. xxxi. 33.

salvation,
salvation, through the justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ; sprinkling the heart from an evil conscience, and the like; all which shews it to be an internal work.

III. This is but some good thing; not every good thing; or, however, not every good thing complete. There is a great deal, indeed, bestowed upon God's people, and wrought in them in their regeneration, and first conversion; for where sin abounded, grace does much more abound. The grace of God is exceeding abundant, with faith, and love, and every other grace. For as before observed, where one grace is, there is every grace. Where there is hope, there is faith; and where there is love, there are faith and hope. These always go together. Yet this good thing is imperfect in the best of saints. The good work of grace is but a begun work. It is, however, carrying on gradually, and will be performed till the day of Christ. Faith has its deficiency; hope is defective; love is imperfect; and we know but in part.

In some this good thing is very little, as at first conversion. It is a day of small things with newly regenerate persons: little knowledge, faith, hope, and the like; and therefore compared to the bruised reed and smoaking flax: and yet, by these appearances, it is clear there is some good thing. In the bruised reed there is a moistness which shews it to be alive; in the smoaking flax there are fire and heat. So in the lowest believer, in the exercise of grace in the weakest manner, there appears some good thing in him (though it is but little) towards the Lord God of Israel. Some light in him, though it is but small: a little knowledge of himself, and the corruptions of his nature: a little knowledge of the person, offices, and excellencies of Christ: a little light in the doc-

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9.
trines of the everlasting gospel. It is as much as he can say, One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see*. He has fight but it is glimmering, in comparison of the light he afterwards has; for the path of the just, is as a shining light, which shines more and more to the perfect day.

There is affection evident, and more affection, perhaps, than judgment; and more zeal than knowledge; which is generally the case with young converts; yet for all this, there is some good thing. There is hope, though it is but in a small degree. Under all his discouragements, such an one can say, I will put my mouth in the dust; if so be, there may be hope. "I do not know whether there is any foundation for hope or no; but I will put my mouth in the dust I will lie in an humble manner at the feet of God. I am told there is hope in Israel concerning this thing; and therefore, I will encourage myself as much as I can, that there will be favour shewn to me, a wicked, miserable creature." Now, in these humble expressions, there is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel. As yet, indeed, he does not abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost; he has not arrived to the full assurance of hope; but there is some good hope through grace, though it is but small. So faith, at first, is like a grain of mustard seed, which is the leaf of all seeds. There is but little faith, as our Lord says, in his address to his disciples, O ye of little faith†; and to Peter in particular, O thou of little faith‡. Faith is but a mere peradventure at first. The language of such a soul is, "I cannot say he will receive me; but I will venture upon him. If I perish, I perish." Now in this language there is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel. But,


IV. Wherever
IV. Wherever this good thing is, it will be found; for in him (says my text) is found some good thing. God has found it there: and there is very good reason why he finds it; because it was he himself who put it there.

The Lord knows the good thing he hath put into the hearts of his people, and he finds it. He sees not as man sees: he knows the heart, and sees what is in the heart. As it is said of our Lord, He knows what is in man. He knew what good was in the heart of Peter; he knew how he loved him. Though there was but very little seen of it when he had so lately, and so basely denied him; yet he knew himself, he had love in his heart to Christ, and he knew that Christ was acquainted with it. Lord, (says he) thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. So wherever there is any good, ever so small, towards the God of Israel, God will find it out, because he put it there. This also will be found by the person himself, sooner or later. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: Know ye not, that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? except ye be void of judgment, as the word more properly signifies. It is not so well rendered reprobates; it being a word somewhat startling to the minds of men. "If ye are not spiritual persons, ye cannot know whether Christ is in you, or not; but if you have any spiritual knowledge, judgment, or feeling; then, upon reflection and self-examination, you will find Christ is in you. You will experience, if you observe it, some outgoings of your souls to Christ, and acts of faith and hope upon him." Thus this good thing in the hearts of God's people may be found by themselves.

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.
So it is also by others, that converse with them. Such as fear the Lord, often speak one to another; and as they are speaking one to another, they find what good thing is in each other. Thus the apostle Paul, though in his former life he was an enemy to the Christian religion, when he came before Peter, James, and John, and they conversed with him, they perceived the grace of God in him. They found there was some good thing in him towards the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he had perfecuted; and then they gave him the right-hand of fellowship. And where there is some good thing in the heart, it will shew itself in the life and conversation; and it will be found at the great day of account. The apostle says of faith, That it might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 1. 7. And I am persuaded, that there is in many persons some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, that does not appear now; and it may be, may never appear to satisfaction in this world: and yet will be found at the great day of accounts, when God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the secrets of every heart; what he hath wrought there.

V. This good thing is sometimes to be found in a Jeroboam's house; or in a wicked man's family; and is sometimes, as I observed, to be found in a youth. Jeroboam's son is, in this chapter, called a child: how old he was is not certain; but God works this good thing betimes in the hearts of some persons. Obadiah knew the Lord from his youth; and Timothy, from a child, knew the holy Scriptures. Those that seek the Lord early shall find him. Sometimes this is found in one of princely birth, as this child was, the son of Jeroboam king of Israel, though it is a rare thing. For not many mighty, not many noble, not many wise men after the flesh, are call-
agood Thing towards the Lord God of Israel. 257

ed* : but some there are; some, in the family of a king. All the saints salute you; chiefly they of Cæsar's household†. Sometimes this good thing is found in one of a bad family. Jeroboam's family was a bad one. He was an idolator, and set up the calves of Dan and Bethel. It is often said of him, to his disgrace, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that made Israel to sin: and yet there was some good thing in his family; which shews grace does not run in a line. Good men are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God ‡. How many good men have had bad children? Eli's sons, and Samuel's sons, did not walk in their father's steps. And so it is, that some in the family of bad men are chosen by God. The Lord takes one of a family, and two of a tribe: takes one, and leaves another. Those who are instances of this kind, have abundant reason to admire distinguishing grace.

VI. This good thing, found in the heart of every regenerate person, always acts towards the Lord God of Israel. The bias of it is towards him: sin inclines the mind to that which is evil: hence the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts are only evil, and that continually. There is an aversion to God, and all that is good. The language of an unregenerate man is, Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways; but where grace is, where this good thing is, it baffles the mind towards God and Heaven. Wherever that exists, the language is, My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? As all grace comes from God, so it returns to him in its acts and exercises. Repentance is towards God. Faith, hope, and love are towards God. Every grace acts towards God; it is exercised upon him,

* 1 Cor. i. 26.  † Phil. iv. 22.  ‡ John i. 13.

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and upon the Lord Jesus Christ: 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*. Christ is the object of faith, of love, of joy, and of every other grace.

Where this good thing is, the thoughts will be employed about God, and the affections, like pillars of smoke, perfumed with frankincense, will ascend towards him. The desires of the soul will be to his name, and to the remembrance of him. This good thing in the heart will operate and shew itself in thankfulness to God for all the good things bestowed. A man that has some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel, will call upon his soul, and all that is within him, to bless the name of the Lord. He will bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ; especially, for Christ, the unspeakable gift of his love. This good thing will cause a man to manifest his concern for the honour of God; for his cause and interest in the world. Such in whom this good thing is, love the habitation of his house, the place where his honour dwells. His tabernacles are amiable, and a day in his courts, is better than a thousand elsewhere. They cannot give themselves the liberty of being absent from the house and worship of God; but must attend upon them. They will exhort and stir up one another to love and good works. They will not only attend the worship of God themselves, but endeavour to bring others with them; saying, Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord; for he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.

Those in whom this good thing is, will lay out themselves, their time, their talents, and all they.

* 1 Pet. i. 8.
have and are, for the honour of God, and his cause and interest. They will honour the Lord with their substance, and with the first fruits of their increase. Where there is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, there will be some good thing done for the honour of the Lord God of Israel.

This leads me to mention, Our yearly collection for the poor Ministers, and the Churches in the country. I persuade myself there is some good thing in many of you, and if so, there will be some good thing done by you; and I doubt not, but this will be attended unto, which is certainly a good work, as it serves greatly to promote the honour and interest of religion, and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a work which you have been used to, and I need not take up much of your time to inform you of the nature of it. It has been continued in the churches in and about London, between forty and fifty years*. The fund was raised so long ago, by several churches, that united in the benevolent design. It is in some measure increased; and the interest of the flock and fund, together with the collections made by the several churches, are annually distributed for the relief of poor ministers and churches in England and Wales. A great number there are assisted and made more comfortable thereby. Pastors, whose churches are not able to give them a proper maintenance, but are obliged to work with their own hands, are, by your liberality a little eased; their families are a little better provided for, and the gospel a little oftener preached, than otherwise it would be, were it not for your generosity. An attention to this, therefore, must be a

This Sermon was preached, Sept, 1762:

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*Footnote: The original text contains a number that seems to be an error or a placeholder, possibly intended to indicate a range of years.
good thing, and I am satisfied of your readiness to assist in so good a work.

This business is managed by your deputies, who are annually chosen to see that the money is distributed to none but such as are found Ministers of the Gospel: and you, yourselves, are in some measure witnesses what those persons are, as you have now and then an opportunity of hearing them. You hear what sound, savory, spiritual, and evangelical ministers they are. You are sometimes drawn thereby into admiration and thankfulness, that the churches in the country are so well supplied with ministers; surely then, this will excite such of you, in whose hearts there is some good thing, to do this good thing for the interest of your Redeemer. Many arguments might be made use of to engage you to this. It is, by the providence of God, so ordered in the common course of things, that some have a larger share of the things of this world, and others are in a poorer state of life; that one may supply the other. So it is in the churches: there are some that have more in number, and, among them, persons that are capable of handing forth for the relief of others; thus the churches in Macedonia relieved the poorer saints in Jerusalem; and so it should be with you. You have many mercies to be thankful for. Temporal mercies; the health of this city, and of the whole nation, is a mercy to be taken notice of. The plenty of provisions; the peace we have at home, and now we are upon the eve of a general peace, when your trade and commerce will be more enlarged, without fear from the enemy: but above all, the gospel of the grace of God, continued with you, and which is likely to be so by means of our gracious Sovereign upon the throne: These things should encourage us,
to do all we can to promote the interest of the Lord our God. It cannot be thought, indeed, that all of you should be sufficiently provided for this good work at this time, many of you having not heard of it before. For the sake, therefore, of such, this collection will be repeated next Lord's day, and then finished. It is to be hoped you will come with open hearts and open purses, and liberally contribute: and let none of you stay away upon this account. Come yourselves, and bring as many of your friends as you can with you: bring those who are now absent, whom you are acquainted with: bring your children, encourage your servants, and every one to do according to their ability; and thus make it manifest there is some good thing in you, by doing something for the honour of God, and the good of his cause.
SERMON XV.

The Manifestation of Christ, as a Saviour to his People, a Cause of great Joy.

1 Chron. xii. 40.

For there was joy in Israel.

IN this chapter we have an account of the association of great multitudes of the people of Israel unto David; first in his exile, when he was obliged to flee from Saul, and was persecuted by him from place to place. In different places, whither he was obliged to retire, many came unto him; as, at the cave of Adullam, in the hold in the wilderness, and at Ziklag. The names, numbers, and characters of those persons that gathered together to him at these several times and places, are mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. In the latter part of it, we have an account of the tribes, that came to him at Hebron to make him King over all Israel; verse 23. These are the numbers of the bands that were ready. [S 4]
The Manifestation of Christ,

ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord. Verse 38. All these men of war that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David King over all Israel. This was after he had reigned over Judah seven years and an half. Upon this, there was a feast made for this great company; and there they were with David three days, eating and drinking what David had provided for them. Those at Hebron, those of the tribe of Judah, with the assistance of others, brought bread, meat, meal, cakes of figs, bunches of raisins and wine and oil, with Oxen and sheep abundantly: for the inhabitants of Hebron, and the tribe of Judah, were not sufficient to have regaled this great company. Then follow the words I have read; For there was joy in Israel. The civil war, between the house of Saul and that of David, was now ended. The man, who was the darling of the people; who was a wise prince and a successful general; who had the good of his country at heart; and from whose administration the people had raised expectations, being now, by divine appointment, made King over all the tribes, there was joy in Israel. But great as that joy was, there is abundant reason for much greater in the spiritual Israel, on account of David's illustrious son, the King Messiah, the Saviour of his people; whom God hath set, as King, over his holy hill of Zion, and given intimations of his Kingly office in various prophecies of the Old Testament. For thus it is written; Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, O Daughter of Jerusalem. Behold thy King cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation*. It is also intimated in prophecy, what should be said upon this joyful occasion.

* Zach. ix. 9.
A Cause of great Joy.

This is our God, we have waited for him; and he will save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for him; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.

It is in this view of the words, that I shall endeavour a spiritual improvement of them, by shewing

I. The cause of joy in Israel, with relation to the King Messiah, the Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Where, and among whom, this joy is and will be. And,

III. The nature of this joy: by which it may be judged, in some measure, whether it is pure and genuine, in those who profess to have it.

I. I shall consider the cause, the reason, the matter of this joy, as it relates unto the King Messiah, the Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ; and this with respect to every manifestation of him, as the King, the Saviour of Israel. First, in the Flesh; then in his coming to his people at conversion; and then in the latter day, both in his spiritual and personal reign. At each of these periods there has been, is, and will be great joy; and that more abundantly than when David was made King over all Israel.

1. His coming in the flesh is a matter of joy, as he then appeared King of Israel, and the Saviour thereof. He came as a King; not as a temporal, but as a spiritual one. The Jews expected him as a temporal King; and it is very probable the wise men of the East, had no other notion of him, when being led by the star, they came and enquired where he was, that

*I sa. xxv. 9.*
The Manifestation of Christ,

was born King of the Jews. But though he was a King, as he confessed to Pilate, yet he was not a temporal monarch. His kingdom, as he told him plainly, was not of this world. His kingdom came not with external pomp and grandeur. He appeared, not as a temporal prince, with majesty and glory; but in the form of a servant. He came, not to be ministered unto, to be served and waited upon in a grand and pompous manner; but to minister; to be a servant, and to give his life a ransom for many. In short, his being King in Israel, is no other than being the Redeemer and Saviour of his people. For he came not to judge the world, to rule and govern it, in the manner as kings and princes do; but to save the world: so that the work he wrought, as a Saviour, as the King of Israel, and deliverer of his people, was, truly speaking, the cause of joy. There was joy in Israel upon his appearance as the King of Israel.

Now, as such his business was, in general, to work out salvation; in particular, to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and to make atonement for the sins of his people: all which lay a solid foundation for joy in the spiritual Israel, or among the people of God, who have any notion of these things. His great work was to procure salvation for his people: for that is the thing on account of which the church is called upon to rejoice at his coming. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! for thy King cometh, having salvation. Salvation! that is the thing which is the source, the foundation of spiritual joy in Israel: the salvation of the souls of men. Thus the apostle Peter files it; Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Your souls, which are so valuable and excellent, of more worth than the whole world: and by how much the soul is more excellent than the body, by so much the
the more great and excellent is the salvation of the the one than the other: and, therefore, the greater reason for joy. If a corporal salvation lay a foundation for joy, as it often does; then much more the salvation of the soul; which is wrought out by Jesus Christ. This is an eternal salvation. God, as the God of nature and providence, is our King and our God, working salvation in the midst of the earth. He is the author of every deliverance therein, and on that account to be praised; and gladness appears in those who are sharers therein. But the salvation that Christ, as our King, and our God, is the author of, or has wrought out for his spiritual Israel, is a spiritual and eternal salvation. Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; and therefore justly occasions great rejoicing.

This is a salvation from sin, and from wrath to come, from eternal death, and from every spiritual enemy. It is a salvation from sin. Christ is called by the name of Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins. From the sin of their nature, or original sin; and all the consequences of it: from actual transgression; sins of heart, lip, and life; of omission and commission, greater, and lesser sins. Christ saves from them all. It was foretold of him that he should redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

The salvation wrought out, is a salvation from wrath to come, which sin is deserving of; on account of which it is revealed from heaven, and comes upon the children of disobedience; and every sinner may expect it. Christ saves his people from wrath to come. Being justified by his blood and righteousness, they are saved from wrath through him. In short, they are saved from hell, death, and every enemy whatever; and therefore, there is great reason for joy in Israel.
This work of salvation is what his divine Father called him to, and gave into his hands. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do: he means the work of salvation. God sent him in the fulness of time, to be the Saviour of men. He came into this world, to seek and to save them that were lost: lost in Adam, even in his fall. He is become the author of eternal salvation. He has obtained eternal redemption for his people, and that by himself, without the assistance of any creature, angel, or man. His own arm hath wrought salvation. It is a complete work.

Now it is matter of great joy in Israel, that Christ is come, as a King and a Saviour; and hath wrought out salvation. And the rather, in as much as this salvation is for sinners, and for the chief of sinners. It is for sinners; and indeed, none else could stand in need of it; nor do any but sensible sinners see their need of it. The whole need not a physician, a Saviour, but they that are sick. Christ came not to call the righteous, self-righteous persons, that imagine their own righteousness will be sufficient to justify them: he came not to call these, but sinners to repentance. This salvation is for the chief of sinners. If it were for sinners of such and such a size only, whose lives were not tarnished with any notorious crime; or who had lived very regular lives, and had committed only some few faults that are common to all mankind; had this been the case, Saul the persecutor, the blasphemer, the injurious person, would have had no part in this matter: but it was the foundation of his faith, hope, and joy, that this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom, I am chief. The Corinthians, of whom the apostle says, such were some of you (having given a list of the vilest sinners that ever lived), would not have been washed, sanctified,
a Cause of great Joy.

saved, and justified, had Christ wrought out salvation for sinners only of such or such a size: but it is for the worst and vilest of sinners, that this salvation is wrought out.

It is to be had freely; and that is another cause of joy in Israel. Salvation is by the free grace of God, not by works. If it were only for persons so and so disposed; so and so qualified; or who had done such and such works of righteousness; there would be great reason for despondency in the minds of many persons: but it is not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. Not of works, lest any man should boast. Salvation, and the blessings of it, may be had freely. For though our Lord exhorts persons to come and buy of him gold tried in the fire, and white raiment, expressive of grace and the blessings of it; they are to be bought without money, and without price.

The salvation that Christ hath wrought out, as King, which occasions joy in Israel, is a great salvation; it cannot be said how great it is. Eternity itself is not enough to set forth the greatness thereof. How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Salvation wrought out by the great God; a salvation wrought out for great sinners, obtained at a great expense, even the precious blood of Jesus; for we are bought or redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. A salvation expressive of the greatest love; of the love of the Father, in giving his Son; and of the Son, in giving himself; and it is hard to say, which is the greatest. A salvation complete. A Salvation of the whole man, soul and body. A salvation from every sin, and from every spiritual enemy. A salvation to the utmost; a salvation that secures grace here, and glory hereafter; and on account
count of which, those who share it, are said to be complete in Christ.

This is a salvation in which the glory of God is greatly concerned, as well as the interest of his people secured. The glory of all the divine perfections are secured in this salvation. *Mercy and truth here meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.* The angels saw this, and praised the Lord at Christ's incarnation: they sang, *Glory to God in the highest,* and *on earth peace, good-will towards men.*

On account of this great salvation, wrought out by the King of Israel, when he appeared in our world, *there was joy in Israel,* and good reason for it. A particular branch of his work, as King of Israel, was the working out an *everlasting righteousness* for his people. When he is prophecied of as the King of Israel, that should appear in the fulness of time, he is spoken of under this character; *The Lord our Righteousness.* It is said, *the Lord will raise up to David a righteous Branch; and a King shall reign and prosper.* In his days *Judah shall be saved,* and *Israel shall dwell safely:* and this is the name, whereby this King, this righteous Branch, shall be called, *The Lord our Righteousness.* He is the author of righteousness, and his work was to bring in *everlasting righteousness.* He came into this world to fulfil all righteousness: not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. He is the fulfilling end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes: and this causes joy. Hence says the church, *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation,* he hath covered me with a robe of righteousness. *In the like exulting strain does she express herself in another place,* *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness; and in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified*.

*Jerem. 23, 5, 6; † Isa. lxi, 10.*
justified, and shall glory*: make their boast, rejoice, and be glad, that they have a righteousness in Christ, and are justified by it: This righteousness is truly called in Scripture, the righteousness of God; because he that wrought it is God as well as man. Hence the apostle, speaking of the gospel, says, Herein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith. And again, The righteousness of God is unto all, and upon all them that believe. A righteousness it is which God the Father approves, and is well pleased with; because quite agreeable to his law, and to his justice. He therefore imputes it freely to his people, without works. This righteousness is entirely agreeable to the law of God, and answerable to all its demands: for though its commands are exceeding broad, this righteousness is of equal extent. The law indeed is said to be magnified by it, and made honourable: more honourable than it could have been by the most perfect obedience of angels, or of men. It is a righteousness with which the justice of God can find no fault; but is entirely satisfied with. Those that are justified by it are without fault, even before the throne of God, as the Judge of all the earth: for, by this righteousness, they are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses: they acquitted from all sins. Those whom God clothes with change of raiment, or with this righteousness; he causes all their iniquities to pass away. They are without spot and blemish; and hence they are accepted with God, through his righteousness. They are comely, through that comeliness put upon them. This is matter of joy; and the rather, because this righteousness is to be had freely. Those whom God justifies by it, are in themselves ungodly. He imputes righteousness

* Isa. xlv. 24, 25.
to them without works; without any consideration of any works of theirs. It is a gift which they receive of him; and proceeds from the abundance of grace. It is by faith that this gift is received; even righteousness from the God of our salvation. The grace of faith, by which a soul receives this righteousness from the Lord, is also the gift of God. In virtue of this righteousness being imputed, and applied to the soul by faith, it enjoys much solid peace and comfort.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. The effect of this righteousness is peace, quietness, and assurance for ever. These are not the effects of a man's own righteousness, or of works done by himself; for they yield no satisfaction, when he reflects upon the impurity of them, and upon the imperfection that is in them: but the righteousness of Christ lays a solid foundation for peace. Hence the kingdom of God is said to consist not in meat and drink, but in righteousness and peace: first righteousness, then peace. The righteousness of Christ imputed and applied: then solid peace and comfort. This righteousness entitles to eternal life; and it is only the righteousness of Christ that can give this title. The justification therefore that arises from it, is called the justification of life. Now all these, and many other things, that might be said of this work of righteousness which Christ hath wrought, lays a solid foundation for joy in Israel.

We may observe, before we conclude this head, that the work of Christ, as our King and Saviour, was to make atonement for sin; to finish transgression, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. He came into our world, in our nature, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. God set him forth in predictions, and sent him forth in the fulness of time to be a propitiatory sacrifice for sin. Propitiation is made by him; and believers, by
by faith receive it. This causes joy in Israel; for we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement: received it in our hearts, and so feel great joy on that account; and there is great reason for it; since Christ hath done that which the blood of millions of slain beasts could not do: namely, take away sin, or make atonement for it. This he hath done by the sacrifice of himself: he, by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. This sacrifice is of a sweet smelling favour to God; and therefore must occasion joy in Israel. It is the work of Christ manifest in the flesh, that is the cause of great joy in Israel.

2. The spiritual coming of Christ in the hearts of his people at conversion, is another event that causes joy in Israel. In conversion he breaks open the everlasting doors of their hearts, and enters in as the King of glory; sets up his throne; forms a governing principle in the soul, which reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life by him. This occasions great joy. When Christ is revealed as a Redeemer and Saviour; when he is made manifest in the hearts of his people, as the hope of glory; it occasions joy to a poor sensible sinner, who before thought himself just ready to perish; having scarce any hope at all of being saved; there being nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to consume him, justly, because of his sins. Now to have Christ revealed to him as a Saviour, to have hopes of pardoning mercy, and of a perfect righteousness through him; what joy must this create in his soul? as in the first followers of our Lord, who, when they had found him, cried out with an exstasy of joy, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write. So Nathaniel speaks of him, in a rapture, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God,
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thou art the King of Israel! that is, the Redeemer and Saviour of men. Thus it was with Zaccheus, when the Lord called him by name, and bid him come down: it is said, he came down, and received him joyfully. Thus it was with the three thousand, who cried out, Men and brethren, what shall we do? What will become of us? Is there any hope? An intimation being given that there was pardon through the blood of Christ, they gladly received the word. And thus it is with every sensible sinner, into whose heart Christ comes: there is great joy on that account.

Similar joy is also experienced by the saints, in the manifestations of divine favour after desertion. When Christ has withdrawn himself from his people, when they do not enjoy that communion with him as they used to have; when they seek him earnestly, in this and the other ordinance, and at last find him; then they adopt the church's words in the Song of Solomon, I held him and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me: all which is expressive of the joy of a sinner on finding the Beloved. Thus it was with the disciples of our Lord, when he had been absent from them; of whom it is said, Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. And every true believer is so, after a time of darkness and desertion, when he is visited again with his sensible presence: for Christ is his all. None in heaven or upon earth like him; and he stands in every endearing relation to his people; and he never pays them a visit, but he brings something along with him, which occasions joy. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you. Whenever he comes he always brings something with him, which renders him welcome unto them. But,
3. In the latter day, when Christ will be more manifest, and, like David, will be King over all the house of Israel, and over the whole world; then there will be joy and gladness. In the spiritual reign of Christ it will be so. The four and twenty elders; that is, the ministers of the gospel church will fall down, and give thanks to him that sits upon the throne; because he has taken to himself his great power, and reigns. There will be joy in Israel, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; when he will destroy Antichrist, with the breath of his mouth, and with the brightness of his coming. Then prophets, evangelists, and all the saints will be called upon to rejoice and be glad, because God hath shewed his justice in taking vengeance on Antichrist, and the Antichristian states. Read the first and sixth verses of the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation, and you will see what joy there will be in Israel on that account. There will be joy in Israel, when the Jews shall be converted; when the Lord's ancient bride, the church, shall be ready, and there will be a grant for her to be clothed with fine linen, clean and white, and then will be the marriage of the Lamb: when Gentiles, in all parts of the earth, will be converted, and called upon to rejoice. Great joy there will be in Israel, in his spiritual reign; when there will be so much increasing light in the world: yea, when the whole earth will be enlightened with the glory of the uncreated Angel of God's presence; when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; when the watchmen, and all the saints, shall see eye to eye, in a wonderful manner; when there shall be peace and harmony among the people of God, Ephraim shall no more vex Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim: when brotherly love, according to the name of the Philadelphian church.
church state, shall take place; when holiness shall be common among all that name the name of Christ; when the kingdom of Christ shall be enlarged from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth; when he will be King over all the earth; and when there shall be one Lord, and his name one.

Was there great joy in Israel, because David was made King over all the tribes of Israel? much greater will the joy be, when Christ shall be King over all the earth: and much more when he shall appear, personally, without sin unto salvation; when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, and when Christ shall take up his residence among his people: when there will be no more sorrow, no more pain, and all tears wiped away from their eyes. There shall be great joy in Israel, when Christ shall reign before his ancients in Jerusalem gloriously; and they also with him, in glory; which state will issue in ultimate happiness. Then those who are made Kings and Priests unto God shall be in in his presence, where is fulness of joy, and at whose right-hand are pleasures for evermore. We must now enquire,

II. Where, and among whom, is this joy? In Israel. This, in a spiritual sense, we must understand, not of the people of the Jews only, who were of the natural stock of Israel; but of the Gentiles also, that are of the spiritual Israel of God. There will be joy among them, on account of Christ's appearance in human nature as King of Israel: for his incarnation was not only on account of the Jews, or his people among them; but of the Gentiles also. Therefore, the angels that brought the news, declared, they brought good-tidings of great joy to all people*

The death of Christ was not for the Jews only, or for the Lord's people among them; no, not for that

nation only, but to gather together the children of God that were scattered abroad: Christ became the propitiation, not only for the sins of the Jews (as John says), but for the sins of the whole world; that is, for all the elect of God, without difference. So there is joy in Israel; not among the Jews only, but among the Gentiles also, the whole Israel of God. This is especially the case with every true Israelite, when Christ is revealed in him, the hope of glory; for it is an ingredient in the character of a true believer: We are, says the apostle, the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Among these Christ reigns, as King. He is set as King, upon the holy hill of Zion. There he is acknowledged as King. The church says, 'The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King, he will save us.' These rejoiced in him, as their King; agreeable to that command, Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King *. Here the gospel is preached, glad tidings of peace and salvation by Jesus Christ, which occasions joy in Israel. Here the ordinances are administered; which, to those that believe, are means of joy and gladness. This may be said of Baptism; and the ordinance of the Supper is a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees well refined †. There was a great feast on account of David's being made King over all the tribes; and this occasioned joy in Israel. But we have a greater feast than that, which the Lord hath prepared for his people in Sion; and it is the cause of greater joy. Here is a feast of fat things for his people to feed upon, in commemoration of what the King of Israel, the Saviour, has wrought for them.

There will be joy in Israel in the latter day, both in the spiritual and personal reign of Christ. There

* Psalm cxlix. 2.    † Isa. xxv. 6.

will
will be great joy, when there shall be but one fold, and one Shepherd: when David's son and Antitype, the King Messiah, shall rule over all the elect. Then they will be called upon to rejoice; as it is written, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

III. I shall now say something of the nature of this joy in Israel, on account of these things; but here I shall be very brief. This joy is not carnal, or concerning carnal things: it is of a spiritual nature, and comes from the Spirit of God. It is called the joy of our Lord; from its accompanying faith in Christ. Where there is faith, there is, more or less, joy; and as faith increases, so will joy; and therefore it is called, the joy of faith. Hence the apostle prays, that the Romans might be filled with joy and peace in believing; believing in him, as their atoning sacrifice, and their justifying righteousness. Joy comes through believing; and it is only believers in Christ, that have any real experience of this spiritual joy. It is a joy that the world knows nothing of; a stranger intermeddles not with it: one that is a stranger to God, to Christ, and salvation by him, knows nothing at all of this joy. It is a joy that is unspeakable, and full of glory; that is better experienced than expressed; and sometimes it is so great that it cannot be told. As there is a sorrow in the saints, which is only expressed by sighs and groans, and cannot well be uttered; so there is a joy they cannot well express. It is well said to be unspeakable, and full of glory. Believers rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

It is a joy to be constantly exercised. Rejoice evermore, is an exhortation of the apostle. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice. There is always reason for rejoicing in the spiritual Israel, let their case and circumstances be what they may; as the prophet says, Although the fig-tree shall not blossom; neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of
of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no
meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there
shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the
Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Let the
circumstances of believers be what they may, there
is always occasion for joy. It is true, indeed,
this joy may be, and often is interrupted: partly
through the corruptions of nature; partly through
the temptations of Satan; and partly through divine
defertions; thou didst hide thy face, and I was trou-
bled. But, then, it may be agian revived, and in-
creased; according to that promise, The meek shall
increase their joy in the Lord; and the poor among men
shall rejoice in the holy One of Israel*. Increase it
may, partly by means of the word and ordinances;
but chiefly through fresh manifestations of interest
in Christ, and the shedding abroad of his love in
the heart.

This joy will be, at last, full and complete. In
the heavenly state, the true Israelites will be called
to enter into the joy of their Lord; and will be in-
troduced into his presence, where there is fulness of
joy, and at whose right-hand there are pleasures for
evermore.

Let us now consider, what experience we have
had of this spiritual joy. What sort of a joy is
ours? Is it of this kind? Is it such as is at-
tended with faith in Christ, which springs from a
view of his work, what he hath done for us, his
having wrought out salvation, brought in a righte-
ousness, and made an atonement for our sins by
his blood? Is it founded upon these things, or
is it not? If we are partakers of this sort of joy,
let it be our great concern to hold fast the rejoicing
of our hope firm unto the end. It is pleasing in the

*Iza. xxix. 19,
fight of God, that we should be joyful, and express our gladness unto him. It should be our great concern to have this joy increased; and, that it may be so, let us make use of all the means which God hath appointed for the increase thereof.
SERMON XVI.

The Presence of God, what it is, and the Means by which it may be enjoyed.

2 Chron. xv. ii.

The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

In the preceding chapter we find that Zerah, the Ethiopian, came with an army of a thousand thousand men, and three hundred chariots, against Asa, King of Judah: who made as good a preparation as he could, in order to give him battle. Before the onset was made, Asa, at the head of his army, put up a prayer to God, addressing him after this manner: Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee; and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God, let not man prevail against thee. This prayer was heard, and answered; he obtained the
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The victory over the Ethiopians: he routed them, pursued them, and took from them a large spoil, and returned in triumph to Israel. As he was coming thither, a prophet from the Lord met him. The Spirit of God came upon Azariah, the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him: Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

The Lord is with you. He had been with Asa and his army; he had given him victory; and they were now returning with great spoil. And the prophet suggests, that he would yet be with them; that he would appear for them, whenever they should be in distress, and do the like things for them he had done, while they were with him, or continued to serve and worship him. And if ye seek him, as Asa did, by prayer, when in distress, he will succour and relieve you. But if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. If you forsake his worship, and go into idolatrous practices, he will forsake you, and give you up into the hands of your enemies, to carry you captive into other lands. This is the sense of the words. I shall now endeavour to improve them, by way of accommodation, to spiritual purposes. The passage it may be observed, contains three answers to so many important questions. For instance,

I. When, and how long the Lord is with his people? The answer is, While they are with him.

II. When the Lord may be found by his people? The answer is, When they seek him.

III. When may the Lord forsake his people? The answer is, When they forsake him.
I. When, and how long, is the Lord with his people? The answer is, While they are with him. The Lord is with you, while ye be with him.

Here I shall enquire, What it is for the Lord to be with his people; and then, What it is for them to be with him; which is the answer to the question.

First, What it is for the Lord to be with his people. To be with them, is to grant them his presence; but this must be understood, not of his general, or essential presence; which is everywhere, and from which there is no fleeing. Of this we are to understand the Psalmist, when he says, Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or from thy presence? There is no such thing as fleeing from the presence of God, in this sense, because it is everywhere. He fills heaven and earth with his presence: there is no place that is destitute thereof; for he is not far from every one of us: in him we live, and move, and have our being. He is not only with all his creatures upon earth (and particularly with men) and with the angels in heaven; but even with the devils in hell. If I make my bed in hell, (says the Psalmist) lo, thou art there! But this is not the sense in which I understand the Lord’s being with his people. It does not intend his Omnipresence, which reaches to all creatures; and therefore is not peculiar to any persons, good or bad.

Nor do I understand it of his being with his creatures in a providential way; for so he is with all men. He is the preserver of men in general. He supports them in their beings. He upholds their souls in life, and his visitation preserves their spirits. He is the preserver both of man and beast. And not only is he with them to support their beings; but he is with them to supply their wants. The eyes of all wait upon him; and he opens the hands of his providence, and gives them their portion of meat in due season.

He
The Presence of God, what it is,

He is with all to protect and defend them. He is a God at hand, and a God afar off.

Nor is this to be understood of his special presence, in a providential way, with his own dear children. He is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe. This presence of God, in a providential way, Jacob intreated, saying, If thou wilt be with me, in a special manner, in a way of providence. So the Lord promised Joshua, that he would be with him in an especial manner, to counsel, help, and assist him, and to give him victory over his enemies. The Lord is, in a variety of instances, in providence, with his people in such a special way as he is not with others. He makes all things work together for good to them that love him, who are the called according to his purpose. It is not, however, of this presence, that I intend to treat; but of the gracious presence of God with his people, which Moses so earnestly intreated, saying, If thy presence go not with me; carry us not up hence. That presence of which David, in so importunate a manner, deprecates the loss: cast me not away from thy presence. From the general or essential presence of God, he could not be cast away: nor does he mean his special presence in a way of providence; but his gracious presence, as appears by what follows: Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.

Now to be with God, to enjoy his presence in this sense, is to have the light of his countenance, for which the Psalmist prays, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. This God graciously vouchsafes unto his people, so that they walk in the light thereof: Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. That joyful sound, the gospel, leads men into light and liberty; and they, under its influence, when it is comfortably applied to them, enjoy
and the Means by which it may be enjoyed.

enjoy much spiritual peace, and have much of the presence of God. The light of his countenance denotes sensible communion with him. The countenance of the Lord beholds the upright; always beholds them, whether they are sensible of it or no. But to have the light of God's countenance in a sensible manner, is, to know that God is their covenant God and Father, and that he smiles upon them, having loved them with an everlasting love. Now this is to be with God, and to have God with us: in other words, to enjoy his presence. Thus he lifts up the light of his countenance, and indulges his people with communion with himself. Nor can there be any communion without his being near, and very near. Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Now when the apostle, and those with him, could say this, they had a real internal experience of the presence of God with them; for fellowship with God the Father, is no other than to have his presence; and so with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When persons, in a natural way, have fellowship one with another, they are together in some place, and enjoy one another's company in eating, drinking, and in conversation. In like manner, fellowship with Jesus Christ, or enjoying his presence, is signified by much the same terms: I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me *.

And such persons also have communion with the Holy Ghost. For this blessing of grace, the great apostle of the Gentiles earnestly prayed, as one of the greatest that heart can desire. These are his words, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen †.

* Rev. iii. 20. † 2 Cor. xiii. 14.
For God to be with his people, and they to enjoy his presence, is for him to commune with them; as he promised to Moses that he would, from off the mercy seat, and to whom he granted his gracious presence in a very remarkable manner. He talked with him, as one friend does with another, in a most familiar way. So God, when with his people, affords them his gracious presence, speaks comfortable words unto them, and brings to their remembrance, and home to their souls, his gracious promises; and a word fitly spoken, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. Never does a child of God experience the presence of God more than when he is pleased to bring a promise, and set it home upon the heart with power.

For the Lord to be with his people, and grant his gracious presence, is, to manifest his early loving-kindness to their souls. Sometimes they are in darkness, and see no light, God withdraws himself from them, as to the manifestation of his love, though he at other times, with great kindness, gathers them, by granting a fresh manifestation of his love. He may be said to be with them, when he speaks to the heart, and says, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee: when heshed his love abroad in their hearts, by his Spirit, or directs their hearts into his love: when they are rooted and grounded in his love, satisfied of their interest in it, and that nothing is able to separate them from it; when he enlarges their hearts to run with cheerfulness in the ways of his commandments; and draws out the desires of their souls to his name, and to the remembrance of him: when he raises their affections, putting in his finger by the hole of the door, causing their bowels to move towards him; and their hands drop with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handle of the lock; that is, when their graces are in lively exercise: when it is thus,
thus, God is with them, granting his gracious presence. When their faith is in lively exercise; and when they can say with the church, My Beloved is mine, and I am his; when their hope is raised to such a degree, as to say, The Lord is my portion, faith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. When their love is so strong, as with the Psalmist to say, I will love thee, O Lord, my God; for thou art my rock and my fortress; when they thus abound in faith, hope, and love, through the power of the Holy Ghost; then may the Lord be said to be with them, and they to enjoy his presence. When in ordinances (hearing the word particularly), they have a spiritual appetite; find the word and eat it, to the joy and rejoicing of their hearts; when there is a desire in their souls for the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby, and they feed upon it, and relish it; when they sit under the shadow of Christ with delight, and his fruit is sweet unto their taste; when, while the Scriptures of truth are opened, or the Word of God preached, their hearts burn within them; then God is with them, and they enjoy his presence. When Wisdom's ways are experimentally ways of pleasantness, and her paths, paths of peace; and the language of their souls is, Lord, it is good for us to be here; God is with his people; his presence is with them at such times. And if we know any thing of God's being with us, or to have his presence, it is in such seasons as these.

Now it is a most amazing instance of divine goodness, that God should grant his gracious presence to any of the sons of men, frail, mortal creatures; sinful dust and ashes. He that dwells on high, in whom it is wonderful condescension to look on things in heaven: He, whose throne is in the heavens, and the earth is his footstool! It is an humbling of himself to look to him that is of a
poor and a contrite spirit. This is grace: but how
much more so, for the High and the lofty One, that in-
habiteth eternity, and dwells in the high and holy
place, to dwell with him that is of a poor and of a
contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to
revive the heart of the contrite ones! It is much he
should look on them; but it is far more, it is amazing,
that he should dwell, or take up his abode with
them. When our Lord spake of such as loved
him, and kept his commandments, he said, that
He and his Father would come unto them, and make
their abode with them, Therefore said Judas, not
Iscariot, Lord how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself
unto us, and not unto the world? What reason can
be given for it? O, how distinguishing is this fa-
vour! This always causeth gladness, when it is en-
joyed. Lord, lift thou up upon us the light of thy coun-
tenance; which will put more joy into our hearts, than
when corn and wine increase. It is with this, God makes
his people joyful in the house of prayer; where prayer
is made, the word preached, and ordinances admi-
nistered: It is the nearest to heaven, of any thing
that is enjoyed upon earth. It is this which sweet-
ens all affections, and makes us easy under them.
The presence of God is like the tree that was cast
into the waters of Marah; it made them sweet. If
the Lord be with his people, they can cheerfully go
through fire and water. If they pass through the
fire, the flames shall not kindle upon them; or through
the waters, the floods shall not overflow them; If the
Angel of God's presence be with them, they can
pass through the wilderness; yea, through the
valley of the shadow of death, without fear. For,
(says the Psalmist) I will fear no evil. Why so?
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they com-
fort me. This makes every affliction easy; yea, it
causes the foul to rejoice; to glory in tribulation;
knowing
and the Means by which it may be enjoyed.

knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.

Of all things in the world there is nothing so desirable to a gracious soul, as the presence of God. Hence Moses says, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. I do not care where I am, or whither I go, if thy presence go with me; that is his meaning. So David says, There be many that say, who will shew us any (carnal, temporal) good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. That is the thing he was desirous of. So Job in his afflicted circumstances, says, O that I were as in months past! when the Almighty was yet with me: which made past days desirable to be returned unto him. Of all things that one good man can wish for another, there is nothing greater than to wish him the presence of God. As Boaz said to his reapers (a very unusual salutation for farmers, to their reapers, in our day), The Lord be with you. He could not wish them a greater blessing. And there is nothing greater, for God to give his people, than his presence. He promised Jacob that he would be with him, and was as good as his word. Jacob was greatly thankful for it, as appears when he said, Let us arise, and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. If God grants his presence with his people, it is an antidote against all fear from every quarter. Fear not, I am with thee. Let a man's case be what it may, he will exult and say; in the midst of surrounding dangers, The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob will not forsake us.

Well, but now the question is, When, or how long will God be with his people? The answer is, While we are with him. And can we expect it any longer than while we are with him? no; The Lord is with you, while
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while ye be with him: while you keep close to him in a way of duty; while you are with him in prayer particularly; while you ply the throne of grace, and keep close to God there; and this is to be done continually. Our Lord spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. The apostle directs us to pray without ceasing; and elsewhere exhorts, that supplication be made for all saints, watching thereunto with all perseverance. Now, if you keep close to God in your closets, in your families, and in public with his saints, God will be with you; but if you restrain prayer before God, you must not expect his presence. Is it reasonable you should, while you neglect to approach unto him? I tell you, you must not expect he will be with you, when he never hears from you. He will be with you, while ye are with him; while you are with his worshipping people. If you desert his assemblies, he will desert you? Of Judah it is said, He ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints. While Judah kept close to God, the Lord was with him; he had power with God, and prevailed.

God is with us, while we are with his people; while we have communion with them that fear the Lord. God is with them that fear him; and those that keep company with such persons, may expect his presence. This is what makes conversation with the saints desirable. These are the excellent in the earth, in whom we should delight. Why so? because God is with them. This is the reason given why ten men should take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew (that is, one inwardly, a spiritual man), and say, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. Now being with the saints, is in some sense, being with God. While you are with his people, conversing, or joining in prayer with them, God will be with you. They that feared the Lord, spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard;
heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. Saints, when they meet together, may at first be very luke-warm and indifferent; but by degrees, through spiritual conversation one with another, they become lively. Spiritual conversation is like putting fuel to fire: and prayer is like the bellows which blows up the flame; and, ere long, before they are aware, it is with them, as the church says it was with her, when her soul was made like the chariots of Aminadib.

I persuade myself some of you remember the times in which it hath been thus with you, in Christian conversation. You have come to it coldly; but by degrees have been refreshed, and have comforted one another. God has been with you. Thus it was with the two disciples travelling to Emmaus. They entered upon Christian conversation; began to talk about the sufferings and death of Christ; and while they were thus discoursing, Jesus came and joined them; went on and talked with them; and when he parted from them, they reflecting upon what had passed, said, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way? Thus, while saints are with one another, they are with God. While they are praying for one another, and building up one another on their most holy faith; God is with them, as he was with the first Christians, when the house was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and great grace was upon them all.

God will be with you, while ye be with him in public worship, and attend the ordinances of his house. As the primitive Christians experienced, who continued steadfast in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Where God hath recorded his name, he comes and blesses
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his people. Where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them. He hath promised to be with his ministers and churches to the end of the world: and while you are with them, he will be with you. But I must proceed to enquire,

II. When will the Lord be found of his people? The answer is, When they seek him. And can they expect he should ever be found of them, when they do not seek him? it is not reasonable. If they seek him, he will be found of them.

There is no finding out God unto perfection; that is certain. As Elihu says, Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out. Something of God may be found out by the very light of nature; more by the light of divine Revelation; still more by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. But, after all, there is no finding him out unto perfection: not in his nature, essence, perfections, and purposes: no, nor in his works of nature and providence. They are past finding out, as Eliphaz says to Job. And New Testament saints agree in this. The great apostle of the Gentiles says, How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways are past finding out. Not only the works of nature and providence are past finding out; but the works of grace are so. The love of God hath heights and lengths, and breadths, and depths, which are not to be found out. Yet God is to be found by his people. He is found of them in conversion; found to be their covenant God and Father. He was so from everlasting; but in effectual vocation this appears plainly. Then, under the influence of his Spirit and grace, they are enabled to claim their interest in him, as their covenant God; and he owns, acknowledges, and claims them as his people. He is found of them in Christ, as gracious and merciful, pardoning
and the Means by which it may be enjoyed.

Pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin. So he was found of the poor publican; when under a deep sense of sin, and humiliation for it, he smote upon his breast, and said, God be merciful to me a sinner. So he was found of the apostle Paul; when made sensible he was a blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious, he said, I obtained mercy. He found God to be gracious and merciful to him.

God is found of his people also at the throne of grace, as a God hearing and answering prayer. For he hath never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. Sooner or later he always hears the prayers of his people; and sometimes, while they are yet speaking. He is found of them as the God of all grace, which is his title; and he is able to cause all grace to abound towards them. They apply to a throne of grace: they may seek him there, and there they find grace and mercy to help them in all their times of need. He is found of them in his ordinances. This is the desire of their souls, in waiting upon him, that they may behold the beauty of the Lord, while they are enquiring in his temple: that they may see his power and his glory, as they have sometimes seen him in the sanctuary. They are favoured with a sight of the footsteps of their King and their God in the sanctuary. There the glorious Lord is a place of broad rivers and streams unto them. He sheds his love abroad in their hearts; which makes the house of God more eligible than any other place, because there the Lord is a sun and shield; there he gives grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Therefore, blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

But when is he found of his people thus? why, when they seek him; that is the answer to the question: If ye seek him, he will be found of you. It is true,
true, indeed, that he is found of some that never sought him; nay, he is always found of his people in the first instant of conversion, before they seek him. I am found of them that sought me not. I am sought of them that asked not for me. Man is quite passive in the first instance of conversion. It is the Lord that finds him. The Great Shepherd looks up his lost sheep, that were scattered in the dark and cloudy day of Adam's fall. It is not in the nature of sheep, that have lost their way, to return to the fold. Hence our Lord, comparing his people to sheep, and himself to a shepherd, says, How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the mountains, and seek that which is gone astray? Now, we are like lost sheep, and should never find the Lord; nay, we should never seek after him, if he did not seek after us. This is more manifest in the parable of the lost groat, recorded in Luke, xvth chapter. The owner must seek after it, or it will never be found. The woman lights up a candle, sweeps the house, and at last finds it: then she calls her neighbours to rejoice with her. Thus it is in conversion. The Lord is found of them that sought him not.

After conversion, when he is pleased to hide his face from his people, they seek him; and it is often a long time before they find him. It was so with Job: Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat. Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left-hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him. He made use of all proper means, looking backwards and forwards where he had seen appearances of his providence or of his grace. So the church, when she had lost her beloved, sought him in the broad places and streets. Elsewhere she is represented
represented as seeking him, and could not find him; as giving charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, if they found him, to tell him, that she was sick of love. Yet sooner or later the Lord is found by them that seek him: for he has promised it, and he is faithful that hath promised. Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Those, particularly, that seek him early, shall find him: i.e. seek him in the first place, and above all things else; that seek him earnestly, and with their whole heart. Some there are that draw nigh to him with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, when their hearts are removed far from him. They seem to take delight in seeking after God, in asking of him the ordinances of justice; but this is only outward show. However, as for those that seek him with their whole heart, it is promised they shall find him. Those that draw nigh to him with true hearts, in the uprightness of their souls; that seek him, as they would any thing the most valuable; such, the wise man says, shall find the knowledge of God.

They seek after a greater degree of spiritual and experimental knowledge; knowing that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him: that seek him in a right manner, while and where he may be found. But where may God be found, as merciful and gracious by a depraved and guilty creature? In the Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life: no man can come to the Father, but by him. By him we have access to God, and in no other way. Thus God is to be found in his house, in his ordinances, and among his people, where he often shews himself, and affords his gracious presence. If ye seek him, he will be found of you, sooner or later.

* Prov. viii. 17.  
† Prov. ii. 5.  

U 4  

III. When
The Presence of God, what it is,

III. When does the Lord forsake his people? The answer is, When they forsake him: and as surely as they forsake him, he will forsake them.

Now, in what sense may God be said to forsake his people? There is a sense in which he never does. He promised Joshua, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. That promise appears to be made, not only to Joshua, but to every believer; for you find it quoted (Heb. xiii. 6.) as a general promise belonging to all the saints, and made use of to encourage the believing Hebrews to be content with such things as they had, nor to fear any enemy; but be confident the Lord would be their helper. This therefore, is a common promise, common to all believers; every one may claim it, and take their share in it.

There is therefore a sense in which he will never forsake his people. Thou, Lord, hast never forsaken them that seek thee. When they are in distress, and make application to him, he will regard them. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. The Lord will not forsake the work of his hands; but will perfect that which concerneth them; will fulfil the pleasure of his goodness in them, and the work of faith with power upon them. He will carry on the work with power, until the day of Christ. He will not forsake his own people; and the reason is, because they are his inheritance. A man does not choose to forsake his own inheritance. Did you ever know an instance of it? Now God's people are his inheritance, and he will never forsake them, so as that they shall be lost. They may seem, in their own apprehensions, to be forsaken of him. They may

* Psalm ix. 10. fay,
and the Means by which it may be enjoyed.

say, with the church, The Lord hath forsaken me. But what answer does the Lord give? Can a woman forget her sucking child; that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? the may, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me. The Lord’s people may think they are forsaken, when they are not. Indeed, they may be forsaken so far, as that God may hide his face from them, or withdraw his gracious presence: as it was with Christ; for what befel the Head, it may reasonably be supposed may befal the members. My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me? God does, for a short time, fortake his people. For a small moment, have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee, Isa. liv. 7. And in the following chapter it is said, Thou shalt be no more termed forsaken. No more, suggests that they had been forsaken, and were termed so; but they shall not again be termed forsaken. Now this is to be understood of God hiding his face from his people. But when does he this? when they forfake him and his laws. If his children forfake my law, and walk not in my judgments, then will I visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail*. So that you see, God’s fortaking his people, upon their fortaking him, is consistent with the continuance of his love to them; and their continuance in his covenant. This fortaking therefore respects sensible communion with him, which he is pleased to except them from, by way of rebuke for their iniquities: for their iniquities separate between them and their God, and cause him to hide his face from them. He for-

* Psalm lxxxix. 30, &c.
The Presence of God, what it is,

fakes them when they forfake his word, worship, and ordinances. The apostle writing to the Hebrews says, Not forfaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some profellors is. This is too much the manner now.

Well then, if you forfake the Lord (for to forfake the assembling of yourselves together, is to forfake him), he will forfake you. To forfake him, is to forfake the throne of his grace; to refrain prayer before God; and, if you continue therein, he will forfake you. You never knew a man, I dare say, in the whole circle of your acquaintance, that ever forlooked the word of God and prayer, but that he was left of God, (though a child of his) and manifestly appeared to be in a declining state. This is a well known case, if men forfake the Lord, in either of these fenses, he is sure to forfake them, till he hath brought them to a sense of their evil. I will go and return to my place, until they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early. This forfaking of God is a very great evil, which the people of God fall into through the infirmity of the flesh, the power of unbelief, the temptation of Satan; and often times through being immersed in the things of this world. Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. What then? He forfook the God that made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. This is a great evil. God is provoked at it, and will shew his displeasure. He refents it by hiding his face from them. If ye forfake him, he will forfake you.

You see then, if you are desirous of enjoying the presence of God, what is to be done. You must be with him. You must keep close to him, to the throne of his grace, to his people, to his sanctuary,
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and the ordinances of it. If you depart from these, you are not to expect the presence of God. I am speaking of sensible communion, which cannot be expected.—Again: What great encouragement here is to seek the Lord. If ye seek him, he will be found of you. He is to be found, great as he is. He will shew himself to you, if ye seek him. You may be assured of it: he hath promised it. In the next place, What care should we take not to offend him, or cause him to hide his face from us! so careful you see the church was, when enjoying the most intimate communion with her Lord; when his left hand was under her head, and when with his right-hand he embraced her, that she said, I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my Love, till he please*. O how careful should we be of offending that God, who indulges us in such a manner, as to grant us his gracious presence, which is the greatest favour that can be enjoyed in this world.

Lastly, We should pray for grace and strength to keep close unto him. Our deceitful hearts are apt to start aside from him. Through the corruption of them, the temptations of Satan, and the snares of the world, we are too much carried away; and are ready to depart from God at all times. How earnest then should we be in plying the throne of grace for strength to keep close to him; to walk humbly before him, and in a constant dependance upon him.

* Cant. ii. 7.
SERMON XVII.

The Eyes of the Lord upon, and his Power engaged on the Behalf of those whose Hearts are upright towards him.

2 Chron. xvi. 9.

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfecte towards him.

NOTWITHSTANDING Asa, king of Judah, had received such remarkable tokens of divine goodness and power, in appearing for him, when Zerah the Ethiopian came out with a vast army against him, so that he obtained a complete victory over him, and returned with a large spoil; yet, when Baasha, king of Israel, attempted to build a city upon his borders, he distrusted the providence of God; betook himself to the king of Syria, and sent him gold and silver out of his own treasury, and out of the treasury of the house of the Lord, to prevail with him to break the league which
The Eyes of the Lord upon, and his Power

which he had entered into with the king of Israel, and make a diversion in his favour; which was accordingly done. Upon which, the prophet Hanani came unto him, and said; Because thou hast relied on the King of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God; therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Then he reasons with him upon that remarkable success which he had against the Ethiopians. Were not the Ethiopians and the Sabines, a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand. Intimating, that had he relied upon the Lord his God now, and not upon the king of Syria, that the Syrian army would have been delivered into his hands. The reason is given in the words I have read, For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him. In speaking to which words, I shall

I. Enquire what we are to understand by the eyes of the Lord.
II. In what sense these are said to run to and fro throughout the whole earth.
III. The end of their running thus.

I. What we are to understand by the eyes of the Lord? These words are not to be understood literally, or in a corporal sense; for though the various parts of a human body are, in Scripture, attributed to God; yet we are not to entertain such a gross notion of the divine Being, as if he had a body consisting of parts like ours. When, therefore, any thing of this kind is ascribed to him, it is only expressive of some power, or action done by him, which is similar thereunto. Hast thou eyes of flesh, or seest thou as man seeth? No, Jehovah has not eyes of flesh;
flesh; he does not see as man sees. Man can only see things that are near him, not at any great distance; but the eyes of the Lord, as in our text, run to and fro throughout the whole earth. Man's eyes can only see and observe objects, one after another; but the eyes of the Lord behold altogether; all objects throughout the whole universe, at one and the same time. The eyes of man can only see when there is light; but light and darkness are both alike to the Lord. Only external objects are to be seen by the eyes of men; but the eyes of the Lord discern internal things; the heart of man, and the recesses of it. The eyes of men are often deceived; but the sight of God never. His are not eyes of flesh; nor does he see as man sees. But this is to be understood figuratively of him; and in our text, designs his all-seeing providence; and that, as concerned in a special manner with his own people; who are described as having their hearts perfect towards him.

This phrase, The eyes of the Lord, designs sometimes his general providence, as it respects every individual person. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, throughout the whole universe, beholding the evil and the good; evil men, and good men; their dispositions and actions, whether good or bad: but here, and elsewhere, the eyes of the Lord intend his all-seeing providence, as concerned in a special manner with his people. So we find in the prophecy of Zachariah, seven eyes are said to be upon one stone, laid before Joshua; which stone seems to be none other than that cut out of the mountain without hands, the stone which the builders refused, and is made the head of the corner; the foundation and chief corner stone, our Lord Jesus Christ. The eye of God, in its full perfection, signified by seven eyes, is said to be upon that stone. It is also upon every
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every one that is laid upon that stone; built upon that sure foundation; which is matter of joy, as it is said, in the fourth chapter of that book. They shall rejoice when they see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, with those seven: they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro throughout the whole earth. The very phrase used in our text.

The eyes of the Lord are pure and holy. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Sin is the abominable thing which his righteous soul hateth; being contrary to his nature, repugnant to his will, and a breach of his righteous law. It makes men abominable in the sight of God. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water. He is not a God that taketh pleasure in sin, neither shall evil dwell with him. He hates all the workers of iniquity, who make a trade and business of finning. His eyes, as they are set upon the wicked, are upon them for evil. I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. And again. The eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, to destroy it*. The eyes of the Lord, as they are set upon his own people, are like the eyes of doves; expressive of mildness, gentleness, tenderness, and love: but as they are set upon wicked men, his eyes are as flames of fire; expressive of wrath and vengeance; sparkling with rage and fury. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil; his countenance is a terrible one, and the effect of it is to cut them off from the face of the earth. But his eyes are set upon the righteous in a favourable way. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry†. His eyes of providence are upon them, attended with love, mercy, and kindness. He takes delight in them, as they are clothed with the righteousness of

* Amos ix. 4–8. † Psalm xxxiv. 15.
engaged on the Behalf of the Upright.

his Son; for none are righteous, but such who are made so by his righteousness. No man is justified in his sight by the works of the law; but such as are clothed with the righteousness of Christ are accepted before him. He behold them with pleasure, and he never turns his eyes from them. They are upon them for good. The eyes of some are full of envy; but his eyes are full of goodness. Is thine eye evil (envious) because I am good, kind, and bountiful? Such is the eye of the Lord towards his people, his righteous ones. It is good and bountiful. His eye is upon them to bestow all needful good; to cause all things to work together for good. His eye is an eye of love, grace, and mercy unto them. The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, and upon them that hope in his mercy. This is no other than his grace and mercy, which are from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him; and that according to his sovereign will and pleasure, who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and is gracious to whom he will be gracious. His looks upon his people with complacency and delight. His countenance beholds the upright. His own people are his Hephzibah, in whom he delights; his Beulah, to whom he is married: and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so does he over them: yea, he rests in his love towards them, and rejoices over them with abundance of joy.

It is further said of the eyes of the Lord, that they try the righteous. His eyes behold, and his eye-lids try the children of men. The Lord tries the righteous; he distinguishes them from others, even in the way of his providence; for though he is the Saviour of all men, yet especially of them that believe. He distinguishes them by the gifts of his grace; which he makes them partakers of, while others are not: so that they have abundant reason to say, with admiration!
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Who hath made us to differ? In this sense are we to understand the eyes of the Lord, as they are concerned with his own people; which are no other than his all-seeing-providence, accompanied with his love and mercy towards them.

Now these eyes of his love and mercy were set upon them from everlasting, in his eternal councils and decrees. He loved them with an everlasting love. He looked upon them and chose them, in his Son, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and happy. He blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus. He gave them grace in Christ before the world began. He put them into the hands of his Son, made them his care and charge; and said unto him, as their surety, Feed the flock of slaughter. To which he agreed, and said, I will feed the flock of slaughter; even ye, O poor of the flock.

His eyes are upon them in time, even as soon as they are brought into the world. He takes them under his special protection, from their mother's womb; so says the apostle, Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace. Not that he called him by his grace as soon as he was born; but so early he distinguished him by a special providence over him, in order to his being effectually called by grace in due time. This he observes concerning others, as well as himself. Who hath saved us, and called us: saved us to be called; saved us, in a special providential way. The Lord's eyes are upon all his people in a peculiar manner, as soon as they are born; and all the while they are in a state of unregeneracy. This is remarkably manifest in the case of the apostle Paul, I am now speaking of. What notice is taken of him in the sacred history, before he was effectually called by grace! When Stephen, the proto-martyr, was stoned,
ed, it is said, the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul; and, further it is observed, that Saul was consenting unto his death. There were multitudes consenting unto his death besides Saul; but he is particularly taken notice of, that the grace of God might be magnified in his conversion. It is further said, Saul made havoc of the church. Saul was breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of Christ. Thus you see what notice was taken of him; how God's eye was upon him, even before he was called by grace; and that because he was a chosen vessel of salvation. So our Lord said to Nathaniel, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Before he was called either in a ministerial way, or effectually by the grace of God, the eye of the Lord was upon him. The Lord's eyes are upon all his people, even in this state, until the time comes in which they are to be effectually called. There is a time for every purpose under heaven; and there is a time for God's calling his people by his grace; for they are all of them called according to his purpose. Now till this time Jehovah waits; waits to be gracious to them; waits as it were with longing eyes, till the time is up; and with respect to some, he waits even till the eleventh hour: and his long-suffering towards his people, whether it be longer or shorter, always ends in salvation; for the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is willing that all should come to repentance. When the set time is come, he passes by them, looks upon them; and his time is a time of love. He looks upon them not with loathing and contempt; but with commiseration. When no eye pities them, he looks upon them; and shews mercy to them. He looks upon them, while in their blood, and says unto them, live; and washes them from all their pollutions and defilements. He looks upon
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upon them, when in the hands of Satan; and snatches them from thence: observes them to be as brands in the burning, and takes them from thence. He looks upon them, and sees them in a pit, wherein is no water; in the mire and clay; and taking them from thence, he sets their feet upon a rock and establishes their goings. Thus he looks upon them with an eye of pity and compassion.

The Lord's eye still continues upon his people after conversion. He watches over them night and day, lest any hurt them. They are engraved upon the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him. As the Lord said concerning the temple at Jerusalem, Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually; so his heart and his eyes are perpetually upon them: and, as it is said of the land of Canaan, The eyes of the Lord are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even to the end of the year: so the eyes of the Lord are upon his people, not only from the beginning of one year, to the end of it, but from the beginning of their life, unto the end of their days. Let us now enquire,

II. In what sense we are to understand this phrase, The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth? We have seen that these eyes of the Lord signify the all-seeing providence of God, attended with his grace, mercy, and love; as concerned with his people in a special manner. But in what sense are we to consider these eyes of the Lord, as running to and fro throughout the whole earth?

The Omniscience of God reaches throughout the world, and to all creatures. He looks down from heaven, and beholds the sons of men; he looks upon the inhabitants of the earth, and considers all their works,

* 1 Kings ix. 3.
engaged on the Behalf of the Upright.

works, whether they be good or bad. His eyes are upon the ways of men, whether right or wrong. He beholds all their goings, every step they take, whether in or out of the way of God. There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves: for the darkness and the light are both alike to him. He fills heaven and earth with his presence. His general providence reaches to all creatures. He preserves man and beast; not only upholds them in their beings, but supplies their wants. The eyes of all are upon him, and he satieth the desire of every living thing. As in one age of the world and another, he has a people in various parts of the earth: so the all-seeing eye of his providence has been concerned, in a special manner with them; and extends to them, be they where they will. The children of God, those whom he hath predestinated to the adoption of children, according to the council of his will from everlasting, are said to be scattered abroad; some are in one place, and some in another. Hence Christ is said to come to gather these together, to reconcile them to God, by being a propitiation, not for the sins of the Jews only, but for all the people of God throughout the whole world: therefore, when he gave a commission to his ministering servants, he bid them go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He so orders it in providence, that he either sends the gospel to them, or he brings them to it; or, however, calls them by his grace, and encourages them to look unto Christ, who says, Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. Hence we read of songs of praise from the uttermost parts of the earth*; songs of electing, redeeming, justifying, pardoning, adopting, re-

* lsa. xxiv. 16.

X 3 generating,
generating, and sanctifying grace, from persons in the uttermost parts of the earth, that are partakers of his grace.

Let the wicked be where they may, they shall not escape his notice: Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them. So let the children of God be where they may, He will find them out. He is the great Shepherd of the sheep; and he will search for them in whatsoever corner they are; and where they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day. The special providence of God reaches them all, attended with his grace, mercy, and goodness.

When, therefore, his eyes are said to run to and fro throughout the whole earth, on the behalf of these; we are not to suppose any local motion, or change of place, in God; for he is omnipresent. Though he is said, sometimes, in condescension to our capacities, to bow the heavens and come down, and to return to his place; yet these expressions are to be understood after the manner of men; and not as true in a literal sense. When his eyes are said to run to and fro, it is expressive of his watchfulness over his people. As those who are watchful look here and there, and are very diligent in their observations; so the Lord watches over his people. He expresseth himself in this very language, As I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them to build, and to plant, saith the
the Lord*. He opens his eyes upon such poor worth-
less creatures as we are; for he that keepeth Israel,
that watches over them, neither slumbers nor sleeps.
The phrase is expressive of his readiness, and swift-
ness, to assist his people in times of difficulty and
distress; and answers to that request of the church,
where she says, Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou
like to a roe, or to a young hart, upon the mountains of
spices. Thus the Lord is a present help in time of
trouble. He is ready at hand to assist his people:
he helps them, and that right early. His eyes run
to and fro, here and there, on their behalf; and
this in order to counter-work Satan, who is said to
go to and fro in the earth†; and is by the apostle re-
presented as a roaring lion, that goeth about seeking
whom he may devour. Now the eyes of the Lord run
to and fro through the earth, to counter-work this
adversary; to watch over his people, that they may
not be hurt and destroyed by him. He hath, as
before observed, those that are the objects of his love
and care, in various parts of the earth; and his eyes
run to and fro every where on their behalf. Fear not,
I will be with thee, I will bring thy seed (spiritual con-
verts) from the East, and gather them from the West.
I will say to the North give up, and to the South keep
not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters
from the ends of the earth. Thus you see what is
the meaning of this figurative expression, and the
propriety of using this phrase; because of the people
of God being in different parts of the world, and be-
cause of the exquisite care the Lord takes of them.
They are under his special notice; and therefore
let them be where they will, his eyes are upon
them. I now come,

* Jer. xxxi. 28. † Job i. 7.

III. To
III. To the end, or use, of the eyes of the Lord running to and fro throughout the whole earth. It is to shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him. Here we shall

1. Consider the descriptive character of those who are so peculiarly the objects of his care and special providence. They are described as having their hearts perfect towards God.

2. The exertion of divine power on their behalf. He will shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him.

1. The descriptive character given of them who are the care of providence in a special way of grace, mercy, and love; they are such whose heart is perfect towards God. What! is it possible any man's heart should be perfect towards God? It seems, we read of several persons, concerning whom this testimony is borne. It is said of Solomon, that his heart was not perfect, as was the heart of his father, David; which plainly implies, that the heart of David was perfect; and yet that great and good man had many blemishes in his life: but it seems his heart was found and perfect. So it is said of Asa, even this very Asa to whom our text has an oblique respect, that his heart was perfect all his days; and yet here is an intimation of some imperfection in him. Which may be reconciled thus: The bent of his heart was, in the main, towards God; and his heart was perfect, as to the outward worship of God; but not as to the inward exercise of grace, particularly faith, in as much as he relied not upon the Lord as he should have done, but upon the king of Syria. Hezekiah appeals to God himself, and says, Lord, remember how I have walked before thee with a perfect heart: and David, in the strength of divine grace, resolves to walk in his house with a perfect heart; but how are we to understand this phrase, a perfect heart?
No man's heart is so perfect in the present state, as to be entirely free from sin. The apostle Paul, speaks of sin dwelling in him; It is not I, but sin that dwell-eth in me. When I would do good, evil is present with me. I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? This great, this good, this holy man, who had as perfect a heart, I am persuaded, as ever any man upon earth had, excepting our Lord Jesus Christ, was not so perfect, as to be free from in-dwelling sin. The beloved disciple, the apostle John, that lay in our Lord's bosom, and enjoyed so much fellowship with him, bears testimony to this, and says, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. And long before this great and good man, Solomon, the wisest of men, had made this observation, that there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good, and sinneth not. In many things we all offend. A man may be justified from all sin, and in that sense, be free from it; so all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. In that sense, a man may be perfectly righteous. So Noah was of whom this character is given. He was a just man, and perfect in his generation. How was he perfect? not by his own righteousness; no: he was a preacher of righteousness, by faith; and no doubt he was justified by the righteousness he was a preacher of; and that was the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. In and by this righteousness, men are made perfectly comely. All their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake; so that when they are fought for they shall not be found. God sees no iniquity in them: they are without fault before the throne: but in themselves they are not perfect. The heart of man is extremely, is desperately wicked; and therefore every sensible sinner prays as David did, that God would cleanse him from secret
secret faults, and keep him from presumptuous sins. 
Though God sprinkles clean water upon his people, in justifying and pardoning them; cleansing them from all their filthiness and abomination; yet, with respect to themselves, who can say they are pure, and free from sinful thoughts? No man is perfect in this sense.

No man is perfectly holy. Though the work of holiness and grace is begun in them by the Spirit of sanctification, it is but begun; it is not perfected. The God of peace will sanctify wholly those who are in any measure justified; but as yet they are not perfectly sanctified. Nor are the graces of the Spirit of God, wrought in their hearts, perfect. Faith is not perfect; there is something wanting in the faith of the strongest believer. The disciples of our Lord had reason to pray, Lord increase our faith. Love also is imperfect in the best of saints. There is room always to pray, that their love to God, Christ, and one another, may abound yet more and more. Hope is imperfect; sometimes very low, as it was with the church, when she said, My hope and my strength are perished from the Lord. Patience likewise is not perfect, in submission to the will of God, under afflictive dispensations of providence. Therefore, says the apostle, Let patience have its perfect work. Knowledge is imperfect. The path of the just, is indeed, as the shining light, which shines, more and more unto the perfect day; but the perfect day is not yet come. We know but in part. There is such a thing as growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. Whereas there would be no room for it, if this were perfect. No man's heart is perfect in this life. None are free from sin, completely holy; nor are the graces of the Spirit of God in them, arrived at perfection. But when the heart is said to be perfect, the meaning, I apprehend, is, sincere and upright. When the ten tribes came to make David king over all Israel,
engaged on the Behalf of the Upright.

Israel, it is said, they came with a perfect heart; that is, in the uprightness and sincerity of their souls. They were quite cordial in what they came about. So David and his people express their great admiration, that they should be enabled, by the Lord, to offer so willingly, with a perfect heart, for the service of God. They did what they did heartily, sincerely, and without any grudging. In this sense we are to understand it here; whose heart is perfect. Such in whom God has created a right spirit, are stiled in Scripture the upright in heart. Their faith is unfeigned, their hope is without hypocrisy, and their love without dissimulation.

Their faith is unfeigned. The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned. Such an unfeigned faith Timothy is said to have. Now there is a faith, which is feigned; such as that of Simon Magus, who said he believed, when he was in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity: But faith is unfeigned, when a man with the heart believes unto righteousness. Hope also is unfeigned, where it is true. There is, indeed, the hope of the hypocrite; which will be of no avail when God takes away his soul. But true hope is unfeigned. It is a good hope through grace. It is founded on the person, blood, and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The true grace of love is without dissimulation. It is not in tongue only, or in word; but indeed, and in truth. Love to Christ is in sincerity of heart; and love to the brethren, is with a pure heart fervently, as the apostle says. Now, where these graces are unfeigned, free from all guile and hypocrisy, the heart may be said to be perfect. The worship of God also, should be from the heart, and in a spiritual manner. In some, indeed, it is merely formal and customary: they draw nigh to God with their

* Psalm xcvi. 11.
mouths, and honour him with their lips, when their hearts are removed far from him. In others, it is otherwise: they draw nigh to God with their hearts; they call upon him in truth, in the uprightness of their souls; their worship is performed under the influence of the Spirit of God; and their hearts concerned therein. Now such, in a gospel sense, may be said to have a perfect heart. But I proceed to consider,

2. The exertion of divine power on their behalf.
The eyes of the Lord run to and fro in behalf of such persons, to shew himself strong; or, (as in the margin of some of your bibles), strongly to hold with such; to be on their side, or take their part; to relieve and protect them. The Lord is, in himself, strong. He is the mighty God; the Almighty. He is wife in heart, and mighty in strength. If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong. If I speak of mighty men on earth, or of mighty angels in heaven, they are nothing in comparison of God. Who is a strong Lord, like unto thee? and to thy faithfulness round about thee? He hath a mighty arm: strong is his hand, and high is his right hand, to do things exceeding great and wonderful. He hath, in a variety of ways, shewn himself to be strong; as in creating all things out of nothing; in upholding all things by the word of his power; in the redemption of lost sinners; in delivering their souls out of the hands of Satan, who is stronger than they: in all these, and in other instances, he has shewn himself to be strong. But particularly in a way of providence; as it is concerned for his people. His eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him. He shews himself strong in supplying their wants, whether spiritual or temporal; for he is able to supply all their need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ.
Christ. He is able to do more for them than they are able to ask or think. He shews himself strong, in supplying them with every thing needful for time and eternity: in supplying and supporting them under all their afflictions and temptations. He will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear; but will, with the temptation, make a way for their escape. He who hath encouraged them to cast their burden upon him, hath promised to sustain them: hath said, that the righteous shall never be moved: and he is as good as his word. He upholds his people with the right-hand of his righteousness; puts underneath everlasting arms, and shews himself to be the mighty God, by supporting them under such trials and exercises, which otherwise, would be intolerable. His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, on the behalf of his people, in strengthening them under all their weaknesses. They are poor weak creatures. Sensible they are of it, and cry unto him for strength. He hears their cries, strengthens them with strength in their souls, with might in their inner man; and makes them strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might: strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He strengthens them to perform every duty required of them, and to exercise every grace wrought in them: to withstand every temptation which befits them, and every corruption which arises up in their hearts, to bear what he is pleased to lay upon them; and to do the work appointed for them in their day and generation.

The eyes of the Lord run to and fro, to protect and defend them. Sin, Satan, and the world, are too strong for them. They would never be able to stand their ground, were it not for the assistance and protection which they have from God, in a way of special providence and grace. But he not only places his
his angels, as guards over them, but he likewise appoints salvation to be walls and bulwarks for them. Yea, he himself is a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in the midst of them. Thus does he shew himself strong in their behalf. Happy are the persons that are under his special care in all these instances.

Let us now praise and adore the grace of our God, if we have any reason to hope and believe, that we have been under his special providential care ever since we have had a being; and especially if he has distinguished us by the blessings of his grace and goodness. Truly, we have abundant reason to bless and praise his holy name, if he hath dealt with us after this manner. In how many instances must it have been bad with us, if his eyes had not been over us; if they had not run to and fro, to shew himself strong on our behalf, in things temporal? And how sad would have been our condition, if he had not expressed his love to us, in calling us by his grace? Let what he hath done for us encourage us to put our trust in him for the future. Let us not rely upon the creature. This was Asa's sin: who, notwithstanding all that God had done for him, distrusted his providence; relied upon the creature, and not upon his God. O let us take warning, and not act after this manner; but trust in the living God. Our great concern, under a sense of all should be, to live to his honour. Let us now attend to the advice that Solomon gives at the dedication of the temple, Let your hearts be perfect with the Lord your God; to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.
Jehovah's Declaration, Behold the Man is become as one of us, considered,

Genesis iii. 22.

And the Lord God said, Behold the Man is become as one of us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

In the three first chapters of Genesis, we have an account of the rise and ruin of the world, and of all human nature. The first chapter gives us a compendious narration of the creation of the universe, in that gradual procedure, which the Former of all things was pleased to take therein; and particularly of the formation of man, the chief of all God's works in this lower world. The second chapter informs us of that happiness which man enjoyed, during his continuance in a state of innocence; namely, that he was the favourite of heaven; Lord of this lower world; had all creatures in subjection to
Jehovah's Declaration, Behold

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to him; was blessed with the enjoyment of all the conveniencies and delights of nature, being placed in the most pleasant and fruitful spot in all the globe: where he had a large knowledge of God, and much communion with him. Nevertheless, man, being in honour, abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish: for in this third chapter we hear of his defection from God, and are told who was the principal instrument of it; by what artful methods he effected it; as also the dreadful consequences which followed the arraignment, conviction, and condemnation of the several parties concerned in this grand rebellion; and the sentence passed on each of them by God, the Judge of all. The account of which is continued almost to the words which I have read; which were spoken by God himself, and respects his fallen creature, man; in which may be observed these two things:

I. A declaration, either of man's present, or of his past condition.

II. A prevention of his eating of the tree of life.

I. Here is a declaration made by Jehovah himself, either of man's present, or of his past condition. And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us. In which may be considered, 1. The person speaking, the Lord God. 2. The persons spoken to, to whom the man is said to be like; or, who are the Us, here mentioned. 3. The persons spoken of, the man, or the Adam. 4. The matter contained herein, and the manner in which it was delivered.

1. It may be proper to consider, who it is that speaks these words; and we are told that it is Jehovah Eloim, the Lord God. And the Lord God said,
the Man is become as one of us.

said. By whom I understand, the second Person in the Trinity, the promised Messiah; who continues speaking from verse 8. This was the sense of the ancient Jewish church; as is manifest from their Targums, or paraphrases on this book. Verse 8, is thus paraphrased by Onkelos. And they heard the voice of the Word of the Lord God, &c. as it is also by Jonathan ben Uzziel. Verse the 9th by the Jerusalem Targum, thus, And the Word of the Lord God called unto Adam, &c. As is verse 10th, both by Onkelos and Jonathan, after this manner: And he said, I heard the voice of thy Word in the garden, &c. Now this was no other than the same person whom the Evangelist John, in the beginning of his gospel, calls the Word; of whom he says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And thus the Jerusalem Targum paraphrases the words of our text: And the Word of the Lord God said, Behold the man which thou hast created, &c. Besides, the person here speaking, appears in such characters, and performs such offices, as manifestly discovers him to be the Messiah; who here gives a specimen of all his three offices of King, Prophet, and Priest. He acted the part of a Judge, in arraigning his creature man at his bar; proceeding in a legal way against him; convicting him of his treason, and then passing sentence upon him; which is one branch of Christ’s Kingly office: For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. He acted the part of a Prophet, in the discovery he made of life and salvation to fallen man, through the promised seed: and who so proper a person to do this, as the Son of God; who was privy to all God’s counsels and resolutions concerning it? by whom it was to be effected, and who was to be the great Prophet in Israel, by whom Grace and Truth were to come. He also acted the part
part of a Priest, in making coats of skins, and clothing Adam and his wife with them. These were the skins of slain beasts, which, very probably, were slain in sacrifice, and were typical of Christ, the great sacrifice; who, as the great High Priest, made reconciliation for sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness; in which robe of his he enwraps all his people.

Moreover, I make no doubt, but this glorious person, appeared in a human form, to our first parents in Eden; and there brought them the messages of grace: for, not to insist upon the audible voice they heard, and the interlocutory discourse which passed between them; why may it not be supposed that he appeared in a human form, to our first parents in the garden, as a prelude of his future incarnation; and for the confirmation of their faith in it, as well as he did to Abraham in the plains of Mamre; and to Jacob, when as a man, he wrestled with him, until break of day; and as well as to many others? And, perhaps, it may be a rule which will admit but of few, if any, exceptions, that wherever, in the Old Testament, we read of God, speaking with an audible and articulate voice, or appearing in any visible form, that the Son of God, the promised Messiah, is there intended; and it may be, our Lord has respect to this, when he says to the Jews, speaking of his Father, Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape*. And, indeed, who so proper to speak, or visibly to appear, when there was any necessity for it, as the Word, who was to be made flesh, and dwell among us. From hence may be observed,

1. The existence of Christ before his incarnation. The followers of Socinus deny this; and assert, that he did not exist before his taking flesh of the virgin.

* John v. 7.

But
The Man is become as one of us.

But this truth appears from many undeniable instances. He existed in the times of Moses, and the Prophets; was before Abraham; as he himself says, Before Abraham was, I am*. He existed in the beginning of all things; for, In the beginning was the Word. Nay, he was before all things: and by him all things consist.

2. The true and proper Deity of Christ. That the person here speaking, is truly and properly God, is manifest from that awe and dread of his majesty, which fell upon our first parents: from his perfect knowledge of Adam's case, and of the condition which he had brought himself and his posterity into; the authority which he had exercised in the arraignment and trial of man; the discovery he made of the way of life and salvation, by the seed of the woman, which before was a secret hid in God's heart from everlasting; to all which may be added, that he is expressly called, Jehovah Elohim, the Lord God, in the words of our text; which is a name that belongs to none but the most High God. See Psalm lxxxiii. 18.

3. That what is said in those words, Behold, the man is become as one of us, whatever is meant by them, (which we shall hereafter enquire into) is certainly true; seeing it is the Lord God who says it: as also, that the prevention of man, from eating of the tree of life, mentioned in the latter part of the verse, was for man's good, and not his hurt: seeing it is the Lord God, who brought the message of grace unto him, and clothed him and his wife with coats of skins, who prevented it.

2. The persons spoken to, are next to be enquired after; or who are intended by the Us, to one of whom the man is said to be like. And,

* John viii. 58.
1. Some Jewish interpreters, who are also followed by some Christians, say, that these words are spoken Regio more, after the manner of kings, who in all their edicts and proclamations use the plural number. But this aulic way of speaking, did not obtain very early in the eastern nations; and, perhaps, was first introduced by the Romans. Nor can any instance be produced in the sacred writings, of any one man, though ever so great, proud, and arrogant, speaking only of himself in the plural number. And as for those Scriptures, which are commonly insisted on, they are rejected by a learned Jew *, as false witnesses. Besides, when princes do issue out their mandates, edicts, and proclamations, it is with the advice of their privy council; which is the reason of their using this way of speaking: so that this subterfuge is like to do but little service to the antitrinitarians.

2. Others would have the angels here meant, to whom the Lord God thus speaks. But these are not his associates and companions; much less of equal dignity and authority with him. They were never made his privy council. He did not advise with them; nor were they assisting to him in the formation of man: neither was it after their image and likeness that he was created. They are God's servants, to do his will; are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. But,

3. By the Us in our text, I apprehend, we are to understand the three Persons in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit: the same Us, who said, Let Us make man in Our image; after Our likeness. This way of speaking is also used by our Lord, John xiv. 23. Je-

* R. Aben Ezra, in Gen. i. 26. † Targum Jon, in Loc. et Ole-

fus
the Man is become as one of us.

Sus answered and said unto him; 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: where two persons, at least, his Father and Himself, are intended. This being the sense of our text, makes it appear that the doctrine of the Trinity is no novel doctrine. It is not only the doctrine of the New, but also of the Old Testament. It is true, it is more clearly revealed in the New Testament, than it was in the Old; though even there we have abundant testimonies of it. Nothing does more fully and compendiously contain it, than that form of words prescribed and used in baptism, Matt. xxviii. 19. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Nor is there any greater evidence of it, than at our Lord's baptism, recorded in Matt. iii. 16, 17. Hence it was a usual saying of the ancients, Go to Jordan, and there learn the doctrine of the Trinity. But though it was more manifestly discovered, in the New Testament; yet it was not unknown to Moses and the prophets: nay, it was revealed to our first parents in Eden's garden.

3. The person who is spoken of, is the man. We read of two Adams in Scripture, the first and the second. The first man is of the earth, earthly; the second man is the Lord from heaven: the true Messiah, sent from thence to be the Redeemer of lost sinners. Agreeable to this, some Jewish writers*, had a notion of two Adams; the one heavenly, the other earthly: the one, as one with God from eternity; the other, as not only another person, but another thing from God, and rejected by him.

Now the question is, which of these two Adams is here meant? The aforesaid Jewish writers understand it of the heavenly Adam; and take the words to be the words of the Lord God, directed to the angels; declaring to them, after the miserable fall of man, the mystery of his redemption, and who was to be the author of it, viz. the Adam that was with God from eternity; who was one with him, and in all things like unto him. The latter part of the text they interpret, of the prevention of this heavenly Adam's immediate entrance upon the work of Redemption; which was deferred to a longer time; and say, that an angel was dispatched, as a messenger, to acquaint the fallen Adam of it, lest he should be pressed down with overmuch sorrow, for being the cause of ruin to himself, and to all his posterity. In which account, though there is something fabulous, yet it shews, that the ancient Jewish church had some notion of man's redemption by Christ, as the second Adam. He, however, is not intended here; but, by the man, we are to understand our first parents, Adam and Eve, who both are called by this name, Gen. v. 2. Male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. They were both created after God's image and likeness; and both fell in the transgression. But,

4. The matter contained in these words, and the manner in which they are delivered, are next to be considered. The generality of interpreters*, understand them as an irony, or sarcasm; a flout or jeer at man's deception by Satan; who told our first parents, that they should be as gods, knowing good and evil: by which deceitful bait, they were drawn into transgression, and ruined. Now whatever hid-

* Calvin. Paræus. Rivet, &c. in loc.
den meaning Satan might have in this speech of his to them (which might be like those ambiguous oracles of his, by which he imposed upon the Gentile world), yet it is certain, that our first parents understood it, of an equality with the most High God; which became a snare, and proved their ruin. He might indeed, mean, that they should be as angels, who are called Elohim, Gods, in Psalm viii. 5; and so Jonathan, in his Targum, paraphrases Gen. ii. 5. And perhaps, Satan might design such angels as he and his company were; which was verified. For, by their sin, they came to have the woeful experience of good and evil; even as those apostate spirits had. Yet, I say, it is manifest, that Adam and his wife understood him otherwise. Now the Lord God here is supposed to upbraid man with it, and in an ironical way says, Behold the man is become like one of us. As if he had said, “See how much like a God, like one of us, the man looks; as Satan falsely promised him, and he vainly expected. See how he stands before us, with his coat of skin upon his back; and before he had that, he was obliged to few fig-leaves together to make aprons, to cover his nakedness. Behold, how he is filled with shame and confusion for his folly. Does this man look like a God? Is this the Divinity that was promised, and which he affected? This is he, who aimed at a more exalted station than that in which he was created: but how is he sunk into the lowest condition of life!” So that the words seem to be much like those which were spoken by Pilate (when Christ was brought, clad with a purple robe and a crown of thorns upon his head, who then said to the Jews, in a sarcastic way, Behold the man! *)

Not that we are to imagine, that the Lord God here

* John xix. 5.
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Joiced at man's misery, or insulted over him in it; for he had compassion on him; remembered him in his low estate; and, in his love and pity, redeemed him. But he took this method, to bring man to a thorough conviction of his sin, to shame, and true repentance for it: as also, more fully to lay open the devil's treachery; the crafty wiles he uses to deceive mankind; that so our first parents might not be ignorant of his devices. Though I must confess, I can scarce think that the words are to be understood ironically: for it is not very easy to imagine, that our great Messiah, at his first entering on his office of publishing the gospel, should, as one expresses it, "Complete his first sabbath, with a jest on poor man's misery." Seeing, as the same author observes, "We don't read of another, broken on his poor church, in all his ministry." I am, therefore, most inclined to think, that those words are spoken seriously, and express real matter of fact, and may be understood, either,

As a declaration of man's present state and condition; who, though fallen from a state of innocence, must now be considered as believers in Christ, and as restored and renewed by grace; so that he may well be said to be, as one of us. For,

1. Adam stood clothed with Christ's righteousness, which was typified by the coats of skins, which the Lord God made for them; on which account he appeared as one of the Trinity, even as the Lord Jesus, whose righteousness was put upon him; for he who hath that imputed to him, is righteous, even as he is righteous. There is so much likeness between Christ and believers, on that account, that

* Croce; Taghmical Art. p. 76. † Nam esti Adam propter statum legis deditus morti est fed spei eis salva est dicente Domino, Ecce Adam factus est tangquam unus ex nobis; de futura facilicet adlectione hominis in divinatum. Tertull, adver Marcion I. 2. c. 25.
he and his church are called by one and the same name. See Jer. xxiii. 6, and xxxiii. 16.

2. Adam being now renewed by grace, was conformed to the image of Christ, who is the first-born among many brethren; which is what all the elect of God are predestinated to, and therefore, as one of us. This new creation image is wrought by the Spirit; and is increased by those transforming views he gives us of the glory of Christ’s person, and will be completed in the other world; when saints shall be like him, and see him as he is.

3. Adam must now be considered as in union with the Father, Son, and Spirit, as all believers are: which union is so strict and full, that he might well be said to be, as one of us. It is expressed by Christ, in such terms as fully evince it, John xvii. 21. That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us. The meaning of which will more fully appear, when we are removed from this state of imperfection.

4. Adam was now in a state of friendship with God. It is true, sin had separated chief friends, and made a breach upon that former amity, which was between God and man: but now man was reconciled to God, through the appointed death of the Son of God; who, to Adam’s faith, was now slain both in the promise, and in the type: and he was also under the reconciling work of the Spirit of God, to the way of salvation, by the promised seed. Or,

These words may be considered, as expressive of Adam’s condition before the fall; for they may be rendered thus, Behold, the man was as one of us; which, I apprehend, is the truest reading; as well as the genuine sense of the words. This sense I also find is given and approved by a learned Jewish writer*; and suits man in his first creation; who

* Vid. R. Abendenda not. in Miclol. Yophi, in loc.
was in the image, and after the likeness of God, which consisted,

1. In the form and constitution of his body. The body of Christ, which was prepared by God for him, is, undoubtedly, the glory of human nature; it being curiously wrought*, like a piece of needle-work, in the lowest parts of the earth. That is, in the Virgin’s womb, by the power of the blessed Spirit; or in the secret thoughts of God’s eternal mind. For, in the book of his eternal purposes, all the members thereof were written, which in continuance (i.e. in the fulness of time) were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them, really and actually existing. Now it seems as though, according to the idea of Christ’s human body, in God’s mind from everlasting, the body of Adam was formed. Christ indeed, is said to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh; to partake of the same flesh and blood with the children, and to be made in all things like unto his brethren; but then, they are also said to be, of his flesh and of his bones. But whether it be so or no, that Adam’s body was formed according to the idea of Christ’s body, that was in God’s mind from everlasting; yet this is certain, that the bodies of the saints, at the resurrection, will be fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ, according to Phil. iii. 21. And why Adam’s body may not be supposed to be formed according to the idea of it, in God’s mind, I see no reason to conclude. Wherefore, it might be very well said of him, especially in his state of innocence, before he had sinned, and his body became subject to weakness, diseases, and mortality, that he was as one of us. But this is not all that this likeness and image consisted in: for,

* Metaphora ab acupictoribus ad formationem corporis humani in utero materno traducta. Buxtorf in Heb. Lex.

2. It
the Man is become as one of us.

2. It also appeared in the rectitude of his mind, for God made him upright, though he afterwards fought out many inventions. Man came out of his Maker's hands a holy creature. God left an impress of holiness upon him; so that he was, in some measure, like him. Hence the work of renovation is called, The new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.  

3. This image of God, in which man was created, appeared in that wisdom and knowledge, with which he was endued; of which some instances are on record: as, his giving names to all creatures; his knowing his wife, as soon as brought to him, who she was, and from whence she was taken; as also, his knowledge of good and evil, which is the particular thing instanced in our text, Behold, the man was as one of us, to know good and evil. Though I know this is produced as an objection against the sense of the words; and it is asserted that Adam did not know good and evil before the fall. It is true, he did not know evil in the same sense; as it is said of Christ, that he knew no sin. That is, he did not know it, so as to commit it; but he knew the nature of it, its contrariety to God's revealed will, its due desert, and wretched consequences; and so did Adam. Nay, I will venture to say, that in this sense Adam had a more exquisite and complete knowledge of good and evil before his fall, than he had afterwards.  

4. This image consisted also in his dominion over the creatures. He was made Lord of all, upon his first creation, Gen. i. 26. So that there appeared some resemblance of the Divine Majesty in him; which universal subjection of all creatures to him, is very particularly and beautifully described, in Psalm viii. 5, 6, 7, 8. Thus the man was as one of us;
in which words there may also be a comparison * of his past with his present state, though one branch of it is not expressed; Behold the man was as one of us. But what is he now? He is strangely altered; he is not the man he was: his body, which was before hale, robust, and free from all diseases, is now become feeble and languid; subject to all manner of distempers, and to death itself. It is now a mere house of clay, which has its foundation in the dust; and must shortly be reduced to its first origin. His soul, which was created upright, is now destitute of its original righteousness, and filled with all unrighteousness. His understanding, which was replete with wisdom and knowledge, is now darkened. The man that was the darling of heaven, and in perfect friendship with his Maker, is now alienated from him; and he that was Lord of this world, and had all creatures in subjection to him, is now a slave to his own lusts, and afraid of those creatures which were made for his use. A strange and sudden alteration indeed! so that man, in his fallen state, appears far from being autēgennos, or possessed of that free-will, which the Jews † ascribe unto him, and endeavour to establish from those words, Onkelos, one of their paraphrasts, rendering the words thus, And the Lord God said, Behold the man is the only one in the world of himself, to know good and evil. So much for the first part of the text, which contains a declaration either of man’s past or present condition.

II. Here is a prevention of him, from his eating of the tree of life. And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever. Which words are elliptic, or defective, and may be supplied, either thus, There’s danger lest he put forth his hand; or, we must take care, that he

* Vid. Jun, in loc. † Vid. Maimon Hilcot Teshura, c. 5. § 1.
the Man is become as one of us.

does not; or, the man must be drove out of paradise, left, &c. as we find in the following verses he was. So that the sense may be this, The man in his primitive state, was as one of us; but now, by his sin, he has brought himself into a deplorable condition. He is quite altered; he is not the man he was before; and seeing he is so much degenerated, what will not his corrupt heart prompt him to, and his wild imagination put him upon? It may be, to put forth his hand, and eat of the tree of life, that he may live for ever: therefore, it is highly expedient to put him out of the garden, lest he should make such an attempt.

Two things are needful to be enquired into. I. What this tree of life was. II. Why Adam was prevented from eating of it, after his fall.

I. It may be proper to consider, what this tree of life was. That it was a real tree, in the garden of Eden, which bore this name, and not merely figurative and allegorical, I make no question; any more, than that the garden, and all the trees therein, were so. It is highly probable, that it might be useful for the invigorating of Adam's body, the keeping it in a good temperament, and the continuation of the life thereof, during his state of innocence. But what kind of plant it was, what fruit it bore, its just description and proper qualities, I shall not pretend to tell; but that it was symbolical I believe will scarcely be denied. And

1. It was a memorative sign, or symbol, of the dependence of his life upon God. As often as he saw, and eat of it, he was put in mind, that it was God who gave him life, and that it was his visitation, that preserved his spirit. That his life, and the preservation of it, were wholly owing to God, that in him he lived, and moved, and had his being.

2. It
2. It was a confirmative sign, or symbol, to him, of the continuance of his life, so long as he was obedient to the divine will. I will not say, that it was a confirmation of his being translated after a time, to a heavenly and supernatural life, had he continued in an entire conformity to the divine will: because I am persuaded that God never designed that man should attain eternal life, merely by his obedience to a law of works. For, says the apostle* If there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But that was never God's intention. He had provided another way in his everlasting councils.

3. It might also be typical of Christ, or at least, Christ is called so, in allusion to it, both in the Old and New Testament, (See Prov. iii. 18. Rev. ii. 7. and xxii. 2, 14.) because he is the author and donor, both of spiritual and eternal life. As Mediator, he asked it of his Father, in the council and covenant of peace. He procured it by his blood, and it is now secured in his person; for our life is hid with Christ in God. But,

II. Why was Adam, after his fall, prevented from eating of this tree? Some have thought, that there was either a natural, or a supernatural virtue, abiding in this tree, after the fall; so that, could Adam, have eaten of it, it would have perpetuated his life, either for many hundred years; or else for ever; and that the reason why God prevented access to it was either, 1. Compassion for him, that he might not live a long and tedious life, attended with affliction and sorrows, to which he was now subject: Or, 2. By way of punishment, that he

* Gal. iii. 21.
might not be able to elude the sentence of death, which was passed upon him.

But neither of these seems feasible. Not the former; because one would think, that if this tree had possessed such a virtue as to prolong his life, it would also have preserved him from all bodily afflictions and distempers. Not the latter; because it was impossible that the sentence should be eluded in any such way, which was the just desert of sin; and what God's veracity was engaged to make good. Besides, had such a powerful virtue continued in this tree, after the fall of man, every body knows, that God, who put that virtue in it, could have removed it at pleasure; so, that if Adam had eaten up the whole tree, it would have been of no significance to him; nor would it have answered any such end. This is manifest from the daily food we eat: from which, if God witholds a blessing, or takes away the natural virtue, it will not yield any nourishment to our bodies. For, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*. So that there was no reason, on this account, for such a guard about this tree, as that of cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way to defend it. The true reason, therefore, of this prevention was.

3. That Adam might have no hope nor expectation of life, from that, or any thing else, but Christ the promised Messiah. Adam might think, as this tree was useful to him, in his state of innocence, to preserve his life, that it would be so now; and thereby be tempted to forget the promised seed, from whom he had reason to expect life and salvation. And now, that he might not lie, under this temptation, the Lord God thought it expedient to

* Matt. iv. 4.
Behold thurf him out of Paradife, and place a guard about the tree. For there is nothing that man is more prone to, than to seek life, any where but in Chriſt. There seems to be a natural averſion to that. Ye will not come to me, (ſays Chriſt) that ye might have life. No, they had rather go to mount Sinai, yea, travel all the globe over, than go to Chriſt for life, could they but obtain it any other way. But God has reſolved upon this, as the only way of life and salvation; and that man ſhall not come at it, by his own works of righteousness, be they what they will. And therefore, has so guarded this way, that he who seeks for righteousness and life, by his own doings, runs upon the flaming ſword of justice; and whilst he is endeavouring to infure his own ſalvation, he is pulling ruin upon himself. Upon the whole, I do not conſider these words as having reſpect to the event, or what would have been, if Adam had eaten of this tree; but the vain opinion, and fooliſh expectation, that he might have enter¬tained, of ſecuring his life by it. Having thus ex¬plained the words, I ſhall very briefly deduce, two or three inferences from them.

1. Learn hence, the wretched and vile nature of sin. How ſoon was man, the chief of God's works, in this lower world, ruined by it! Nay, the whole world was laid under a curſe, for his ſake. Sin entered into the world, and death by ſin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have ſinned. Rom. v. 12.

2. See the vanity of seeking life by our own performances. It is not only, what God has not eſtabliſhed; but also, what he is reſolved againſt.

3. Obſerve the grace of God, in providing a Saviour, for lost man; and how early the discovery of it was made to him. A Saviour was provided before
before that sin was committed, which required one; and was revealed, before the man was driven out of the garden, that he might have no reason to despair of life.

4. Let us not, then, lay hold on any vain pretences for life; such as those of our own doings, services, and performances. But let us look to Christ alone; for he is a tree of life, to them that lay hold upon him; and happy is every one that retaineth him. Prov. iii. 18.
S E R M O N XIX.

The Love of God considered.

2 Thess. iii. 5.

And the Lord God direct your hearts into the Love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

ONE principal part of the apostle's design in writing this epistle, was, to satisfy some persons in this church, who were shaken in mind, and troubled, as though the day of Christ were at hand. He assures them, therefore, in the second chapter, that it was not; for there were several things to be done previous thereunto: such as the removal of the Roman empire; the great apostacy that was to befall the churches; and the setting up of the man of sin, the Papal Antichrist. He therefore exhorts them to steadfastness in the doctrines of the gospel; and wishes them a great many good things. In the beginning of this chapter, he desires them to pray for him, and the rest of the ministers of the gospel; hints what he would have them pray for, and the reason why. Finally, brethren, pray for us; that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified; that we may be delivered from un-
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reasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith. And then, for their comfort, expresses his assurance of their final perseverance. But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil. As also, his great confidence of their cheerful and universal obedience to the commands of God, saying, And we have confidence in the Lord, touching you, that ye both do, and will do, the things which we command you. In order to which, he puts up a prayer for them, in the words of the text, *The Lord direct your hearts,* &c. So that the words are a prayer of the apostle's, consisting of two petitions, namely, That the Lord would direct their hearts into the Love of God. And, that the same Lord would also direct their hearts into the patient waiting for Christ. It is the former of these that I shall insist upon at this time. In order to explain which, I shall make the following enquiries.

I. What are we to understand by the Love of God?
II. What it is to have our hearts directed into it.
III. Who this Lord is, who is prayed unto to do this for us. And.
IV. What is the great usefulness of having our hearts so directed.

I. What we are to understand by the Love of God. This may be understood either actively or passively. Actively, of the love wherewith we love God. Or, passively, of the love wherewith we are loved by God. In other words, by it may be meant, either our love to God, or God's love to us; and seeing the words will admit of either sense, I shall consider them in both. And by the Love of God, may be meant, our love to God; concerning which, let the following things be observed.

1. That
1. That this is the sum and substance of the moral law; at least, it is the main and principal part thereof, as may easily be collected from our Lord's answer to the lawyer's question, in Matt. xxii. 35, 40. The lawyer's question is, Master which is the great commandment in the law? Christ's answer is, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment. Love to God, urged under the gospel dispensation, is the same with that enjoined by the law of Moses. Christ and Moses agree in this, as appears from Deut. vi. 4, 5. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. This is no new commandment of the gospel; only it is renewed under the gospel dispensation, and pressed with stronger motives.

2. Let it also be observed, that every man by nature, is destitute of love to God: nay, there is not only a want of affection, but even an aversion to him; yea, an enmity against him. For the carnal mind is enmity against God. One part of the character given of the Heathens (in Rom. i. 30.) who were left of God and given up to their own lusts is, that they were secoys; which signifies, not only that they were hateful to God, but that they were haters of God. Likewise in the account the apostle gives of the degeneracy which shall be in the latter day, he says, (2 Tim. iii. 4.) Men shall be lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God. And this is not only the case of those persons now mentioned, but of all mankind; even of God's elect themselves, while in a state of nature. For they, as well others, are enemies in their minds, by wicked works. They live in a state of rebellion, and commit open acts of hostility against the God of heaven. They stretch out their hands against God, and
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Strengthen themselves against the Almighty. They run upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler.

3. Let it be further observed, that love to God is a grace implanted in the heart, by the Spirit of God. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit; and is mentioned at the head of them, Gal. v. 22. The fruits of the Spirit is love, &c. It is, with other graces, wrought in the soul at regeneration. That grace of the Lord, which comes in with it, flows into the sinner's heart at conversion; is exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. These two graces always go together; being implanted at one and the same time: by one and the same hand. And faith, particularly, works by love; and love is usually most warm, active, and vigorous, at first conversion. Infomuch, that the Lord takes special notice when it is left by us; according to Jer. ii. 2. Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Which leads me to observe,

4. The fervour of this love often abates; though the grace itself can never be lost. This frequently arises from the aboundings of sin, both in ourselves and others. Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold, according to Matt. xxiv. 12. Very often, also, it arises from an immoderate pursuit after the things of this world. Hence the apostle, 1 John ii. 15. advises, not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world: for, says he, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. That is, there is but little evidence of love to God, in that man's heart, whose affections are set upon the things of this world. These things, though they cannot destroy the grace, where it is once wrought; yet
yet they strike a very great chill upon it. The grace of Love indeed, cannot be lost; but then it may be left, as it was by the church at Ephesus, of whom the Lord complains, Rev. ii. iv. saying, Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. He does not say, because thou hast lost it; the word signifying not Amittere, to lose; but Remittere, to remit, or abate, in the fervour of it. And this, all the people of God, more or less, sooner or later, experience to their great sorrow: especially in the day in which we live. Therefore,

5. There is great need to pray, with the apostle, that the Lord would direct our hearts into this love. That is, that he would work upon our hearts, and excite our love to God; stir and blow it up into a flame. This he does, by shewing us the vanity of all earthly enjoyments: what God is in himself, and what he is to his people. How worthy he is of their highest affection; and more especially, by shedding abroad the love of God, in our hearts; than which nothing can more effectually do it. For we love him, because he first loved us, 1 John. iv. 19. A sense of this, invigorates our love, ravishes our souls, and obliges us to say with the Psalmist, Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee. Psalm. lxxiii. 25. But I chuse, rather,

By the love of God here, to understand God's love to us; concerning the nature and glory of which, take the following hints.

1. As to the original of it, it is free and sovereign. Nothing out of God moved him to it. He did not set his love upon us, because of any loveliness in us; or because of any love in us to him. Not because of any lovelines in ourselves. For we were in no wise better than others, being by nature the children of wrath. Nor because of any

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love in us to him; for his love is prior to ours, as the cause is to the effect. And, indeed, he loved us, before we had done either good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand. No other reason can be given of God's loving his people, but his own Eudoxia; his Sovereign good will and pleasure. Nor ought any other to be sought for, he loves them because he will love them. And though, perhaps, this may not be allowed to be a sufficient reason, by your men of reason; yet it is what the Holy Ghost has thought fit to give us, and we should rest satisfied with it, Deut. vii. 7, 8. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people); but because the Lord loved you.

2. As to the objects of God's love, it is special and discriminating. He loves some, and not others. It is true, he has a general love and regard to all his creatures. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. They all share in the bounties of his providence. He makes his sun to shine on the evil, and on the good. He sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. But then, he has chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure. Hence he bestows peculiar blessings on those to whom he bears a peculiar love. David says, Psalm cvi. 4. Remember me with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: very plainly intimating, that it was special and discriminating; of a different nature from that which he bore to others. A full instance of this distinguishing love, we have in Mal. i. 2, 3. I have loved you, saith the Lord; yet ye say, wherein haft thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and hated Esau. And, as I said before, no other reason can be given of this distinction, which God makes among the lost sons of Adam,
Adam, but his own sovereign will; who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, let a wrangling world say what they please.

3. As to its commencement, it is from eternity. God has loved his people with an everlasting love; and therefore with loving-kindness he draws them to himself in time. Many are the instances which might be given, in proof of the antiquity of this love. His choosing them in Christ, before the foundation of the world, was an act of his love, for Election presupponit dilectionem. Election pre-supposes love. His entering into an everlasting covenant with his Son, on the account of those he chose; his setting him up as the Mediator of that Covenant, from everlasting; and his donation of grace to them, in him, before the world began; are so many demonstrations of his early love to them. As also, his putting their persons into the hands of Christ, and so making them his care and charge. Because he loved the people, (Deut. xxxiii. 5.), all his saints are in his hand. Now, can it ever be imagined, that there should be a choice of persons; a covenant of grace, so well formed and stored; a promise of life granted; and security given both for person and grace, and yet no love all this while? No, these things prove his love, and this love does not commence with ours; nor, indeed, with time; but bears date from eternity.

4. As to the duration of it, it is to eternity; for it reaches from one eternity to another. Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. He loves them to the end of time, and will love them throughout the endless ages of eternity; for he rests in his love towards them, and from it there can be no separation. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor
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5. As to the degree of it, it is unparallelled. It appears very great in the conversion of a poor sinner. Hence, says the apostle, Eph. ii. 4, 5. 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. But in sending his Son to die for sinners, it appears yet greater. Scarcely for a righteous man, (lays the apostle, Rom. v. 7, 8.) will one die; but God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. There is in those words a very beautiful gradation. The apostle seems to allude to the distribution of the Jewish people*; among whom were three sorts of persons. One sort they called Righteous persons, very strict observers of the letter of the law; but did no more than just what they were obliged to do by the law. There was another sort called, Good men. These were very generous and liberal to the poor, and towards defraying all the expenses of the temple service, in which they exceeded the strict demands of the law. But then there was a third sort, called Wicked men; the profligate and abandoned part of the people, given up to their own lusts, and the very refuse of mankind. Now it is as if the apostle should say, scarcely for one of these righteous persons will one die, who will do no more than just what he is obliged to; yet, peradventure, for one of these good men, who were so generous (and, consequently, had the affections of the people) some would even dare to die. But who will die for those wicked, profligate, and abandoned wretches? Not one; but God commended his love to-

* Vid. Goodwin's Moses and Aaron, Lib. i. c. 9.
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wards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Matchless, unparalleled grace!

6. As to the nature and quality of it, it is unchangeable. It is as invariable as his own nature; nay, it is his nature: for God is love*. The blessings of his grace are irreversible, because they proceed from him, who is the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. Hence also it is, that our salvation does not stand upon a precarious foundation; which it would do, if his love to us changed, as ours to him does. But he is the Lord, who changes not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. God sometimes changes the dispensations of his providences towards his people; but never changes his love. He sometimes hides, and he sometimes chides; but at all times he loves. When he hides his face from his people, for a moment; he still, with everlasting kindness will have mercy on them. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, faith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee†. Love makes alterations in the condition of God's people; but those alterations make no change in God's love. Love made a strange alteration in the state of the apostle Paul; who, of a persecuting, blaspheming, and injurious Saul, was made, not only a believer in Christ, but a preacher of the everlasting gospel. But this wonderful change in him, produced none in God, nor in his love. But if things be so, you'll say, "Then God loves his people with the same love, before conversion, as after." And where is the great hurt of saying so? For once, I will assert, he does; and a very few considerations will bring you to an acknowledgment of it. Let

* 1 John iv. 16. † Isa. liv. 8, 10.
us a little consider, the instances of God's love, before and after conversion, and compare them together; from whence we may be able to conclude which exceeds. I might take notice of God's love in choosing them in Christ; in making a covenant of grace with him, on their account; and in putting both their persons and their grace into his hands; which are all great instances of love, before conversion. But I shall only observe to you three great gifts of God's love to his people before conversion; which, I think, can never be equaled by any instance after conversion. And they are these,

1. God's gift of himself to them: for God has, in his everlasting covenant (and this long before conversion) made over himself unto his people. The tenure of which runs thus, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

2. The great gift of his Son to them, and for them; in which he has shewn the exceeding greatness of his love towards them. Herein is love, says the apostle, not that we loved God: (so far from it, that we were enemies to him; for it was, while we were yet sinners, that Christ died for us) but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

3. The great gift of the Spirit, who is sent into the hearts of God's people, previous to conversion, in order to effect that great work; namely, to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And now, having observed these things, I am ready to ask, Can any greater instance of God's love to his people, after conversion, be produced? If the heavenly glory itself should be mentioned, with all the joys of that delightful state; I deny it to be a greater instance of God's love, than the gift of himself, of

* 1 John iv. 16. John iii. 16. Rom. v. 5, 6, 8, 10.
that of his Son, or that of his Spirit. And, indeed, all that God does in time, or will do to eternity, is only telling his people, how much he loved them from everlasting; all is but, as it were, a comment upon that ancient love of his. If, then, no greater instance of love can be produced, after conversion, than was before; we need neither to be afraid, nor ashamed to say, That God loves his people with the same love before conversion, as he does after.

This doctrine, I am sensible, is not easily digested; and therefore, many distinctions are formed, in order to lay it aside. Some distinguish God's love into Antecedent and Consequent: a distinction without any foundation in the word of God; and is, indeed, in itself, a mere jargon of words, which convey no proper ideas of God's love; but such as are derogatory to the glory of his being and perfections, and serve only to introduce confusion and distress in the minds of men.

There is another distinction of God's love, which I have observed pretty much obtain among persons, though as groundless as the former. It is this, God loves his people before conversion, with a love of benevolence, or good-will. He wishes them well; but he does not love them with a love of complacency, till after conversion. But surely the Lord Jesus Christ loved his people, with a love of complacency, before conversion; for, it is said, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, his delights were with the sons of men*. The Hebrew word translated delights, is not only in the plural number, but its radical letters are doubled; which, according to the usage of that language, always increases the signification of the word: so that it is expressive of the exceeding greatness of Christ's delight and complacency.

* Prov. viii. 23-31.
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cency, which he took in his people. Nay, he seems to have taken a pleasure in the fore-views of the very places where he knew his elect should dwell: for it is said, that he was rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth. And now, why God the Father should not love them with the same love the Son did, I cannot see. God's love is invariably the same, as his nature and essence are. It does indeed appear more in some acts of God than in others; and is more clearly manifest at one time than at another; but in itself it is always the same. All the difference between God's love before, and after conversion, lies in the manifestation of it. It is manifested at, and after conversion; and that sometimes more, and sometimes less; but was not at all manifested before. But the change is in us, and not in God's love.

But if this doctrine be true, you will say, God must love his people in their sins. Well, and where is the hurt of saying he does? It would have been miserable, to all intents and purposes, with you and me, had he not done so. When he saw us wallowing in our blood, in all the impurity of our nature, with our numerous sins and transgressions attending us; had not then his time, been a time of love, had he not then spread his skirt over us, and manifested his covenant grace to us, we had never been his. Perhaps it may be replied, according to this notion, God takes pleasure in the sins of his people, but where is the reason so to conclude? What, can no distinction be made, between God's taking delight in the persons of his elect, and his taking delight in their sins? The distinction is allowed after conversion; that God loves the persons of his people, though he hates their sins. And why may not the same distinction be allowed before, as after conversion? We know that God is of pure eyes.
eyes than to behold evil, or look upon iniquity; that he takes no pleasure in sin, neither shall evil dwell with him, but hates all the workers of iniquity. We abhor and detest all notions to the contrary; yet firmly believe the unchangeableness of God's love to his people. It may be asked, how is it possible that a person should be a child of wrath, and an object of love, at one and the same time? For the elect of God are by nature children of wrath even as others: how then at the same time can they be the objects of Love? I answer, how was Jesus Christ the object of his Father's Love and wrath, at one and the same time? Why it was as he bore two different characters, and stood in two different relations to his Father; viz. That of a Son, and that of a surety. As he was the Son of God, he was always the object of his love and delight; but as he was the sinner's surety, he was the object of his wrath, and displeasure. Hence it is said, thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wrath with thine anointed*, with thy Messiah, or Christ. But yet even when he poured forth his wrath upon him to the uttermost, on account of the sins of his people: when he ordered Justice to draw the sword, and sheath it in him, his love towards him was not in the least abated. Thus also the elect of God, considered in different views, may be truly said to be the children of wrath, and yet objects of love at one and the same time. Considered in Adam, and under a covenant of works, they were children of wrath; exposed to the curses of God's righteous law, and liable to the wrath of God. But as considered in Christ, and under the covenant of grace, they always were, and ever will be the objects of God's love.

*Psalm, lxxxix, 30.*
Nor has this doctrine any tendency to encourage licentiousness; or to discourage the performance of good works; or to prejudice true humiliation for sin; but all the reverse. The consideration of this, that God loved me, before I loved him; nay, when I was an enemy to him; that his thoughts were running out on my salvation, when I had no thoughts of him, or concern for myself; lays me under ten thousand times greater obligations to serve, fear, and glorify him, than a supposition that he began to love me, when I began to love him, or because I did so, can possibly do. This may be a full answer to those who ask where is the usefulness of this doctrine?

7. If we inquire into the excellency of God's love, it is preferable to all creature enjoyments; thy loving kindness is better than life. And if so, it must be better than all the comforts and pleasures of life. The streams of this river of God's love, make glad the city of God. A sense of it makes the believer cheerful under all his trials, and fixes his confidence in God. How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. Psalm xxxvi. 7. But I proceed.

II. To enquire what it is, to have our hearts directed into this Love. And,

1. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is to be led into it, as it were, by a straight line; for so the word מָצַרְבִּים, here used, properly signifies. Now it is the work of the Spirit of God, to lead souls into the love of God, directly, at once, in a straight line; and not in a round about way, as some persons are led, being directed by false guides; who tell them, they must go through the valley of humiliation, and up the hill of obedience, before they can get into the love of God. But the Spirit of God leads the soul directly into it, indepen-
dent of all its obedience and humiliation for sin: which love, when directed into, will set persons in the road of obedience, and put them upon humiliation for sin, in another way and manner.

2. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is to be led into it further and further; so as to be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth of it. This work is progressive, and may very well be represented by Ezekiel's waters; which were first up to the ankles, then to the knees, and then to the loins; but after that, they were waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over, Ezek. xlvi. 3, 4, 5.

3. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is to be led into it, so as to know our own particular interest in it. Thus the apostle Paul knew that God loved him in particular, and was persuaded that nothing should be able to separate him from it, Rom. viii. 38, 39.

4. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is so to be led into it, as to have our hearts affected with it; and influenced by it. A man may have notions of God's love in his head, who never felt the power of it upon his heart: and I am afraid that some persons are more solicitous to have their heads filled with notions about it, than to have their hearts and lives influenced by it. But our apostle does not pray, that the Lord would direct their heads but their hearts, into the love of God. I now proceed,

III. To enquire who is meant by the Lord here; who is prayed unto to do this for the saints. The word Θεὸς, here used, is commonly in the New Testament applied to Jesus Christ; though the Holy Spirit is also sometimes signified thereby, as in a Cor. iii. 17. Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And, I am of opinion, that by the Lord, in our text, we are to understand the Holy Spirit; for he is very manifestly...
The Love of God considered.

ly distinguished from God the Father, into whose love, and from Jesus Christ, into whose patient waiting for, the hearts of the saints are to be directed. So that we have here a proof of the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons. Besides, we are furnished from hence, with more arguments than one, in favour of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost; who is not only called the Lord, which is expressive of dominion; but is also laid to direct the heart; which none but God can do. For the king's heart, and so every man's heart, is in the hands of the Lord, and in his only; as the rivers of waters, he turneth it whithersoever he will*: and especially, he must be God, that can direct the heart into the Love of God; which is one of the deep things of God, which the Spirit of God only can search into, and reveal to us. Besides, prayer is here directed to him; which is so considerable a part of divine worship, that it is sometimes put for the whole of it, as in Rom. x. 13. and therefore would never be offered up to the Spirit, were he not the true God. Now it is the work of the Spirit, to direct souls into the love of God. He not only takes of the things of Christ (his person, blood, and righteousness) and shews them to us, and our interest in them; but he takes also of the things of the Father, and particularly his love. He sheds it abroad in our hearts, and directs our hearts into it; and, in so doing, acts the part of a Comforter to us. I now come,

IV. To enquire into the usefulness of having our hearts directed into the love of God. And,

1. It is very useful to increase our love to God. Never was love to God, to Christ, to his gospel, people, ways, and ordinances, more cold than it is now. Great need there is to have it revived and increased; and nothing can more effectually do it.

* Prov. xxii. 1. than
than this, to have our hearts directed into the Love of God. It was this, which, being let down into our hearts, first produced our love to God; and which only can animate and excite it, when it is grown cold. According to the perception we have of God's love to us, does our love to him rise. Her sins, which were many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little, Luke vii. 4.

2. It is very useful to promote our love to one another. There is a very visible decay of brotherly love among the saints, in this day; as is manifested from those discords, divisions, contentions, and backbittings, which everywhere abound in churches. Now nothing is more likely to retrieve our love to one another, than to have our hearts directed into the love of God. The primitive saints having a large effusion of the Spirit upon them, and a large sense of the love of God to them, were full of affection to each other. Insomuch that they had no need to be stirred up; for they were taught of God to love one another. Nay, even in Tertullian's time, so strong and vehement was their love to each other, that the very Heathens could not but take notice of them, as they walked about the streets, and say, Vide, ut se invicem diligant*. See, how they love one another! No greater incentive to this duty is there than the love of God and of Christ. Hence the apostle John, after having discoursed of the love of God in sending his Son to die for sinners, thus argues, Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another: well knowing, that nothing could more vehemently provoke unto it.

3. It is very useful to enlarge our obedience to God. And indeed, it seems to be with this view, that the apostle puts up this petition here. In the preceding verse he expresses his confidence in

* Tertull. Apolog. c. 39.
these Thessalonians, that they both did, and would do, the things that were commanded them: and in order to that, he prays, that the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God; knowing, that nothing would more enlarge their hearts, to run with cheerfulness in the ways of God's commandments. 'Tis this which constrains souls to live to the glory of God; and makes even those that were slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Never was there more need of having our hearts directed into the love of God, than now; when there is such a neglect of duty among professors; not only in their closets and families, but also in the church of God.

4. It is very useful to enable us to mourn for sin aright. We have great reason to be humbled before God, and to mourn both for our own sins, and for the sins of others. But we never mourn more, nor better, than when impressed with a sense of God's love. It is this which throws our humiliation for sin into a proper channel. Our sorrow for it never rises higher; nor are our shame for it, and detestation of it more increased, than when we are made sensible of God's pacifying love towards us. See Ezek. xvi. 61, 62, 63. It was a look of love from Christ that sent Peter out of the hall to weep bitterly, after he had so shamefully denied his Lord; and it was a discovery of Christ's love to the poor woman, which fetched those floods of tears from her eyes, and which put her upon washing Christ's feet therewith, and wiping them with the hairs of her head.

5. It is very useful to enable us to bear the cross of Christ cheerfully; and perhaps that may be the reason why this other clause is added, And unto the patient waiting for Christ. This may intend, either a patient waiting for Christ's second Advent, and is what our version seems to regard; or a patient bearing
bearing the cross for the sake of Christ. The words in the original, will admit of either sense. It is the saints' duty to bear all reproaches and trials, patiently, for the sake of Christ; and that, in imitation of him who has left them an example. And great need they have to consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; lest they be weary, and faint in their minds. And not only a consideration of Christ's person, but a sense of God's love, is very requisite to support them under adverse dispensations of providence; which, when they have, they glory in tribulations; knowing, that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us*. Wherefore the apostle may be thought to pray, that their hearts might be directed into the love of God, in order that they might patiently bear all things for the sake of Christ. Thus, having considered the nature of God's love, and shewn you what it is to be directed into it, I shall close all with those hearty petitions of the apostle, in the two last verses of the preceding chapter. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.

* Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.
SERMON XX.

The Meat-Offering typical both of Christ and of his People.

Levit. ii. 1, 2.

And when any will offer a meat-offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour: and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon; and he shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests; and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof: and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord.

SACRIFICES of old were of divine institution: and they were appointed of God, long before the Levitical dispensation; when a variety of them were in a particular manner enjoined upon the people. They commenced almost as early as the fall of Adam: they immediately took place thereon. Adam's sons, Abel and Cain, offered sacrifices; one of the fruits of the earth, the other of the firstlings of
of his flock. And the one is said to offer up a more acceptable sacrifice than the other; because he offered it up by faith in a view to the great sacrifice of Christ, the antitype of all the sacrifices, whether before, or under the Levitical dispensation. Wherefore he is said, for this, among other reasons, to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The patterns of things in the heavens were purified by legal sacrifices; but the heavenly things themselves, with better sacrifices than these*: which better sacrifices can be no other than that of Christ. His sacrifice is expressed in the plural number; not that there has been a repetition of it; for it is but one sacrifice, and but once offered up, and will never be reiterated; but to shew the excellency of it, it being usual with the Jews to use the plural number in speaking of things the most excellent. So Christ is called Wisdoms, Prov. i. 20. Besides, respect may be had to the many sacrifices under the law, which were types of it, and were answered and fulfilled by it; and to the many persons on whose account it was offered; and to the parts of it, the soul and body of Christ: and this is a better sacrifice than the legal ones. The legal sacrifices could not make those who came to them perfect, or remove from their consciences a sense of sin. The blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin; but Christ, by his one offering of himself (which has put an end to all other sacrifices) has "put away sin for ever, and perfected for ever" them that are sanctified."

Various kinds of sacrifices were offered before and under the Levitical dispensation. Some were peace-offerings, others sin-offerings, and others trespass-offerings; of which we have an account in some of the following chapters. These were all typical

* Heb. ix. 23. † Heb. x. 14.
of Christ. The peace offering was typical of him, who is our peace; and who has made peace by the blood of his cross. The sin and trespass-offerings were typical of him, "who knew no sin, yet was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He is the sum and substance of them all; and has completed them, by finishing transgression, making an end of sin, making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness.

Among these sacrifices and offerings, that of the burnt-offering was a very considerable one. Of which we read at large in the preceding chapter, and are told what it consisted of; of the herd, and of the flocks, and of fowls. Those that were of the herd, were the ox; those that were of the flock, were the sheep or the goat; and of fowls, turtles, or young pigeons: all fit emblems of our Lord Jesus Christ. The ox, or bullock, was an emblem of his strength and laboriousness; the sheep of his harmlessness and inoffensiveness; the turtle and young pigeons, of his meekness and humility, and of those dove-like graces which are to be found in him. These were to be perfect; to have no spot in them: typical of Christ, who is spotless and perfect, holy and without blemish, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. These offerings were to be voluntarily brought, intimating, that the sacrifice of Christ, the sum and substance of them, would be freely offered up, as it was. "He gave himself an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a "sweet smelling savour.""

When these were brought, the offerer laid his hands upon them; which was expressive of a confession of sin, and was an acknowledgment that he deserved

*2 Co. v. 21.*

† Eph. v. 2.
to die, as that creature was about to do, in his room and stead. Moreover, this action signified the transferring of his sins from himself to this sacrifice, which was to be offered up to make atonement for them; and it denoted the imputation of our sins to Christ, the great sacrifice. "God made to meet on him the iniquity of us all*;" and who was as they were, a vicarious one, offered up in the room and stead of his people. The Just suffered for the unjust.

But I shall now call your attention to another very particular sort of offering, which is mentioned in the text, the meat-offering: which might with as much, if not greater propriety, be called the bread-offering; being made of fine flour. When any will offer a meat-offering to the Lord, it shall be of fine flour, and he shall pour oil upon it†.

There were several kinds of these meat-offerings. There was one that always attended the daily sacrifices; the lamb that was offered in the morning and in the evening, as you may see in Exodus xxix, 38. "Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year, day by day, continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning, and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even; and with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil: and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink-offering. And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat-offering of the morning, and according to the drink-offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord." This was to be done continually, every morning and evening. There was also a meat-offering, at

* Isa, liii, 6. † verse 1st.
the consecration of the priest, and which the high
priest was obliged to offer every morning, at his
own expence*. There was another which accom-
panied the wave-offering, offered at the time of the
harvest yearly†. These meat-offerings were ap-
pointed and fixed at certain times, and were obliged
to be offered; but this, mentioned in our text, was a
free-will offering; wherefore it is said, when any
will offer.

Now this was as the rest were, typical of the Lord
Jesus Christ. As the daily sacrifice was typical of
the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the
world; continually takes away the sins of his peo-
ple, whether of the night or of the day; so the meat-
offering was typical of Christ, who is that meat which
endureth unto everlasting life. Continually endures,
and abides to be food for the faith of God's people,
whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink
indeed: and that not merely typical and shadowy,
but really solid and substantial; who is that bread of
God which came down from heaven, and gives life
unto the world. And, moreover, this meat, or bread-
offering, may be considered as an emblem or repre-
sentation of the children and people of God, as
well as of Christ; for the same word is used of them,
and particularly of the converted Gentiles; as you
may see in the prophecy of Isaiah, where it is said,
And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto
the Lord, out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots,
and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to
my holy mountain Jerusalem, faith the Lord; as the
children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel in-
to the house of the Lord†. And this had its accom-
plishment in and under the ministriation of the great
apostle of the Gentiles; who was made so useful to

* Levit. vi. 20, &c. † Levit. xxiii, 10, &c. ‡ Isa. lxvi, 20.
The Meat-Offering typical

the Gentile world, being instrumental in converting multitudes among them. In his epistle to the Romans he says, Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost *. By the offering up of the Gentiles, he means the Gentile converts wrought upon by his ministry; who were either offered up and presented by him unto the Lord, as a chaste virgin to Christ; or who, under the influence of divine grace, presented themselves, bodies and souls, unto the Lord, as a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice; which was but their reasonable service.

Now whether we consider this meat-offering as having a regard unto Christ, or his people, or both, (for both may be included) we may observe the agreement between the one and the other in the following things.

I. The principal ingredient in this offering, which was indeed the substance of it, fine flour. When any will offer a meat-offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour.

II. In the things which were used, or forbidden to be used with it. There were some things ordered to be used with it, such as oil, frankincense, and salt; and others that they were forbidden the use of, as leaven and honey; as may be seen in some following verses.

III. In the composition thereof, and the different manner of dressing it. It was either to be fine flour mingled with oil, and to be baked in an oven, or in a

* Rom. iv. 15. 16.
pan, or fryed in a frying pan, or if of the first fruits, it was to be corn beaten out of the full ears and dried by the fire.

IV. In the use that was made of this offering: part of it was burnt as a memorial unto the Lord, and the other part of it was eaten by the priests. And,

V. In the acceptableness of it to God. It was an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.

I. I shall consider the principal ingredient of it. There were two things of which it consisted; one of which was fine flour. If any will offer a meat-offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. This may very well be thought to have respect to our Lord Jesus Christ. This fine flour was of wheat, as is clear from various accounts we have of this offering. So when Araunah the Jebusite gave his threshing floor to king David, to build an altar upon, and his threshing instruments for wood; he gave also, it is said (or proposed to give) wheat for a meat-offering*. By which, as well as from other passages, it appears, that this meat-offering of fine flour, was of fine wheat, which is the choicest of all grain; and to which our Lord compares himself when he says, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit†. signifying hereby, the necessity of his dying, in order that he might bring forth much fruit.

This may denote the excellency of Christ: the superior excellency of him to all others, not only as a divine person, but as God-man, and Mediator: he preferable to angels and to men. He has obtained a more excellent name than the angels, having a more excellent nature than they; being,

* Chron, xxi. 23; † John, xii. 24.
superior to them upon all accounts: for he is represented as the object of their religious worship and adoration. When he bringeth his first begotten into the world, he saith, let all the angels of God worship him*. And there is a very good reason why they should, since he is their Creator. He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire†. And as God-man, and Mediator; having finished the great work of redemption and salvation, for his people, he is set down at the right hand of God; where angels are not; for, to which of the angels said he at any time, sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool ‡. These are represented as ministering spirits sent forth by him to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation, whilst he sits at the right hand of God far above all principalities, angels, authorities, and powers, they being made subject to him.

He is the chiefeft, or chosen out from among ten thousands of men. He is stiled God's elect in a special and peculiar sense: behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth ‖. He is chosen of God and precious. He is the head of the election of grace. He was chosen as head to his members. He is fairer, more excellent, and valuable, than all the children of men. There is none like unto him. He is preferable to them in his offices. He is such a King as there is none like him. His Father has made him his first born, higher than the kings of the earth. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. By him kings reign, and princes decree justice; and all are accountable to him for what they do.

As a prophet, there is none like him. Never man spake like him, such words of truth and consolation.

* Heb. i. 6. † Heb. i. 7. ‡ Heb. i. 13. ‖ Isa. xlii. 1.
He spake as one having authority, (having a commission from his divine Father) and not as the scribes and pharisees.* He was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure; for God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him.

As a priest there is none like him: no, not Aaron and all his sons, being a priest not after their order, but after the order of Melchizedec, who will remain for ever, and whose priesthood is an unchangeable one. There is a superlative excellency in him; on account of which, he is esteemed of God and good men. For, though disallowed of some, as he was by the Jews, yet he is chosen of God and precious: and he is precious to all that believe, by whom he is esteemed as more excellent than all others, whether angels or men. Of him they say, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

But this meat-offering, being of fine flour, of wheat the choicest of grain, may also denote the purity of Christ: fine flour of wheat, being the purest and cleanest of all others. As he is a divine person, he is a rock and his work is perfect: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and true is he. The holy one of Israel, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises. He who hates iniquity, and loves righteousness.

As man, his human nature was intirely free from all contagion and corruption of sin: from original taint, as the fine flour of which this meat-offering was, free from all bran, so he was free from the bran of original corruption. Though all men are conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, yet he was not. Though out of an unclean thing, a clean one cannot be brought, naturally; yet in such a won-

* Mat. vii. 29. † Psa. lxiii. 25.
derful way and manner was the human nature of Christ produced, as to be free from corruption; and therefore it is said, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*. Pure and free was he from any iniquity in life: he did none, neither was guile found in his mouth. His enemies traduced him all they could; and sought for false witnesses to bear a testimony against him, to charge him with some sin, but they could find none. His judge acquitted him, saying, I find no fault in him†. Satan, his grand enemy, sought all he could to injure and ruin his character, yet he could find no sin in him; the Prince of this world cometh, (says Christ) and hath nothing in me‡. All his administrations, in the several offices he undertook, were holy. His doctrines which he as a prophet delivered were pure. All the administrations of his kingly office were just and righteous. Righteousness was the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The execution of his priestly office was with the greatest purity and holiness; such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners||. Particularly the sacrifice which he, as a priest offered up, (of which the meat-offering was a type,) was a pure and holy one. He himself being without sin, was a fit and proper person to take away the sins of others by the sacrifice of himself. This he was capable of, and did offer up himself without spot to God: being the Lamb of God, without the spot of original, or blemish of actual sin and transgression.

Moreover, as fine flour of wheat is the principal part of human sustenance, and what strengthens the heart of man, and nourishes him, and is the means

of maintaining and supporting life, it may fitly shadow and figure out our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the bread of God, which came down from heaven. Bread is put for all the provisions of life, as in that petition our Lord directs his disciples to use, *Give us this day our daily bread*. So Christ is our life, our joy, our peace, and comfort. He is our raiment, our clothing, our food, our meat, and drink; he is our all in all. It is by faith, feeding upon him, we receive spiritual strength. To those that have no might, he increaseth strength; and in the strength of this spiritual food, may believers be said to walk many days. Though they are so weak and feeble in themselves, that they can do nothing, yet, receiving spiritual strength from him, living by faith upon him, they can do all things. They are nourished up by him with the words of faith and sound doctrine: the words of grace, relating to his person, these are the wholesome words which are strengthening to true believers. By these, spiritual life is maintained and supported. He is the bread of life which came down from heaven, and gives life to the world; on which, if a man feeds by faith, he shall never die, but have eternal life. For, as the living Father hath sent me (says Christ) and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

The sacrifices of the old law, so this in particular is called the bread of God. "They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God; for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God they do offer." Again, "Thou shalt sanctify him therefore, for he offereth the bread of thy God." Now this is the very name which our Lord Jesus

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* Matt, vi. 11. † John vi. 57. ‡ Levit. xxii, 6. § Levit. xxi, 8.
The Meat-Offering typical

Christ bears particularly alluding to this of the meat-offering, he is called the bread of God which came down from heaven*. The bread of God's preparing, the bread of God's giving, and the bread which God blesses for the nourishment of his people. Thus this meat-offering, as to the substance of it, being of fine flour of wheat, is a very special and particular representation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It may also with great propriety be applied unto his people, who are represented in Scripture frequently as wheat. Hence you read in the New Testament, while the wicked and ungodly are compared to chaff which shall be burnt up with unquenchable fire, they are spoken of as the wheat which Christ will gather into his garner†. When tares are said to be sown among the good seed, they are ordered to be suffered to grow till the time of the harvest, left the wheat should be plucked up with them. And when the time of harvest comes, we are told, that the tares shall be gathered, and bound up in bundles and burned, and the wheat shall be gathered into barns‡: meaning true believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. These may be signified hereby, because of their peculiar choiceness; being the excellent in the earth, in whom is the delight of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as of his divine Father, whom he has chosen from all others, to be his peculiar people. They are his Hephzibah in whom he delighteth, his Beulah to whom he is married.

And they being compared to wheat, may denote also their purity. Not as considered in themselves; for they are no better than others by nature, being all under the power of sin, defiled with it, and liable to the consequences of it. And even when they are called by the grace of God, and

* John vi. 33. † Matt. iii. 12. ‡ Matt. xiii. 30.
have a principle of holiness wrought in them, sin dwells in them. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*. Much sin is committed by them. There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not†: but their purity is in Christ. That he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, he has wrought out a righteousness for them, and has shed his precious blood to wash them from their sins; and so they are presented to his divine Father without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. I proceed,

II. To consider the things which were to be made use of along with this meat-offering; and the things which were forbidden to be used in it.

There were some things to be made use of in it, such as oil, frankincense, and salt. Oil was to be poured upon it, frankincense put thereon; and every oblation was to be seasoned with salt. The oil that was poured upon the meat-offering, or to be mingled with it, may denote, either the grace of God in Christ, or the grace of God communicated to, and bestowed upon his people. It may denote the grace of the Spirit of God, poured out upon Christ without measure; that oil of gladness with which he was anointed above his fellows, and from whence he has the name of Messiah, or Christ, or Anointed; and with which he was anointed to be Prophet, Priest, and King. In allusion to which, the church says, Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee‡. Or this may denote the grace poured out upon his people, which is sometimes signified by oil: hence the wise virgins are said to take oil in their vessels. They were concerned for the true grace of God; and that as a foundation of their making a profession of religion,
The Meat-Offering typical

which the foolish virgins shewed no concern for. This is the unction from the Holy One, that anointing which teacheth all things; that oil of joy for mourning, spoken of in Isa. lxi. 3.

Frankincense put upon the meat-offering, may denote, either the acceptableness of the Lord Jesus Christ, to God and his people; or the acceptableness of his people unto God, and to Christ. It may denote the acceptableness of the Lord Jesus Christ as an offering and a sacrifice to God, and to divine Justice. He is expressly said to be an offering and a sacrifice to God, of a sweet smelling favour*. And it may denote his acceptableness as a meat-offering to his people. Those who know the nature, sweetness, and profitableness of feeding by faith on this bread-offering, will say, as the disciples did, Lord, evermore give us this bread†: we would be always living, and feeding by faith on this bread-offering. It may denote also the acceptableness of the people of God, in and through Christ. They are accepted with God in him: they are like pillars of smoke, as the church is said to be, perfumed with frankincense‡. Their persons are acceptable to God, through Christ; so are their services and sacrifices. Their sacrifices of praise are acceptable to God; so are their prayers, as they ascend up before God, perfumed with the much incense of our Lord’s mediation.

Salt was another thing that was used in it; which makes food savoury, and preserves from putrefaction, and may denote the favourines of the Lord Jesus Christ to believers. Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? says Job §. Now Christ, as a meat-offering, is to his people savoury food, such as their souls love: pleasing, delightful, comfortable,

* Ephef. v. ii. † John vi. 34. ‡ Sol. Song iii. 6. § Job vi. 6.
refreshing, nourishing, and strengthening. Salt is an emblem of perpetuity. Hence you read of a covenant of salt*; which signifies a perpetual covenant, an everlasting covenant; such as the covenant of grace is, ordered in all things and sure. And such the covenant of the priesthood was, which was to endure until the Messiah came. Now this may denote the perpetuity of Christ's sacrifice, which always remains; and the perpetuity of him, as the meat offering. For he is that meat which endures to everlasting life; and him has God the Father sealed.

And this, as it respects the people of God, may be an emblem of the favour of their life and conversation. Ye are the salt of the earth, says our Lord †; and again, he says, have salt in yourselves ‡. And it is expected that those who profess Christ, should have their speech always with grace, seasoned with salt§; and that no corrupt communication proceed out of their mouths.

There were two things which the Jews were forbidden to use in the meat-offering: the one was leaven, and the other was honey. There was to be no leaven in it. This, as it may respect our Lord Jesus Christ, the Antitype of the meat-offering, may denote his freedom from hypocrisy, and all false doctrines; which were the leaven of the scribes and pharisees. He said to his disciples, Beware of the leaven of the pharisees: and it immediately follows, which is hypocrisy. But Christ was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile; no guile in his lips, in his life and conversation: he knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Whatever the pharisees might mean when they sent out their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art

* Numb. xviii. 19. † Matt. v. 13. ‡ Mark ix. 50. § Col. iv. 6.

B b 3 true,
true, and teacheth the way of God in truth*; it was no doubt matter of fact. Leaven signifies false doctrine. Hence, when our Lord at another time cautions his disciples to beware of the leaven of the pharisees, he says, "How is it that you do not understand, that I spake it not unto you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the pharisees and the sadaeees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread; but of the doctrine of the pharisees and sadaeees†." Their doctrines were corrupt and false. But our Lord's doctrine was quite free and clear from every thing of this kind. He is truth itself, the way, the truth, and the life; and the doctrines preached by him were grace and truth.

To apply this to the people of God, as no meat-offering was to be made with leaven, it may denote, that they should take heed of communing with profane and scandalous persons. Purge out, therefore, says the apostle, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened‡: meaning, they should put away the scandalous person from among them. Such persons who are of scandalous lives and conversations, are to be put away: there is to be no fellowship held with the unfruitful works of darkness. "For what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" And it may denote, that they should be clear of malice and wickedness: they ought to lay aside, as new-born babes, all superfluity and naughtiness ff.

Another thing forbidden in the meat-offering is honey. Nor any honey in any offering of the Lord made by fire, ver. 12. It may, at first sight, seem strange that this should be forbidden, since it was to be brought among the first-fruits; and when it is so

often taken in a good sense in Scripture. The doctrines of the gospel are compared thereunto: the word of the Lord is said to be sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb*. Honey and milk are said to be under the church's tongue: that is, the doctrines of the everlasting gospel, comparable to honey and milk, because they are sweet and nourishing. And Christ is said himself to eat his honey comb with his honey †; and yet honey is prohibited in this meat-offering. The reason of this is, because it was made use of among the Heathens in their offerings, and the people of God were not to walk in their ordinances; but in the ordinances appointed of the Lord. Besides, honey, like leaven, is of a fermenting nature, and which, when burned, gives an ill smell: and no ill smell was to be in the offering. It was to be, as our text says, of a sweet favour unto the Lord; which it could not have been if honey had been in it. Besides, it is of a cloying nature, it causes a loathing, when persons eat too freely of it ‡. Now there is nothing of this to be found in the antitypical meat-offering, our Lord Jesus Christ. No, the true believer that feeds by faith upon him, the language of his soul is, Lord, evermore give us this bread; let me always feed upon this provision. Moreover, honey may be considered as an emblem of sin, and sinful pleasures; which are as a sweet morsel rolled under the tongue of a wicked man, though it proves the poison of asps within him at last: and so denotes unto us, that such who would feed by faith on Christ, ought to relinquish sinful lusts and pleasures. As well it may also further denote, that the people of God must not expect their sweets, without their bitters. They that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution of one

* Psalm xix. 10. † Sol. Song i. 5. ‡ Prov. xxvii. 7.
kind or another. So the passover was to be eaten with bitter herbs, as the representation of the same thing.—For these reasons honey was not to be used.

III. As to the composition thereof, and the different manner of dressing this meat-offering. It was to be made of fine flour, made of wheat, beaten out of the husk and ground; it was to be mingled with oil, kneaded, baked in an oven, fried in pans, or parched by the fire. Now all this may be an emblem of the dolorous sorrows and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ; who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; who bore the fire of divine wrath, who was the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and who is the proper food of our faith.

And as it may be applied to the people of God, it may denote, not only their separation from others; but the trials and exercises they meet with, which are sometimes called fiery trials. But I must hasten to consider,

IV. The use that was made of this offering.

Part of it was burnt as a memorial unto the Lord, either to put the Lord in mind of his loving-kindness to his people, and of his covenant with them, and promises unto them, to which the allusion is, Psalm xx. 3. or to put the offerer in mind of the great sacrifice of Christ, who was to be offered for his sins, and to be a meat-offering to him. And the other part of it was to be eaten by the priests; which shews the care taken by the Lord for the maintenance of the priests, and from whence the apostle argues for the support of the ministers of the gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. And this may denote, that such who are made priests unto God, by Christ, have a right to feed upon Christ, the meat-offering, by faith; who is the altar and meat offering, which none
of Christ and his People.

none but such have a right to eat of. I shall but just mention,

V. The acceptableness of it. It is said to be of a sweet savour unto the Lord, as Christ's sacrifice is said to be, Ephes. v. 2. And so his people also, their persons are an offering of a sweet smelling savour to God, in Christ; being accepted in him the Beloved, and as are their sacrifices both of prayer and praise.

—But to draw to a conclusion.

Let us look to Christ as the meat-offering. We are called upon to bring an offering, and enter into the courts of our God, Psalm xcvi. 8. What offering can we bring in the arms of our faith, but this? And let us hope, that all our sacrifices will be accepted through Him, who is that altar that sanctifies every gift.

Is Christ the Antitype of the meat-offering, food for our faith? Let us regard him as such, and feed upon him; and the rather, in as much as we are so kindly invited by him. Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled*. And as in every offering under the legal dispensation, a regard is had to Christ, who was the substance of those types; so in every gospel ordinance we are to look to Jesus. He is to be seen and regarded in them all; particularly in that of Baptism, and that of the Lord's Supper. And it may be easily observed, that there is a similarity between the meat-offering and the Lord's Supper. The meat-offering was made of fine flour. Bread is one part of this ordinance. With the meat-offering went a drink-offering of wine; so in this. And as we are this evening about to attend to this ordinance, may our faith feed on Christ, the sum and substance thereof. It is his flesh that is meat indeed; and his blood that is drink

* Prov. ix. 5.

indeed.
indeed. May we be helped to feed upon it by faith, looking to Jesus: to eat of his flesh, and drink of his blood, in a spiritual sense. So shall we be greatly refreshed in our souls; and go on our ways rejoicing; rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh,
The Table and Shew-bread, typical of Christ and his Church.

Levit. xxiv. 8 and 9.

Every sabbath, he shall set it in order before the Lord, continually; being taken from the children of Israel, by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons', and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, for a perpetual statute.

Every sabbath he shall set it. This refers to the shew-bread, which was to be always, continually before the Lord, according to Exodus xxv. 30. And thou shalt set upon the table shew-bread before me alway. This was made of fine flour, as in the context, verse 5. And this fine flour was made into unleavened cakes; and these cakes were in number twelve. And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof; two tenth deals shall be in one cake*. These twelve cakes answer to the twelve tribes.

* Verse 5,
The Table and Shew-bread

The tribes of Israel. And being set upon the table continually, was in commemoration of the bread the twelve tribes of Israel were fed with in the wilderness. These were set upon a table called, verse the 6th, a pure table: called so, because it was overlaid with pure gold; because upon it was set the pure shew-bread; bread made of fine flour, and used in the pure service of God. Of the form, matter, and decorations of this table, you read at large in the 25th chapter of the book of Exodus.

This table was set in the holy place, on the North side of it, over against the vail that divided between that and the holy of holies; and so was before the ark, the symbol of the Divine presence. And these twelve cakes were set in two rows, six in a row; and frankincense was put upon these rows, denoting the acceptableness of them to the Lord. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row; that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord*. This was done, as our text says, every sabbath, every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord. These cakes were first placed there on the sabbath-day; and there they continued the whole week following. The next sabbath they were removed from off the table, and twelve more new ones put in their room. As fast as the priests took off the old loaves, there was another course of priests that placed upon it new hot loaves; so that the table was never empty; therefore it is said, they were before the Lord continually. Hence this bread is called continual bread†: and this shew-bread was the portion of the priests. The twelve cakes of the old bread, when taken off the shew-bread table, were divided between the courses of the priests, that carried in, and brought out; and they were not to be carried to

* Verse 7th. † Numb. iv. 7.
theirown houſes, or families; only Aaron, and his sons were to eat of it, and that only in the holy place, the court of the tabernacle: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord, made by fire, by a perpetual statute. Hence our Lord observes, in an-
ter to the rebuke the Jews gave his disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, "Have ye not read what David did, when he was "an hungred, and they that were with him; how "he entered into the house of God, and did eat "the shew-bread; which was not lawful for him to "eat, neither for them which were with him, but "for only the priefts? "

Now the mystery, and the gospel of all this, I shall endeavour to point out; or to shew, what was meant and typified by

I. The Table, and
II. The bread set upon the Table.

I. The mystery or the gospel of the Table, upon which this bread was set every sabbath, and there continued all the week, until a fresh set of loaves were placed in their room. This table was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of communion with him, in the administration of the word and ordinances. It was typical of the person of Christ, in both his na-
tures: for there are two natures in him, human and divine. This is the great mystery of godliness, God ma-
ifest in the flesh. He is Immanuel, God with Us: God in our nature. He is the Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Yet, though two na-
tures are in him, he is but one person; one Son of God: One Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things,
and we by him*; one Mediator between God and man, the God-man Christ Jesus.

The human nature of Christ, may be signified by the wood, of which this table was made; and his divine nature, by the gold it was overlaid with: for this shew-bread table was made of shittim-wood, and that overlaid with fine gold. The wood may denote the human nature of Christ; that wood being excellent and incorruptible. Excellent. It has its rank among the most excellent trees in those parts; with the cedar, the myrtle, the fir, and the pine trees†. Christ is excellent as the cedars‡; and more excellent than they. He is the chiefest among ten thousands, the choicest of them; chosen out from among the people. As to his human nature, he was separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, superior to angels and men. Higher than they, than any creature whatsoever, even as to his human nature; being set at the right-hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject, unto him.§

This wood is said to be incorruptible; and a fit emblem therefore of the human nature of Christ. In which, as there was no moral corruption, for he knew no sin, neither was guile found in him, in his nature, lips, or life; so there was no physical, or natural corruption in him, not in his body. No, not when dead. For though he was brought to the dust of death, and laid in the grave; yet he laid not there so long as to see corruption. He was raised from thence before any thing of that kind could appear in him. And now, though he was dead, he is alive and lives for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death.

* 1 Cor. viii. 6. † Isa. xli. 19. ‡ Sol. Song v. 15. § 1 Pet. iii. 22.

His
His divine nature may be signified by the gold, with which this table was overlaid. For that may not only denote (as some have thought) the excellency of his human nature, as being ornamented with the gifts and graces of the Spirit; but rather his divine nature, which is elsewhere called his head; and which is said to be, as the most fine gold*. He, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with him; being possessed of all divine perfections. The whole fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him; and therefore, he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.

And this shew-bread table was not only typical of Christ, as to the matter of it; being made of such excellent, incorruptible wood, and that overlaid with pure gold; but also with respect to the decorations of it. It had a crown of gold round about, and it had a border of gold also about it, as we read in Ex. xxv. 23, and the following verses. It had a crown of gold upon it; which may be expressive of that honour and glory which is due to Christ, and is given unto him as the King of kings, and Lord of lords. It is said, prophetically, of him, Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head†. That is, God his Father, has set a crown of pure gold upon his head: which is not to be understood in a literal sense, but figuratively, of that honour and glory conferred upon him as Mediator; being now crowned with glory and honour, and having a name given unto him, above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. And not only has his Divine Father bestowed upon him this honour and glory, as Mediator, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, but the church and people of God (sometimes in a figurative sense called his mother) set a crown upon

* Sol. Song v. 11. † Psalm xxi. 3.
his head, cast their crowns at his feet, and give him all the honour and glory of their redemption and salvation. Hence it is said, *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him; in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart*; which refers to what I am now speaking of.

The border of gold, with the crown upon it, about this table of shew-bread, is also significant of what may be observed in Christ. For as this phrase, when applied to the church of Christ, as it is in the same mystical song I have referred to, where it is said, *We will make thee borders of gold, with studs of silver;* may denote the graces of the Spirit of God, bestowed upon his people, which is as ornamental to them, as borders of gold and studs of silver; so this, being applied to Christ, may denote that fulness of grace that there is in him. He is full of grace and truth. He hath received the Spirit, and the gifts and graces thereof, without measure. Grace is poured into his lips: and he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. And now, upon all accounts, view him in what light you will, whether in his divine nature, as a divine person, God over all, blessed for ever; or in his mediatorial capacity, as head of the church, and whose head is as fine gold; and, in the fulness of the graces of the Spirit of God, he is possessed of, he will appear exceeding excellent and precious, the chiefest among ten thousand. To them that believe he is precious, and altogether lovely: there is none in heaven or on earth like unto him, or to be desired with him. Thus this table was typical of the person of Christ.

It may also be considered, as typical of communion with him. A table among men is an emblem

*Sol. Song iii. 11.*
of communion and fellowship. Here men sit, eat, drink, and converse together: and this shew-bread table is an emblem of the saints' communion with Christ, in the present state more especially. There is the table of the Lord, to which his people are now admitted; where he sits down with them, and they with him, to have fellowship with him in the ministration of the word and ordinances, of which he is the sum and substance. He, the King of Saints, sits at his table; and whilst he is sitting there his church's spikenard (or the graces of his Spirit in his people) sends forth the sweet smell thereof. This table Christ himself is the provider of; it is he that hath furnished it. Wisdom hath furnished her table: that is, Christ hath done it; and here he sits and encourages his guests to eat of the provisions he has made, saying, "Eat, O friends, drink; yea, drink abundantly, O my beloved." He comes in to them, sits down with them, and eats with them, and they with him; and herein is fellowship; such fellowship, as gives the greatest joy, pleasure and satisfaction to the believer, that he can possibly have in this world. On which he may, and does exultingly say, Truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. What more honourable than this, to sit with Christ, the King of kings, at his table? Haman made his boast; it gave him a sensual carnal pleasure, elated his mind, and filled him with pride and vanity, that he was invited by Queen Esther to a banquet, where only he and the King were to be. It was an act of kindness in David, and an honour done to Mephibosheth, that he was to eat at his table all the days of his life. O! what an honour is it to the people of God, those poor Mephibosheths, to be admitted to sit with Christ at his table! This is an instance of amazing condescension in Christ, the King of kings, and Lord of
of lords, whose throne is the heavens, and the earth is his footstool: that he should look upon those that are of an humble and contrite spirit; dwell with them, and admit them to enjoy the most intimate communion and fellowship with him. Nothing in the world more desirable than this, to a truly gracious soul. No wonder the church should express her fervent desire, in such language as this, that she sought him with her whole heart; and that the desire of her soul was to his name, and to the remembrance of him*. No wonder that saints, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and know what communion with the blessed Redeemer means, should pant after him, as the hart pants after the water brooks: that this should be the one thing uppermost in their souls, to see the beauty of the Lord, while they are inquiring in his temple. Nothing is so delightful as this, to sit under the shadow of the blessed Redeemer, where his fruit drops on every side; they take it up by faith, feed upon it, and it is sweet unto their taste. This is what makes the tabernacles of the Lord amiable to them; and a day in his courts is better than a thouand elsewhere. Yea, it is this that makes every child of God say, I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Now it is to this communion that the Lord's people are called by grace, in effectual vocation. They are called by him to come from Lebanon, from all their carnal and sinful pleasures and companions, to go along with him. They are exorted to forake their own people, and their father's house, and all the sensual enjoyments thereof, to be with Christ, their Lord, their Head, and King; and to partake of spiritual enjoyments, which are abundantly pre-

* Isa. xxvi. 8.
ferrable to any thing they leave behind. Ye were called (says the apostle), unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*. And a greater privilege cannot be enjoyed on this side heaven. And this greatly lies in feeding upon Christ by faith; in eating of his flesh, and drinking of his blood; which is the provision set before us in his word and ordinances. Thus this table may be an emblem of that communion and fellowship which the saints have with Christ in the present state.

It is true, indeed, that the same figure of a table is sometimes made use of to represent that communion and fellowship which the saints will have with Christ in Heaven. Hence he says, I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom†. Here you see the figure is used to express that fellowship and communion that the saints will have with Christ in another world; when many shall come from the East, and from the West, from the North, and from the South, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as at a table, regaling themselves with the fruits set before them in the kingdom of heaven: where, the lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them with the rich discoveries of himself and his love, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, by which they shall be sweetly and fully refreshed, and that for ever; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

But the shew-bread table being placed not in the holy of holies, the figure of the heavenly state; but in the holy place, the figure of the church here on earth; it may rather point out that communion and fellowship the saints are admitted to in the present state; and the enjoyments they have in the mi-

* 1 Cor. i. 9. † Luke xxi. 29, 30.
The Table and Shew-bread

ministration of the word and administration of the ordinances. These are sometimes in Scripture signified by a feast. The ministration of the everlasting gospel, our Lord represents in this light; he says, a certain king made a marriage-feast for his son, and sent his servants to invite persons thereunto, saying, all things are ready*: which has regard, I conceive, to the gospel dispensation, the ministration of the word, and the invitation of souls to attend thereto; in as much as the gospel proclaims, that all is done, that all is ready, my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come to the marriage. Christ is offered up, peace and reconciliation made, pardon obtained, and righteousness wrought out; so that it may well be said, come, for all things are ready. The ordinances of the gospel are signified also by a feast, particularly that of the supper; which may with great propriety be called a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined. And this is represented by a table too; it is called the Lord's table. Ye cannot be (says the apostle) partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils†: that is, there is the greatest inconsistency in the world, that ye should partake of the Lord's table, and at the same time be partakers with the worshippers of idols, or join in fellowship with them in any of their idolatrous practices.

Now Christ is the sum and substance of the word and ordinances. We preach not ourselves (saith the apostle), but Christ Jesus the Lord‡. From which it appears, Christ, in his person, offices, and grace, is the sum and substance of a gospel ministry: so he is likewise of gospel ordinances. In the ordinance of Baptism, his sufferings, his burial, and his resurrection from the dead, are in a lively manner represented§. And, in the ordinance of the supper, Christ

* Matt. xxii. iv. † 1 Cor. x. 21. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 5. § Rom. vi. 4.
is evidently set forth before us, as crucified and slain. Now in these, the ministration of the word, and administration of gospel ordinances, Christ is pleased to afford his gracious presence, and grant his people fellowship with himself. Where two or three are gathered together in his name, he has promised to be in the midst of them, to bless them. And where his ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are administered, he has promised to be with his people to the end of the world. It is through these windows of gospel ordinances, that Christ grants his people looks of love. It is through these lattices that Christ shews himself in the glory of his person, and in the riches of his grace. When his church inquires where he causes his flocks to rest at noon? His answer is, *Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd’s tents*: that is, go where my pastures, my shepherds are; where my ministers are employed in feeding my flock; in ministering my word, and administering my ordinances. It is here Christ grants his presence, and holds fellowship with his people. And thus this table may be an emblem of Christ, and of communion with him in the word and ordinances.

Before I dismiss this head, give me leave to observe unto you, that there were rings upon the shew-bread table, and flaves to be put into these rings, which were for the removing and carrying it from place to place, and which was done by the Levites, when it was necessary; as while they were in the wilderness, and before the tabernacle had a fixed place for it. For wherever the tabernacle was carried, the ark and the table were also. Now let it be observed, that where a church of Christ is, there Christ himself is: there his Spirit is, and there

*Sol. Song, i. 8.*

are
are the word and ordinances; which are to remain until his second coming. For they are not like the ordinances of the former dispensation, which were shaken and removed; these remain, and continue, and will do so. Hence that promise, Isaiah lix. 21. “My Spirit, that is upon thee; and my words, which I have put in thy mouth (speaking of the church, and with regard to her spiritual seed) shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, faith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.” But sometimes a church state is removed: the candlestick is removed out of its place. When this is done, the word and ordinances are taken away and indeed it is by the taking away of these, that a church state is removed. The kingdom of God is taken from one people, and carried to another; as from the land of Judea into the Gentile world; and from the eastern part of the world to the more northern. As for the seven Asiatic churches, where are they now? The word, the ordinances, and gospel are all gone from them; and of this the removal of the shew-bread table was a figure. As that was done by the Priests and Levites; so this, by the ministers of the gospel, who bear the name (that is, the gospel) of Christ, and carry it from place to place, as he in his providence directs them.—But I proceed in the

II. Place, to give you some account of the gospel, and the mystery of the shew-bread set upon this table.

This may be considered as typical of the church of God, who are called bread: We being many, are one bread, and one body*. They are all one bread; and they may be fitly signified by the shew-bread; by these twelve cakes of unleavened bread, set con-
tinually upon the table every sabbath day. As they were made of fine flour, and into unleavened cakes, so they may denote those that are upright in heart and conversation. Israelites indeed, who have the truth of grace in them; who are such as keep the feast, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. These twelve cakes, had reference to the twelve tribes of Israel; so these may signify the whole of the spiritual Israel of God, whether consisting of Jews or Gentiles; even that General Assembly and Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in heaven. In the original text it is the bread of faces; because this bread was always before the face or faces of God, before all the Three Divine Persons in the Trinity; before God the Father, Son, and Spirit: before Jehovah, before the Divine Shekinah, which dwelt between the Cherubims, over the mercy-seat of the ark, a symbol of the divine presence. It was continually before the Lord, as our text expresses it: and this may denote, the people of God's constant and continual presentation of themselves before the Lord in acts of public and religious worship. This was the practice of the saints before the law was given; as in the times of Job there were seasons when the sons of God, true professors of religion, met and presented themselves before the Lord*. Under the legal dispensation it was enjoined that all the males of Israel, three times in the year, should appear before the Lord: namely, at the feast of the passover, at the feast of pentecost, and at the feast of tabernacles. And under the gospel dispensation, we that profess the name of Christ, are under the greatest obligation so to do: therefore the apostle beseeches the Romans, to whom he wrote, by the mercies of God, by the blessing of the ever-

* Job i. 6.
lasting covenant, by those all-spiritual blessings with which they are blessed in Christ Jesus; if they had any regard to them, any sense of them upon their souls; if these could have any weight with them, he begs that they would present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God; which was but their reasonable service.

But it may still have a higher sense than this; it may have respect unto these persons, being always under the eye and care of God. Not only are the eyes of his providence upon them, which run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of those whose hearts are upright towards him, to see that no hurt comes to them, that they stand in need of nothing, and to protect, preserve, and defend them; but his eyes of love, grace, and mercy, are always upon them. He never withdraws his eyes from them. They are set continually upon the righteous: they are engraven upon the palms of his hands; and their walls are continually before him. He watches over them night and day, lest any hurt them.

Again, This shew-bread, and the twelve loaves thereof, were placed upon the table, where they stood firm and safe. This may denote, the standing and security of the saints and people of God, upon our Lord Jesus Christ, that sure foundation God has laid in Sion; that foundation of the apostles and prophets. Here they have a sure and safe standing, as on a rock, the Rock of ages; against which the powers of hell and earth can never prevail. And as about this shew-bread table (as before observed) there was a border of gold, to keep every thing put upon it from falling off, this may still further point out unto us, the safety of the people of God; who are set upon the shew-bread table, our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no danger of their falling off from thence; here is a border of gold all round them; the power of
of Christ around them, to keep them from falling. Yea, God himself is round about them, as the mountains are round about Jerusalem. They are in the hands of Christ, who is able to keep them from falling; and out of whose hands none can pluck them. They are safe, then, being placed upon this shew-bread table.

And then you may further observe, this shew-bread was placed upon the table every sabbath-day: there was a constant succession; the table was never empty. There were two sets of priests always employed; one took off the old loaves, the other put on the new ones, as fast as the old ones were taken off. This may denote the constancy of true believers that have the interest of Christ at heart, in assembling continually before the Lord. Not forsaking the assembling of themselves together; but, like the primitive Christians continuing steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Or rather, it may denote, the constant succession of the children and people of God in the world. As in the natural world, and the inhabitants thereof, there is a constant succession; one generation goes, and another comes, as the wise man says; so it is in the spiritual world, and the churches of Christ. Here is one set of believers going out of the world, and another coming in their room: so that Christ has always a feed; and that promise is made good: His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. But to proceed,

This shew-bread, set upon the table, may also be emblematical of Christ himself; and that as he is the spiritual food of his people. He is the true bread; so he says, My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. He is speaking there of the

* Psalm lxxix. 36. † John vi. 32.

manna
manna in the wilderness; which was not the true, but only typical bread. Christ is the true bread, in distinction from that. So the meat-offering, which, on a similar occasion*, I gave you some account of, was only typical bread. Christ is the true bread; the truth of those types. His flesh is meat indeed; these were only the shadows. This shewbread, made of fine flour, may fitly signify Christ the finest of the wheat, the corn of heaven, the bread that comes from thence; by which his people are fed while in the wilderness. And there being twelve of these loaves upon the table, may denote the fulness and sufficiency of Christ. Here is bread enough, and to spare. Here is enough for the people of God in all ages. This bread is exceeding strengthening; those that have once tasted of it, say, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And as this bread was continual bread, was always upon the table; so it may denote, the permanency of Christ. He is always the same: the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And as this was set upon the table by the priests, and only by them; and none eat of this bread but the priests only, Aaron and his sons, (who may be significant of the ministers of the word, or of Christians in common under the gospel dispensation); if we understand it of the ministers of the word, it points out, that they set before the people the shew-bread; even the wholesome and salutary words of our Lord Jesus Christ; and feed the people with knowledge and understanding. But if we understand it, (as I rather do) as expressive of the people of God in common, who under the gospel dispensation are all made kings and priests to God, it denotes, that these,

* This sermon was preached when the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was administered.
and these only, eat of this spiritual food. None but they do it; none but they can do it.

Or, this shew-bread, set upon the table, may be an emblem of the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ; who is the Angel of God's presence, or face, (as it may be rendered), who continually appears in the presence of God for his people; and so may be fitly signified by the twelve cakes, representing the twelve tribes of Israel; or the whole election of grace, the spiritual Israel of God. As the high priest bore, upon his breast-plate, the names of all the people of Israel; so our High Priest bears, upon his breast-plate, or represents all the spiritual Israel of God, in the heaven of heavens; where he ever lives to make intercession for them. He is there as their representative; and they are set down in heavenly places in him. And these loaves being always upon the table, may denote, the continual intercession of Christ: he ever lives to make intercession for us. And these being set in rows upon the table, and frankincense put on each row, may denote, the acceptableness of his intercession; for he was, and is always acceptable to his Father. His sacrifice is of a sweet smelling favour to him, upon which is founded his intercession. And the prayers of the saints, which he presents to his divine Father, are acceptable through him; as perfumed with his much incense, and therefore are called odours. —Thus we have seen the mystery of these shadows, the shew-bread table, and the loaves set thereon; as they may be expressive of Christ and of his church.

I close with a word or two. Let it be our great concern to enjoy communion with Christ. Seek that in every ordinance and opportunity, in hearing the word, and in attending upon ordinances. Let this be the main, the principal thing you do. Do

*Rev. v. 8,
not content yourselves with a bare hearing the word, and attendance upon ordinances, without communion with your Lord. Let that be the great concern of your souls; and if you are blessed with that, you are blessed with the highest favour that can be enjoyed on earth. For, as has been observed, what more honourable than to sit at his table who is the King of kings? What more desirable, what more delightful than this? And it is worth your while to attend time after time, one sabbath after another, one ordinance after another; that you may enjoy this blessing, fellowship with your Lord. Then, in the next place, we see the antitype of the shewbread is food for faith. Feed upon him as he is set before you in the word and ordinances: don't content yourselves with the bare external attendance hereon; but let it be your concern by faith to feed upon Christ, to lay hold on him, embrace him, and that for yourselves, as he is here represented. And bless his holy name for his word, and for his ordinances. Bless his name that you have a place and a name in his house, better than that of sons and daughters. And let not your place be empty at the Lord's table: remember the case of Thomas, who was absent when Christ met his disciples. I say, remember his case, and what he lost; and into what a sad frame of soul he was cast, by reason thereof; out of which nothing could have recovered him, but the powerful and efficacious grace of God.
SERMON XXII.

The Wave-Sheaf typical of Christ.

Levit. xxiii. 10, 11.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof; then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow, after the sabbath, the priest shall wave it.

In this chapter we have an account of the several festivals to be offered by the Jews in their generations until the coming of the Messiah. And these are called the Feasts of the Lord, verse 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations; even these are my feasts. Which were of his appointment, by his direction, and for his honour and glory: and which were typical of Christ, and his person, offices, and grace.
The first of these mentioned in verse 3, is the seventh day sabbath. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation, ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings. Of this, Christ is the sum and substance. Wherefore, says the apostle, let no man judge you in this and the other thing; and among the rest, in respect of the sabbath-days, which are a shadow of good things to come; but the body is of Christ.

The sabbath was a rest (as the name signifies) from toil and labour: and this was typical of rest by Christ, whose rest was glorious; and that in every sense of it, both spiritual and eternal. There is a spiritual rest by Christ; which lies in a freedom from the burden of sin, and from the bondage of the law; and which lies in peace, joy, and comfort, arising from a comfortable perception of an interest in the righteousness, blood, and sacrifice of the Son of God. This is that rest which our Lord promises to all such who come, spiritually, and by faith unto him. And besides this, there is that eternal rest, which remains for the people of God, in the other world. There will be a rest of their bodies in the grave, till the resurrection: a rest of their souls in the arms of Jesus, till that time: and then a rest of both with God and Christ, angels and glorified saints, to all eternity. Now of all these, this first feast was a figure.

The next that follows, is that of the passover, verses 5, 6. In the fourteenth day of the first month, at even, is the Lord's passover: and on the fifteenth day of the same month, is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord. This also was typical of Christ. Hence the apostle faith, Christ, our passover, is sacrificed.
ficed for us*, And not only we Christians are now able, with great clearness and exactness, to observe the agreement between the passover and our Lord Jesus Christ; but even Moses, at the first institution of this ordinance, kept it by faith. So the author of the epistle to the Hebrews afferts, that through faith he kept the passover †: believing that the blood of the passover Lamb, sprinkled upon the door post of the Israelites, would be a means of their preservation: believing there would be a speedy delivery of the people of Israel from Egypt: and he kept it in faith of the future spiritual deliverance and redemption by Christ, the antitype of it.

The next of the feasts mentioned, is that which is in our text; the sheaf of the first-fruits. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath, the priest shall wave it. This also was typical of Christ. We cannot have any doubt about it, as the apostle expressly says, Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept: and he further adds, every man in his own order: that is, shall rise in his own order; Christ the first-fruits, and afterwards they that are Christ, at his coming‡. What I shall endeavour to do at this time is, to shew you the agreement between the type and the antitype.

I. In the matter of it: both in respect to its quality and quantity. A sheaf of the first-fruits.

II. With respect to what is done to it, and with it. It was reaped, it was brought to the court, and beaten

* 1 Cor. v. 7. † Heb. xi. 8. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 32.
beaten out. It was dried and parched by the fire, ground in a mill; and an omer of it was taken and waved by the priest, before the Lord.

III. With respect to the concomitants of it: or, what attended it: and that is, a Lamb was offered for a burnt-offering; and likewise a meat-offering and a drink-offering were to accompany it.

I. We shall endeavour to shew, that this sheaf of the first-fruits was a type of Christ, as to the matter of it, both in respect to quality and quantity. With respect to quality, it was a sheaf of barley: as to its quantity, it was a single sheaf; or, however, such a quantity as only one omer of barley was taken from it, and waved before the Lord by the priest.

It was of barley. The Jews had a two-fold harvest, one of barley, the other of wheat. That of barley, which was at this time, was the first; which was at the time of the feast of the passover. We read that Ruth and Naomi came out of the land of Moab to Bethlehem, in the beginning of barley harvest*. From that unto the wheat harvest were fifty days, or about seven weeks; which is what in the New Testament is called Pentecost. It was the feast of Weeks, of wheat harvest, and of in-gathering of the fruits of the earth†. Now it was at the former, and not at the latter of these, that this sheaf of the first-fruits was taken. Therefore it must be of barley, and not of wheat; as the time most clearly shews: it being at the time of the passover, or of the Israelites coming out of the land of Egypt. A little before that, when the plague of hail was upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, we are told, that barley was in the ear‡. Now at this time it was ripe;

* Ruth i. ult. † Exod. xxxiv. 22. ‡ Exod. ix. 31. but
but it must not be reaped, till a sheaf of the first-fruits was waved before the Lord.

Now this being of barley, which is a mean sort of grain, may denote, the mean estate of our Lord Jesus Christ in his humiliation. The barley cake which tumbled into the host of Midian, and overturned the tent in it, as in the dream of the Midianitish soldier, was an emblem of Gideon, a mean and unpromising instrument of the destruction of the Midianitish army. So here the sheaf of barley may be an emblem of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his state of humiliation; who, when he was found in fashion as a man, appeared in the form of a servant. He grew up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; there being no form nor comeliness in him, no outward form and splendor which might make him desirable to carnal men. He was reckoned a worm, and no man: such was his great humility, wonderful condescension, and amazing grace. It is well known, it is notorious: Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor; that ye, through his poverty might be rich.*

But this sort of grain, though mean, was used for food, in early times, in latter ones, and even with us, in some countries; it was so in Judea. We read that one of the miracles of our Lord was, the feeding of five thousand, with five barley loaves and two small fishes†: so Christ, in his mean estate of humiliation, is suitable and proper food for faith. He is held forth in the everlasting gospel, as food for the faith of his people, under the character of Christ crucified: We preach Christ crucified (says the apostle), to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Yea (he further adds), I de-

* 2 Cor. viii. 9. † John vi. 9.
termine not to know anything among you; to set before you none other, as the proper object of your faith to feed upon, and receive comfort and nourishment from, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. It was upon him he himself lived: I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God; who loved me, and gave himself for me.—So much for the quality of this sheaf of the first-fruits; it was of barley.

Next its quantity. It was but one; one sheaf that was waved; one omer, which was the tenth part of an ephah*. It was as much as a man could eat in one day. Christ, in many respects, is but one. One with his divine Father, in nature and essence. I and my Father are one†. He means particularly in power. He is speaking of his power in keeping his sheep committed to him, so that none shall perish, or any pluck them out of his hands; and he adds, and my Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands. And then, for the further confirmation of their security, being in his and his Father's hands, he adds, I and my Father are one: possessed of the same divine power. He, the Father, and the blessed Spirit, are one God. There is but one God: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord‡. Now the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, are this one Jehovah.

Christ is one in his person, tho' he has two natures, human and divine. This is the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. The Word was God, as to his divine nature; was made flesh, as to his human nature: and these two, though different and distinct,
yet they are united in one person, the one person of the Son of God. The human nature is not a person itself; it had its subsistence in the person of the Son of God: and there is much of the wisdom and grace of God in this matter. Had the human nature of Christ been a person subsisting of itself, all the actions done thereby, and the sufferings underwent therein, would have been found of no use to any, unless it was to that person; but this being taken into union with the divine person of the Son of God, all those actions and sufferings received an infinite efficacy and virtue, to answer the purposes of grace in our salvation.

Christ is but one in his office as Mediator: the one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus; who has interposed between God and man, and made up the breach between them: who is our peace, and by whom the way is opened for us to God. Through him we (both Jews and Gentiles) have access: he is the new and living way to the Father, and he is the only way. There is but one way: no man can come to the Father, but by him. It is in his name, and by making mention of his righteousness, and of his only, that we can draw nigh unto God, with any degree of freedom; or to any good purpose. He is the one and only Saviour and Redeemer; his arm, and that alone, without the help of any other, has brought salvation. He is the only one to whom we must apply for salvation; to whom we are directed, from whom we are encouraged to hope for it, and that by himself. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else*. There is no other Saviour besides him; nor is there any other from whom salvation can be expected: and therefore to him must be given all the glory. He is the one Lord, as the apostle

*I sa. xlvi. 22.

D d 2
**The Wave-Sheaf**

saying, **One Lord, one faith, one baptism**. One Lord, to whom we are to yield obedience; even to all his commands and ordinances. Though there are many that are called Lords; (there were among the Heathens) yet to us, as Christians, there is but one Lord Jesus Christ, and we by him. Though other Lords, as sin and Satan, and the world, in unregeneracy, had dominion over us; yet now, through grace, it is our resolution, that by him, and him alone, will we make mention of his name; that is, we will only serve him. He is the only head of the church, whom the Father has given to be head over all things unto it: a head of eminence to rule over, and guide, and protect it. A head of influence; as the natural head is to the body, from which it receives its nourishment, and increases. And he is the only husband of the church: **thy maker is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name**.

And though good men may, through the prevalence of temptation and corruption, go after other lovers, yet they are recovered again; and their resolution, in the strength of divine grace, is, to go and return to their first husband; for then it was better with them than now. Thus, in many respects, Christ is but one, as this sheaf was.

But then, though this sheaf was but one, it had many stalks, many ears of corn, and many grains in it. And so Christ, though he is but one in various respects, as we have seen; yet in him there is a complication. There is a complication of blessings of grace. Jehovah has presented him, from all eternity, in the council and covenant of grace and peace, with all the blessings of grace and goodness for his people; he has put them all into his hands, and

*Eph. iv. 5.  † Isa. xxvi. 13.  ‡ Isa. lv. 5.  § Hosea ii. 7.*

blessed
blessed them with all spiritual blessings in him, and he is of God (as faith the apostle) made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. So that they have all blessings of grace in him, and from him; and are enabled to say, in the strength of faith, at times, as Jacob did, “I have enough, I have all things.” For, faith the apostle, all things are yours; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s *.

Moreover, he has not only a complication of all blessings in him; but as this sheaf of the first-fruits represented the whole harvest, and was a pledge and earnest of it, so Christ, the sheaf of the first-fruits, represents all his people. They are all gathered together under one head in him; and when he was crucified, they were with him; when he was buried, they were with him; when he rose again from the dead, they rose again with him; and are now sat down in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And besides, as the sheaf of the first-fruits, had a connection with all the rest, so he with all the people of God. It was for their sakes he suffered, died, and rose from the dead. He suffered, to gather together the children of God, that were scattered abroad. He was delivered into the hands of justice and death, for their transgressions; and he arose again for the justification of them all.—So much for the first thing: that the sheaf of the first-fruits was typical of Christ, as to the matter of it, both as to quality and quantity.

II. It was so, with respect to what was done unto it, and done with it. This was, as has already been observed, first reaped, then brought to the court, and then, after a variety of ceremonies, it was waved before the Lord. First it was reaped. And this was done in a very solemn and pompous manner, according to the account the Jews give of it, which is this: the

1 Cor. i. 30. 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23.
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messengers of the Sanhedrin went out (from Jerusalem, over the brook Kidron, to the fields near it), on the evening of the feast, and bound the standing corn in bundles, that so it might be more easily reaped; and the inhabitants of all the neighbouring villages gathered together there, that it might be reaped in great pomp; and when it was dark, one said to them, Is the sun set? They said, Yes. With this sickle shall I reap it? They said Yes. In this basket shall I put it? They said, Yes. If on a sabbath-day, he said to them, On this sabbath-day shall I do it? They said, Yes. These questions were put and answered three times; then they reaped it, and put it into the basket, and brought it to the court.

Now this reaping of the sheaf of first-fruits was an emblem of the apprehending of our Lord Jesus Christ by the Jews, or by officers which they sent to take him. They attempted this once and again, before they accomplished it. We are told in the seventh chapter of John, that at the feast of tabernacles they sought to lay hold of him; but his time was not yet come. The very officers were dispirited; and when they were called to an account by the chief priests and pharisees, for not bringing him, they said, Never man spake like this man. They could not take him. But when the set time was come, he was easily apprehended by them. And as we are told they bound the ears of corn, that they might be the more easily reaped; so they bound Christ, and brought him to the High Priest*. This was done at night, when it was dark. One of the questions asked at the reaping of the sheaf of the first-fruits, was, Is the sun set? It was answered Yes: then the sickle was put in. So it was after sun was set, the Lord Jesus Christ was apprehended. After he had eaten the passover

* John xviii, 12. with
with his disciples, he entered into discourse with them, and said, *All ye shall be offended, because of me, this night.* Simon Peter, very bold in the cause of his master, says, *Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.* To whom our Lord answers, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice*. And that it was night when he was apprehended, is clear from the account given of Judas, who, with his band of soldiers went into the garden with lanthorns and torches to take him. And the account of the Lord's Supper, given by the apostle, confirms it, who says, "That our Lord Jesus Christ, "the same night in which he was betrayed, took "bread†." And as the sheaf was reaped by a deputation of men, sent by the grand Sanhedrim at Jerusalem; so our Lord was apprehended by officers, sent by chief priests and pharisees, who were assembled together in council, as the great Sanhedrim of the nation. They met together just before the time of our Lord's apprehension and sufferings, as they had done in vain many times before, but now with success. They met together to contrive ways and means to put him to death. An opportunity presented. Judas came and offered to betray him for such a sum of money; and he, with a band of men, went into the garden, where he knew our Lord used to resort; and there they apprehended him. And this was done in the sight and presence of a multitude of persons, just as the sheaf of the first-fruits was reaped in the presence of multitudes from all towns round about.

That this was true of Christ is certain from what is recorded by the evangelists; for we are told, that

* Mark xiv. 30. † 1 Cor. xi. 23.

[Judas]
Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude, went in order to apprehend him*. Besides the band of soldiers, he had of the scribes and pharisees, the chief priests and elders, there were a multitude of the common people that attended to see the issue of things: to whom our Lord said, Are ye come out against a thief, with swords and slaves for to take me†.

Likewise, the circumstance of the sheaf of first-fruits being reaped near the brook Kidron, exactly agrees with the apprehending of Christ near that brook. It was over this same brook our Lord went, and entered into the garden where he was taken. (And in this he appeared to be the antitype of David, who when he fled from Absalom went over the brook Kidron. Cedron, or Kidron, signifies black: so that brook had its name from the blackness of the water, through the soil that run into it; being a kind of common sewer, into which the Jews cast every thing that was unclean and defiling. And perhaps it is in allusion to this that the Psalmist prophetically said, He shall drink of the brook in the way‡). Now it is remarkable, that in these minute circumstances, as some of them seem to be, there should be such an agreement.

When this sheaf was reaped, then it was brought to the court; so Christ, when he was first apprehended was brought to Annas, then to Caiaphas, then to the court; where, after his arraignment and trial, he was condemned to death. This sheaf being brought to court, was threshed, winnowed, dried, and parched by the fire, and ground in a mill; all which set forth, in a lively manner, the dolorous sufferings of our Lord. The sheaf being threshed, was expressive of his being smitten by men; of his being but-

*Mark xiv, 43. † Mark xiv, 48. ‡ Psalm cx. 7.
fetted and scourged, by the order of the Roman Governor, by the soldiers; all in perfect agreement with prophecy, that they should smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek*. That he should give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them which plucked off the hair†.

This sheaf of the first-fruits, as it was beaten out, so it was dried and parched by the fire; which may be considered as expressive of the wrath of God which Christ endured; which is compared to fire, and by which (as it is expressed in the Psalms concerning him) his strength was dried up like a poacher. It was ground also in a mill (as was the manna, another type of Christ) ‡; which was another circumstance that pointed out the sufferings of the Redeemer, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.

Upon the omer of flour that was taken, oil and frankincense were poured: which may denote, the acceptableness of Christ in his sufferings, death, and sacrifice to his divine Father. He gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet smelling savour. And then the waving of this by the priest before the Lord, seems to denote his resurrection from the dead. This action, indeed, literally understood, was expressive of an acknowledgment to the Lord of heaven and earth; that the fruits of the earth, and the plentiful harvest were of him, and to give him the praise and the glory of it. But typically considered, it represented the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. (And remarkable it is, he rose from the dead on the very day the sheaf of the first-fruits was waved). That which confirms this, is what I have already observed from the great apostle of the Gentiles, who

* Micah v. i. † Isa. i. 6. ‡ Num. xi. 8.
The Wave-Sheaf

tells us, Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept: this makes me conclude, that this waving the sheaf, denotes, the resurrection of Christ. He is the first-fruits of them that slept; the earnest of the resurrection from the dead to his people: he infures that to them, being the representative of them. He is the first that rose from the dead to an immortal life: for though there were others that were raised before him, as the son of the widow of Sarapta, the Shunamite's son, and the man that was let down into the grave of the prophet Elia: all which took place before the coming of Christ, And after his coming, before his resurrection, there were many raised from the dead; and raised by himself, which was one proof he gave of being the Messiah. The dead are raised*; how many we cannot say; but instances we have upon record, as Jarius's daughter, Lazarus, the favourite of our Lord, and others. But then he was the first that rose by his own power unto an immortal life. He arose by his own power, Destroy this temple (said he, meaning his body), and in three days I will raise it up †: and accordingly he being put to death, raised himself the third day; for he had power (which no mere man had) to lay down his life, and take it up again. And by doing this, especially the latter, he declared himself to be the Son of God with power.‡

He was the first that arose to an immortal life. All the rest rose from the dead, but died again; but he, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. He was dead, but is alive, and lives for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death. Jehovah the Fa-

* Luke vii. 22. † John ii. 19. ‡ Rom. i. 4.
ther shewed him the path of life; and he was the first that trod therein. There were some indeed raised at the time of his resurrection, as it is written, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves, after his resurrection*. And in all probability these arose to immortal life, and went triumphantly to heaven with our risen Lord; but then this was after his resurrection; so that he was the first that rose to an immortal life.

And as Christ rose first in order of time, so he rose the first in dignity. He rose as the head of the body, as the first-born, the beginning, that in all things he might appear to have, as he ought to have, the pre-eminence. He did not rise again as a mere individual, as a single person, but as a public head and representative of all his people. He also is the first in causality. He is the procuring cause of the resurrection from the dead. He not only by the gospel, brought life and immortality to light; but, by his obedience, sufferings, and death, has opened the way of life. He came to this end; that we might have life, spiritual and eternal; so true is that saying of the apostle, that as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead. And he is the pattern and exemplar, according to which the saints will be raised; as my dead body shall they arise*. Just as his dead body arose, so shall the dead bodies of all the saints arise in the resurrection morn: they shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Was he raised incorruptible? so shall they. So faith the apostle, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality †. As his body was raised a powerful body, so shall theirs. He was crucified through

* Matt. xxvii. 52, 53, † Isa. xxvi. 19. † 1 Cor. xv. 52, 53. weakneſs,
weakness; but being raised by the power of God, it became a powerful body. So saints shall be raised in power, no more subject to weaknesses and infirmities, as now; no more liable to disorders and diseases, or to death itself: neither of them shall have any power over them. As his body was raised a glorious one, so shall theirs also. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ*: shining not only as stars, but as the sun in the firmament of heaven. As his was raised a spiritual body, so shall theirs too. Not a new aerial and celestial body, as some have dreamed; no, but a spiritual one. Not as to substance, but as to quality; that shall be supported without eating and drinking. The organs thereof will be fitted for spiritual exercises, and be wholly under the influence of the Spirit of God; and be no more an incumbrance to the spirit or soul of man.

And, as Christ's risen body was the same body that was crucified and slain; (which appears from the marks upon it. Except, says Thomas, I shall see the prints of the nails in his hands, I will not believe: and these were shewn him. And our Lord, to convince his disciples that it was the same body, said, Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I, myself. Handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have;) the same body of the saints that dies, shall be raised from the dead. Job himself firmly believed this, In my flesh shall I see God; whom mine eyes shall behold, and not another †. So the apostle, this corruptible (pointing to his body) must put on incorruption §.

* Philip. iii. 21. † Luke xxiv. 39. ‡ Job xix. 25, 27. § 1 Cor. xv. 53.
Christ is the efficient cause of the resurrection. The procuring cause as Mediator; the exemplar, as man; the efficient cause, as God: for as the Father quickens whom he will, so the Son. It will be by his voice the dead will arise; some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt. And herein will be a display both of his Omnipotence and Omniscience. Of his Omnipotence, that he has the keys of hell and death; and can open the graves, and set the prisoners free. The raising the dead is a work of Omnipotence; as the raising of Christ's body was, so the raising of the bodies of the saints will be. Our Lord will by this shew himself to be the mighty God. There will also be a display of his Omniscience. He must needs be omniscient, that knows where the dust of his saints lies. Though dispersed here and there; yet has he undertaken (and it was an obligation laid upon him) to raise it up at the last day; and so he will. Thus we have seen the waving of the sheaf pointed out the resurrection of Christ from the dead: but this is not all.

It is also expressive of his connection with his people, whom he represented; and whose resurrection is the pledge, earnest, and security of theirs. For, as the first-fruits sanctified the rest of the harvest, represented the whole, gave a right to the ingathering of it, and insured it; so our Lord's resurrection from the dead, sanctified and secured the resurrection of his people. Because he lives, they shall live also: or as sure as his dead body arose, so sure shall theirs rise also. But then he is only the first-fruits of his own. Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Who are the fruits of his sufferings and death; who have the first-fruits of his Spirit and grace in them: the fruits of righteousness upon them; who are his, by virtue of the
the Father's gift unto him, as also by the purchase of his blood, the efficacy of his grace upon them, and through a voluntary dedication of themselves unto him, under the influence of his Spirit and grace. The first fruits of these and these only. Not but that there will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust; the sea and the grave will give up all the dead, and among these will be some whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. These will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things done in the body; but then the saints, whom Christ is the representative of, will arise by virtue of union to their living Lord and head. Not so the wicked; only by virtue of his power exerted upon them they will arise, and that to everlasting shame and confusion.—Thus we have seen, this sheaf was a type of Christ with respect to what was done to it. Now it remains only to observe,

III. What were the concomitants of it. What accompanied the waving the first fruits, were a burnt offering, and a meat-offering*. The first of these was an eminent type of Christ, as all the burnt offerings were. It was a lamb: a figure of Christ the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. A Lamb without blemish: a type of the immaculate Lamb of God. This was a burnt-offering; so a fit emblem of the dolorous sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then there was a meat-offering, which always went along with this; which was typical of Christ, as we have seen in a former discourse†. I shall close all with a word or two.

From hence we see the great advantages we receive from Christ. He is the first fruits, and all our

* See verses 12, 13, 14. † Sermon 20.
fruit is from him. This remarkable type in a particular manner points out the many benefits we receive from the sufferings, death and resurrection of Christ, who was apprehended, beaten and scourged: who endured the wrath of the Almighty, and that in our room and stead. The fruits of which are, our redemption from the curse of the law, the remission of sins, peace and reconciliation with God, pardon of sin, and justification. Many are the advantages also accruing to us from the resurrection of Christ. Our justification is owing thereunto; he rose again for our justification. Our regeneration is in virtue of it; we are begotten to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The resurrection of our bodies in the last day are insured hereby; because he lives we shall live also. And therefore many are the obligations we lay under to give thanks unto his name and not forget his benefits. We ought, through the constraints of his love, to live to him who died for us.

And how much ought this night to be observed in which we are about to commemorate the sufferings and death of a dear Redeemer? As it is said of the night of the passover, when the Israelites were in such a remarkable manner delivered and saved. It is a night to be much observed in all generations; so the night in which the antitypical sheaf of the first fruits was reaped, in which our Lord was apprehended; in which he was betrayed; in which he was brought before the great Sanhedrim and there condemned. The consequence of which was, his sufferings and death: which laid a foundation for the everlasting salvation of all that believe in

* This Sermon was preached before the administration of the Lord's Supper, Aug. 15, 1762.

him.
him, is a night to be much observed in all the churches of Christ until the second coming of our Lord.
S E R M O N XXIII.

Solomon's Temple a Figure of the Church; and the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, typical of Christ.


And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz.

These two pillars were set in the porch of the temple that was built by Solomon; and he is the person that is said to set them there; that is, they were set there by his order. Reference is had to the place of their standing, in various passages of Scripture, in an allusive way. The human body of our Lord Jesus Christ is called the temple, and that by himself; destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*. The Jews who heard him say these words, understood them in a literal sense; as if he was speaking of the material temple that was

* John, ii. 19

built
built by Zerubbabel, and repaired by Herod. Therefore they said, forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? Whereas, the evangelist observes, he was speaking of the temple of his body, that true tabernacle which God pitched and not man: which was a greater and more perfect tabernacle than was built by Solomon, or by Zerubbabel, or repaired and ornamented by Herod. He, the Word of God, the eternal Logos, when made flesh, tabernacled and dwelt among us. Herein the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily; even all the perfections of the divine nature. The train of the divine perfections filled the temple of the human nature of Christ; according to the glorious vision which Isaiah had thereof*.

Sometimes, in reference to this temple, particular believers are called the temple of God: Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you †. It was known, or it might be known, from the habitation of the Spirit of God: and then it is added, if any man defile the temples of God, by insinuating bad principles into them, or drawing them into evil practices, him shall God destroy. He will shew his resentment against such persons: for the temple of God is holy, therefore should not be defiled with bad principles or bad practices. Which temple, says the apostle, ye particular believers are: for that he means not the collective body, the church, but particular believers, is clear, by what he afterwards observes in the same epistle; Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you? which must refer to individuals. As also in another epistle of his to the same church, he says, what agreement hath the temple of

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* Isa. vi. 1. † 1 Cor. iii. 16.
God with idols *?? That is, what agreement is there between those who are the true worshippers of God, and such as worship idols?

But at other times, and in other places, we may observe the whole church of God is called a temple, in allusion to the temple at Jerusalem. Thus, in that famous prophecy of the Messiah, Zach. vi. 12, it is said, Behold the man whose name is the Branch (which is a descriptive character of the Messiah), and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory. That is, he shall build the Church of God, and he shall have the glory of it, as the sole builder; and thus speaks our Lord himself, Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it†. And here I shall take occasion to observe, that the temple of Jerusalem may very properly be considered as a figure and emblem of the church of God, on various accounts.

I. With respect to the several parts of it. It consisted particularly of these three; there was,

1. The great court in which stood the altar of burnt offerings, and the laver, and where the people of Israel in common assembled to worship God.

2. There was the holy place, where stood the golden candlestick, the golden altar of incense, and the table of shew-bread; and into which none but the priests might enter and officiate. And,

3. There was the holy of holies, in which was the ark of the mercy-seat, and the cherubim; into which none but the high priest might enter, and that only once a year.

* 2 Cor. vi. 16. † Mat. xvi. 18.
Now the first of these, the great court, was a figure and emblem of the outward and visible church of God, in which are both good and bad. To this the Holy Ghost refers, Rev. xi. 2; where mention is made of the outward court, which was left out in the measuring of the temple; having respect unto such who were only outward court worshippers, who were not to be taken into the measure to which that prophecy has a reference. Thus in all ages, more or less, it has been the case of the outward visible church of Christ upon the earth; that there have been some good, and some bad among them. This was represented by our Lord in that parable of the field, in which good seed was sown; which good seed was emblematical of true believers in Christ, gracious souls, partakers of the grace of God in truth. Among these, tares were sown by the enemy, which grew up with the wheat; and both were suffered to continue until the harvest, the time of death, the end of the world, and universal judgment. So in the parable of the virgins, the kingdom of God, or a church state, is represented by ten virgins; five of whom were wise, and five were foolish. In Sion, in the outward visible church of God, there always were, and always will be more or fewer hypocrites; called hypocrites in Zion*, as well as there are the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold.

The holy place was an emblem and figure of the invisible church of God; or such persons as are truly spiritual, believers in Christ, partakers of the grace of God in truth, who are a royal priesthood, and built up a spiritual house to offer up spiritual sacrifices unto God. Inward court worshippers, who are made light in the Lord, signified by the golden candlesticks.

and the two Pillars typical of Christ.

sticks in that place, and whose light so shines before men, that those who behold their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven. The prayers of these are set before the Lord, as incense; and the lifting up of their hands as the evening sacrifice. These sit down at the table with their Lord, and sup with him, and he with them: or, in other words, they have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. These are they that worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

There was also the holy of holies; which was a figure and emblem of heaven itself, into which our great High Priest hath entered with his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us; where he appears in the presence of God for his people, and ever lives to make intercession for them, Where stands the mercy-seat, the throne of grace; and to which there is a way open, even a new and living way through the vail, that is to say, Christ’s flesh. In virtue of his blood, true believers have boldness to enter even into the holiest of all. That is, into heaven, and the church triumphant there, where none shall enter that defiles, or maketh an abomination, or a lie.

II. The Temple built by Solomon, may be considered as a figure of the church of God, with respect to the situation of it. It was built upon an eminence, upon mount Moriah *. The church of Christ is also built upon a hill, and upon a Rock, the Rock Christ Jesus: Upon this Rock will I build my church †. Zion is well founded by the Lord of Hosts; for a good foundation the Lord hath laid in Zion: even a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation ‡; such a foundation as will

* 2 Chron. iii. 1. † Matt. xvi. 18. ‡ Isa. xxviii. 16.
always abide, will never give way, and upon which those who are laid are safe and secure to all eternity.

III. The Temple was typical of Christ, in respect of the builder of it, which was Solomon, whose name signifies peace, or peaceable; and he was chosen to be the builder of the temple on that account. His father was rejected because he was a man of war, and a man of blood; but Solomon's reign being peaceable, he had leisure for that service; and being a man of peace, was a proper person for being engaged therein. And herein he was a type of Christ, the Prince of Peace; who is in his nature peaceable, and the author and giver of peace, spiritual and eternal. A greater than Solomon was concerned in building the church of God; and that not only on account of his being the Prince of Peace, but because in every thing he excelled him, even in those things in which Solomon excelled others, particularly in wisdom and riches. A greater than Solomon is the builder of the church of God; even he in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; and whose riches are unsearchable†.

IV. This temple was a figure of the church of God, as to the materials of it. The materials, we are told, were costly stones‡: such as were of great worth, and were bought at a great price. Hence the antitype, the church of God, is said to have its foundations laid with sapphires, its windows of agates, its gates of carbuncles, and all its borders of pleasant stones§: by which are meant the precious sons of Sion, comparable to gold, and all that is valuable. The stones of which the temple was built were hewn stones, ready prepared to be laid in the building: for there was not so much as an hammer or an axe, the noise of which was heard all the while the temple was build-

* Col. ii. 3. † Eph. iii. 8. ‡ 1 Kings v. 17. § Isai. liv. 12.
ing, as it is said in the preceding chapter. This
denotes, that such as are laid in the spiritual build-
ing, are taken from nature's quarry, separated from
the rest of mankind; are hewn by the Spirit of God,
and so fitted for the spiritual building. And it sug-
gests, that in this spiritual building, the church, there
should be no discord, no clamours, no jars; but all
concord, harmony, peace and love. The noise of
an axe or a hammer ought not to be heard there.

Moreover, cedar wood was greatly made use of
as a material in building that temple. As the temple
was built of costly and precious stones, hewn and
fitted for the building; so the wall was wainscoted
and floored with wood of cedar, fetched from mount
Lebanon. A fragrant and durable wood; so a pro-
der emblem of those who are the materials of the
spiritual building, the church. Our Lord Jesus
Christ, because of the excellency of his person and
offices, is said to be excellent as the cedars*: and his
people also, because of the fragrancy and grace be-
towed upon them, and because of their duration
and perseverance in grace and holiness, are said to
grow as the cedar in Lebanon†.

Once more: That stately, famous building, the
Temple, where these two pillars were placed, men-
tioned in our text, was covered or overlaid with
gold. Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold:
and he made a partition, by the chains of gold before
the oracle; and he overlaid it with gold. And the whole
house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all
the house‡. What a magnificent, splendid building
must this be! a proper emblem and figure, there-
fore, of the church of God, and of true believers
in Christ, who are the materials thereof; who stand
in the presence of Christ, at his right-hand, in

* Sol. Song v. 15. † Psal. xcii. 12. ‡ 1 Kings vi. 21, 22..
gold of Ophir; whose clothing is of wrought gold, and who are all glorious within, ornamented with the graces of the blessed Spirit. But,

V. This Temple was a figure of the church, with respect unto its pillars, which leads me to take a more particular notice of the passage which I have read unto you. There were other pillars in this building besides these two; but these were the principal ones; the most open to view; the most to be taken notice of, as they stood at the entrance into the court of the temple. And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz. The church of Christ itself is sometimes said to be a pillar. So the apostle tells Timothy, that he wrote unto him, that he might know how to behave himself in the house, or church, "of the living God, "which is the pillar and ground of the truth *. The pillar and ground of the truth; that both holds forth truth, and holds it fast. Some pillars had inscriptions upon them; and so held forth to view some fact, of which a declaration was made upon them. In this sense the church is the pillar of truth. It holds forth the truths of the gospel, by its ministers, and by its members. Other pillars are for support; and in this sense the church may be said to be the pillar and ground of the truth. The support thereof, which keeps the faith of Jesus; that is, the doctrine of Christ, and denies not his faith; but maintains and supports it to the uttermost.

Particular believers in Christ, are sometimes signified by pillars. Him that overcometh I will make a pillar in the temple of my God †. Such are, in a sense, pillars in the temple of God; who have, through di-

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* J. Tim, iii, 15. † Rev. iii, 12.
vine grace, a place and a name there, better than that of sons and daughters; and who are honourable members of the church of God. Such as come into the church in a right way, that come in by the door of the sheep-fold, which is Christ; they are honourable members of the church. He that comes in upon a true and rich experience of the grace of God; upon a profession of faith in Christ, and submission to his ordinances; who abides by the truths and ordinances of the gospel; forfakes not the assembly of the saints, but closely attends to the word, worship, and ordinances of God; and whose conversation is as becomes the gospel of Christ; such as they may be said to be pillars in the temple of God, or honourable members of his church. Such as are upright in heart; have the root of the matter in them; and a right spirit created in them; Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile: who are upright in conversation; walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, according to the rule of the divine word: these are, according to the measure of gifts bestowed upon them, in one way and another, pillars and supports of the cause of God; who have a natural concern for the good of the interest of a Redeemer; and who exert themselves to the utmost for the maintenance of the same, either by their purses, as God hath given them ability, or by their conversation, or by their prayers. In one way or other they may be said to be pillars; who maintain and support the truths of the gospel, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, according to the abilities which God hath given them. Besides, they support those that are feeble and tottering, by their conversation and prayers with them; and therefore, may in this sense, be said to be pillars. Like pillars also, they are steady and steadfast; not like children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; but established...
established in their principles, as well as constant in their practice. They stand fast in the faith, quit themselves like men, are strong; continue in evangelical doctrine, and in communion with the saints, in breaking of bread, and in prayers. It becomes those who have named the name of Christ, to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord their God. Such are pillars that shall never go out, as is said in the forementioned chapter*.

There are some that get into a church of Christ, and go out again; of whom the apostle says, They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us†. And even those brazen pillars, called Jachin and Boaz, went out of the material temple. That is, they were carried out from thence; for they were carried into Babylon, as we read in the last chapter of the book of Jeremiah. But such who are really pillars in the spiritual building, are more lasting than those brazen pillars. They shall never go out of the church of God: servants abide not always in the house, but sons abide for ever; those who are really and truly the children of God.

Ministers of the everlasting gospel are represented as pillars in the spiritual temple. Thus Wisdom is said to build her house, and hew out her seven pillars‡; which may be understood of the ministers of the word. So the Lord tells the prophet Jeremiah, that he would make him an iron pillar, and a brazen wall, against the people he had to do with§. And some of the apostles are by Paul represented as pillars; as when speaking of Cephas, James, and John, he says,

* Rev. iii. 12. † 1 John ii. 19. ‡ Prov. ix. 1. § Jerem. i 18.

Who
Who seemed to be pillars, Gal. ii. 9. And indeed the apostles, or first ministers of the word, may, with great propriety, be called pillars; and as Jachin and Boaz were placed in the front of the court of the temple, at the entrance into it, so they are set first in the church of God*. And these may be said to be pillars, for their strength; as they were strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and good soldiers that endured hardness patiently for his name's sake.

Ministers, like pillars, are, or should be, steady, and steadfast, as Peter and John were: who, when called before the great council of the nation, and threatened what should be done to them, if they persisted to preach in the name of Christ, boldly answered, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye †; and then went on in their ministry, and counted it all honour to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. Such was the great apostle of the Gentiles; who, though he knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him wherever he came, yet none of these things moved him. He stood firm, as a pillar; unmoved under all he met with from men, being set for the defence of the gospel. All such may be said to be pillars in the house of God.

They, like pillars, are for the support of others. For though ministers of the word have no dominion over the faith of men, to impose articles of their own making; yet they are helpers of their joy. They are often instruments of supporting the weak, and comforting the feeble-minded.

Now here are two of these pillars set at the front of the temple. In the book of Proverbs, before referred to, we read of seven pillars; and reference may be had there to the fulness of the gifts and 

* 1 Cor. xii. 28. † Acts iv. 19.
graces of the Spirit of God, being bestowed upon gospel ministers for their work. Or rather, it may signify that there always has been, and will be, a sufficient number of them, to the end of the world, for the support of the churches of Christ; according to that word, Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world *. But here is mention made of two pillars: so the apostles were sent two by two, the seventy disciples two by two. So there were two olive trees; and the two witnesses that flood and prophesied in sackcloth, and will do so till the second coming of Christ.

But Jachin and Boaz may rather be considered as an emblem of Christ, and of the two natures in him. Christ Jesus our Lord went before the children of Israel in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. In a pillar of cloud by day, to protect them from the scorching heat of the sun; and in a pillar of fire by night, to direct them in the way. Of like use is he to his spiritual Israel, while they are passing through this wilderness, to screen them from the heat of Satan's temptations, and from the fury of wrathful persecutors; and to guide them in the path which they should go. But to return to the text. These pillars may be considered, as an emblem of the strength of Christ. As he is the mighty God, he bears up, and supports all things in the whole universe. By him all things consist. He upholds all things by the word of his power. The whole world would soon dissolve and fall into ruin, did he not support it. The earth, and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Psalm lxxv. 3. As God-man, and Mediator, he bears up his church and people. He is the grand pillar that supports them. He bears them up under

* Matt. xxv.ii. 20.
and the two Pillars typical of Christ.

all their trials and exercises in this life: under all their temptations, afflictions, and desertions: under the weight of all their burdens. He is that bearer of burdens, whose strength shall never decay. He hath the government of the church upon his shoulder; and for which he is abundantly qualified. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold*

The two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, stood in the porch of the temple, just as the people entered into it; and either these names were inscribed upon them, or rather were given them by Solomon under divine direction. They were also well known; so that whoever entered the temple, knew that these were the names of those pillars: which name served to encourage them that entered therein. The one signifies, he shall establish; and the other, in him is strength: suggesting, that the Lord would establish his true worshippers; and that they should have strength to perform the duties required of them.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the door of his spiritual temple; and whoever goes in and out there shall find pasture. There is encouragement from a consideration of what is in him; for he will establish his people; and in him they shall find spiritual strength. This leads me a little more particularly to consider these pillars, as they may have respect to our Lord Jesus Christ, the way into the church of God.

The name of the first signifies, he shall establish; that is, the Lord shall establish. Establish who? The church, signified by the temple; and all true believers, real members of a gospel church. The Lord will establish the church itself. This is often affirmed: As we have heard, so have we seen, in the

* Sol. Song v. 15.
Solomon's Temple a Figure of the Church;

city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God. God will establish it for ever*

Again. Of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her †. Now the church is well established upon Christ, the sure foundation; being built upon that Rock against which the gates of hell can never prevail: that sure foundation which God hath laid in Sion. Yet, sometimes, with respect to its outward state, it is very unsettled and unstable. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests and not comforted ‡. This is said of the church. Tossed about; either by the attacks of fawning teachers, or by the fury of persecutors. Tossed to and fro, afflicted, and not comforted. It is removed, sometimes, from place to place. One while, it was in the land of Judea; then it was carried into the Gentile world, a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, as our Lord foretold §. And the visible church of Christ has been subject to a variety of removals. The candlestick, as was threatened to the Church at Ephesus, has been removed out of its place. But there is a time coming when the church shall be in a more stable condition; when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it ||. This will be in the Philadelphian church state, to which the passage I have referred, and applied to particular persons, may have respect; Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out **. Thenceforward, the church will no more be in that unsettled state it has been in. Thine eye shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of

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* Psal. xlvi. 8. † Psal. lxxxvii. 5. ‡ Ifa. liv. 11. § Mat. xxvi. 43 || Ifa. ii. 2. **Rev. iii. 12.


the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken*. Now it is like a tabernacle that is removed from place to place; but then it shall be no more unpinned, no more taken down. Being fixed, it shall remain: and not a stake plucked up, or a cord broken. The Lord will establish her. This may be signified by Jachin.

Moreover, the Lord will establish also particular believers; all such as enter into a gospel church state in a right manner, that are true members thereof. The name of this pillar, and the inscription upon it, may serve to encourage them to believe, that he will establish them. In some sense they are in a stable, certain fixed state already. They that trust in the Lord are as mount Sion, which shall never be removed, but standeth fast for ever. Their place of defence is the munition of rocks. They are out of the reach of men and devils; and cannot be hurt by them. They are secure in the everlasting covenant of God's grace. They are safe in the arms of everlasting love, from which they can never be separated. They are engraven upon the palms of the Lord's hands; and their walls are continually before him. They are, in this respect, in the most safe condition. And so they are as considered in Christ; for in Christ they are established. *He which establishes us with you in Christ, says the apostle†. There is no stability but in Christ. There was none in the first Adam. There is none in ourselves; it is only in Christ. The Lord's People, as chosen in him to holiness and happiness, are stable. And they are united to him; for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. They are stable, as they are built upon him the sure foundation; against which,

*I Sa. xxiii. 20. † 2 Cor. i. 2.
Solomon's Temple a Figure of the Church,

all the temptations of Satan, the snares of the world, the corruptions of their own hearts, and the perfections of the world, avail nothing. As they are regenerated by the Spirit of God, they are also in a stable condition. For the good work of grace being begun in them, it shall be performed until the day of Christ. Every grace of the Spirit of God in them is firm and stable; and cannot be removed. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Hope is as an anchor, sure and steadfast; and every grace of the Spirit, has an abiding in them. Now remain and abide these three, faith, hope, and love. But these graces, though stable in themselves, as to the principle, are often times very unstable as to their exercise. With respect to faith, many doubts arise in the minds of the Lord's people, as they did in Peter, to whom our Lord said, O thou of little faith. Hope is sometimes so low in those that are possessed of it, that they say, as the church did, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord. Love waxes cold; so that there is need of being established, with respect to the exercise of these graces, into the doctrines of the gospel which the people of God have received. And that in a very comfortable way too; they may be like children tossed to and fro, and be carried away, for a season, by the error of the wicked: so have need to be established in the truth of the doctrines they have received. And it is the Lord's work to do this. It is he that establisheth us with you in Christ. It is God that gives them that stable condition they have in Christ: that establishes their graces, and the exercise of them; and establishes them in the truth; and he does it by the gos-

*Heb. xi. 1. †Heb. vi. 19. ‡Mat. xiv. 31. §Lam. iii. 18.
pel. Now to him that is of power to establish you by my gospel *, says the apostle, who desired that he might come to the Romans, to impart unto them some spiritual gift, to the end that they might be established.

The name of the other pillar is Boaz; which signifies, in him is strength. This agrees with what our Lord says of himself; I am Understanding, I have strength †. In him is everlasting strength. Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength ‡. Believers find it in him; they go to him for it, and say, Surely, in the Lord have we righteousness and strength. There must needs be strength in Christ, since he is the mighty God, whose hands hath laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his fingers: who upholds all things by the word of his power, and governs the whole universe. For the kingdom is his, and he is the Governor among the nations.

There is strength in him, as Mediator. All power in heaven and in earth is given to him. The spirit of strength and fortitude, as well as of wisdom and the fear of God, rests upon him. He is the man of God's right-hand, whom he hath made strong for himself. There is strength in him, adequate to the work, that he, as Mediator, engaged to perform. He engaged to redeem his people, and he is mighty to save §: able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him. He is a match for all his and our enemies. He is stronger than the strong man armed; and able to deliver his people out of the hands of him that is stronger than they. He has overcome the world, and abolished death, the

* Rom. xvi. 25. † Prov. viii. 14. ‡ Isa. xxvi. 4.
§ Isa. lxiii. 1.
laſtenemy. In him there is strength also for his people, to bear them up under all the temptations and difficulties that attend them in this life. He hath strength to communicate unto them. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength*. There is strength in him to enable them to bear the cross he lays upon them; and that patiently. He gives them strength to perform every duty of religion, to which they are unequal in themselves: for without him they can do nothing; but through his strengthening them, they can do all things. In him there is strength to enable them to resist every sin and temptation. They have no might of their own to resist the many enemies they are engaged with; and are ready to fear they shall perish by the hands of one or another of them: but the grace of Christ is sufficient for them, and they find it so. Their hands are made strong, by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. In short, there is strength in him, to enable them to hold on their way to the end; to persevere in faith and holiness. He is the support of their lives, to strengthen them throughout their whole course, to do or suffer whatever he calls them to: and when flesh and heart fails, he will be the strength of their hearts, and their portion for ever. Thus he is their Boaz, in whom they have strength.

Upon the whole, we may observe, that happy are those persons who are within the walls where these pillars stand, Jachin and Boaz. He (the Lord) shall establish, and in him is strength. Happy are they that dwell in this house; not only because of the work and service in which they are employed, praising the name of the Lord for all the great things he hath done for them: but because their strength is

*I ſa. xv. 29.*
and the two Pillars typical of Christ.

In him, and they go from strength to strength, from one degree of it to another, until they appear before God in Sion.

This may serve as an encouragement to all those within these walls, that have entered, at the right door, into a gospel church state. It may serve to encourage them to look to Christ for fresh supplies of grace and strength. **Trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength,** to go on in the performance of every religious duty, and act of religious worship. And this may teach the people of God, to give Christ the glory of all they have, are, and do. It is he that establisheth and strengtheneth them. It is owing to his grace and strength, that they do, and shall persevere in faith and holiness unto the end. **He is their Jachin and their Boaz; or their strength in life and in death; and will bring them safe to the everlasting enjoyment of himself, in glory.**
SERMON XXIV.

The Elect of God, chosen Vessels of Salvation,
filled with the Oil of Grace.

2 Kings iv. 6.

And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.

In the context is related a very remarkable case. A certain widow of a prophet, applied unto Elisha for relief in her distressed circumstances; and in a very wonderful manner was delivered. Her husband was one of the sons of the prophets. Who he was, cannot with certainty be said. The Jews commonly suppose he was Obadiah; for no other reason, I conceive, but that of his fearing the Lord. Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest, that thy servant did fear the Lord*. It is said of Obadiah, that he feared the Lord from his youth†: otherwise, he was a steward of Ahab's family, and so does not appear to be the son of a prophet. Be

* Verse 1.          † 1 Kings xviii. 12.
this as it may, the prophet, the husband of this woman, was dead. This is the lot of prophets, as well as others. Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?*

This prophet, it seems, was a poor man; which was very frequently the lot of such persons. More than this, he died insolvent. His widow and children were therefore in great distress, on that account. The creditor, who was a severe man, took the two sons of the widow for bondmen, to sell them, in order to pay the debt; which was usual in those countries, at that time. To which our Lord seems to refer in the parable of the king, who called his servants to account: one of whom owed ten thousand talents, and had nothing to pay. He therefore commanded him, his wife, and children, and all that he had to be sold, and payment to be made. In like manner the creditor of the husband of this poor widow was about to proceed. Therefore she applied to Elisha, being the chief of the prophets in those days, and who had great interest with God in prayer, and great gifts in performing miracles; so that she might conclude from one, or of both these circumstances, that she might meet with relief from him. After she had told her case, thus, Thy servant, my husband, is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord; and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons, to be bond-men. Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? what do you expect from me, a poor prophet? Tell me, what hast thou in thine house? and she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. Then he orders her to go to borrow of her neighbours, empty vessels; and of those, not a few. Then bids her, when she had got as many as she could, to go into

* Zach. i.5.
the house, with her two sons, and pour out the oil into these empty vessels. She did so, and it was multiplied, as she poured it out. The pot, or vessel, was, no doubt, a small one; yet so miraculously was the oil multiplied, that it filled all the vessels she could get together. When she had filled them all, she asked for another vessel; one of her sons tells her there is no more. They were all full; and then the oil was stayed.

Now this being done, the prophet ordered her to sell this oil, to pay her debt, and live upon the rest. Thus she was extricated out of her present difficulties, and had a sufficient maintenance for herself and sons. A most wonderful event this!

Having stated to you the connection of the text, with the preceding verses, and given you a short account of this remarkable part of Scripture history, what I shall endeavour further to do is, to accommodate the subject in the following way.

I. By considering the oil in a figurative sense; as expressive of the grace of God, to which it is sometimes in Scripture compared.

II. By comparing these vessels to the chosen vessels of salvation; which, while in a state of nature, are empty ones.

III. By shewing, that the oil of grace is put into them; and enquire when they may be said to be vessels full. And,

IV. By observing, That when all the chosen vessels are full, the communication of the oil of grace will cease; and not till then.

I shall consider the oil in a figurative sense, as expressive of the grace of God. Sometimes indeed the word oil is used to signify temporal blessings. The land of Canaan, among other descriptions of it, has

this
The Vessels of Salvation,

this for one, that it was a land of oil-olive: abounding with all temporal good things, both for convenience and for delight. When a famine is expressed, it is sometimes signified by the labour of the olive failing; while plenty of the things of this world is signified by that hyperbolical expression, rivers of oil. The great plenty Job possessed, before his troubles, is expressed by himself, in such language as this; The rock poured me out rivers of oil*. That is, he was supplied with very great plenty of temporal things. Now, generally speaking, the vessels full of this sort of oil, are the children of this world; whose belly Jehovah is said to fill with his hidden treasures: and who have as much of this kind, as heart can wish.—Sometimes the term oil is put for spiritual blessings, and plenty of them. Thus runs a prophecy of gospel times; They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; by all which are meant not the outward blessings of life; but inward and spiritual ones. Of which, when the souls of God's people are made partakers, they become like a watered garden; very prosperous and flourish. By these may be meant, those spiritual blessings, with which the saints are blessed in heavenly things in Christ Jesus. Happy those persons, who with Naphthali, are satisfied with the special grace of God, and are full of the blessings of the Lord. The Lord's people may say, as Jacob did, I have enough; or, as it is in the original text, I have all things. For a believer has all things pertaining to life and godliness. He has an interest in all the blessings of life and salvation. All are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's‡.

*Job xxix. 6.  †Jer. xxxi. 12.  ‡Cor. iii. 23.

Sometimes
Sometimes oil, in a figurative sense, intends the gospel, and the precious doctrines of it. So in Zachariah iv. 11, 12, you read of two olive-trees standing before the Lord of the whole earth, which emptied the golden oil out of themselves, through the golden pipes or channels. By these two olive-trees are meant the ministers of the gospel, the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles and ministers of the New. By the golden oil, emptied out of themselves, the gospel is meant, which they have in their earthen vessels; and which they, through the ministration of the word and ordinances, empty out of themselves into other proper vessels, that are made so by the Lord. Such were the three thousand, who received the word gladly; and all others, into whose hearts it is brought, and it becomes the engraven word. They receive it, not as the word of man; but as it is in truth, the word of God.

Sometimes oil designs, in a figurative sense, the Spirit of God, the gifts of the Spirit, and even the more extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; such with which the human nature of Christ was endowed without measure. Thus it is said in a prophecy of him: thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. This the apostle Peter interprets of the Holy Ghost; for speaking of Christ, he says, Ye know how that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost. That oil of gladness, is no other than the Holy Ghost; his gifts and graces, with which Christ was anointed above his fellows; or above the many brethren, among whom he is the first-born. He received the Spirit of God and his gifts without measure, while they have them in measure.

* 1 Thess. ii. 13. † Psalm xli. 7. ‡ Acts x. 38.

But
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But in other places we find oil is made use of, to express the ordinary communications of the grace of God to his people. Thus we are to understand it in the parable of the virgins. The foolish virgins took no oil in their vessels with their lamps, as the wise ones did: they were not concerned about that, as the others were. By which oil in their vessels with their lamps, we are to understand the true grace of God in the heart, with the lamp of an external profession. Now this is that anointing, that union saints receive from the Holy One, Jesus Christ; or that grace which every one of them receives out of his fulness, even grace for grace; an abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness. This is signified by oil; either in allusion to the holy anointing oil, made by divine appointment for sacred uses, under the former dispensation; or in allusion to oil in common. The anointing oil, made by divine appointment for sacred uses, was a very peculiar composition. It was made of the principal spices, with peculiar art, and none was to be made like unto it. The matter of it was the principal spices, such as myrrh, cinnamon, sweet calamus, cassia, and oil-olive. And it is easy to observe, that by each of these, the grace of the Spirit is signified in Scripture. Of that grace, myrrh, in the language of Scripture is frequently an emblem. So Christ, in the communication of grace to his people, is said to be like a bundle of myrrh unto them; sweet smelling myrrh. He is said (being ornamented with the graces of the Spirit) to be perfumed with myrrh and frankincense. It is said of the church, when the various graces of the Spirit were in exercise, that her hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet smelling myrrh upon the handle of the lock. Christ, her

* Cant. i. 13. † Cant. iii. 6. † Cant. v. 5. loved,
loved is said to come into his garden, and gather his myrrh with his spices*: expressive of that peculiar pleasure he takes in the exercise of his own grace in the hearts of his people. Cinnamon also, was a principal spice; very delightful and pleasant. It is reckoned among the chief spices†. It was in former times more especially very rare. So grace is a rare thing; for the generality of men have it not; only those to whom it is given. Very refreshing and cheering this spice is: and the Lord's people are, at times, filled with joy and peace in believing. It is very acceptable to God himself; and indeed, without faith, it is impossible to please God‡.

Another of the principal spices of which this anointing oil was made, was sweet calamus, or sweet canes, which come from a far country; as it is expressed in Jeremiah§. Very proper, therefore, to express the grace of God by, which comes from heaven: for a man can receive nothing of this kind, unless it be given him from above. This shews the nature of the grace of God in the hearts of his people, especially when in exercise. It is a sweet-smelling favour to the Lord himself. Thou hast ravished mine heart with one of thine eyes, (says Christ, meaning faith) with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices||! For like reasons also, the grace of God may be signified by cassia, a sweet smelling herb, or plant, mentioned among other odoriferous ones. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia‡. To these were added, oil-olives. Now, as the church is sometimes compared to the olive-tree, so our Lord Jesus Christ is the true olive-tree, from whom this oil springs; or grace from his fulness, is received.

* Cant. v. 1. † Cant. iv. 14. ‡ Heb. xi. 6. § Jerem. vi. 29. ‖ Cant. iv. 10. ¶ Psalm xlv. 8.
As the sacred anointing oil was a composition of various spices, so the grace of God in the heart, consists of faith, hope, love, and other fruits of the Spirit. As that compound was to be put together, according to the art of the apothecary, as we are told*; so the grace of God is a curious piece of workmanship; exceedingly delightful; and is not made by man, but by the Lord himself. For regenerating grace is not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God. He only works in us to will and to do, of his own good pleasure. There was nothing to be made like unto this composition; signifying, that counterfeit grace is not to be accounted as grace. A seigned faith may be, where there is no grace. There may be a hypocritical hope, which is as the giving up of the ghost; and there may be dissembled love, which is in word only, and not in deed, and in truth; but no account is to be made of such counterfeit graces.

The nature of this oil was such, that it is said to be holy, and durable. It is called the holy anointing oil; so grace is, in its own nature, and in its effects, holy. The several graces of the Spirit of God make up that work of grace upon the heart, which is commonly called by the name, Sanctification. Every grace is holy. Faith is holy, in its nature and effects. It works by love, and is productive of good works. It purifies the heart, as it deals with the precious blood of Jesus. He that has a good hope through grace; founded on the person, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ; purifies himself, by dealing with that blood and righteousness, even as he is pure. Love influences men to obey the commandments and ordinances of a blessed Redeemer. If ye love me, keep my commandments,

† Exod. xxxii. 7.
ments. And as that holy anointing oil was throughout the generations of Israel, always to continue; so the graces of the Spirit of God are abiding. Now abideth these three, faith, hope, and charity; or love. These always continue. The grace of God in the hearts of his people, is a fountain of living water, springing up to everlasting life: an immortal feed.

As to the use of this oil; there is an agreement between that, and the grace of God. It was to anoint the tabernacle, the vessels thereof, and divers persons. To anoint the tabernacle, typical of the human nature of Christ; that tabernacle which God pitched, and not man. The Holy One was filled with the graces of the Spirit above measure, to anoint his people: who are sometimes called tabernacles, are the Lord’s anointed ones, and go by the name of Christians, from their anointing. The holy oil was also to anoint the various vessels of the Sanctuary: and, by the grace of God, the chosen vessels of salvation are anointed; the vessels of mercy afore prepared for glory. By this the Lord’s people are made vessels meet for their Master’s use.

This oil was intended also to anoint persons with; namely, Aaron and his sons, the priests, typical of our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is consecrated for ever more. And as the ointment was poured upon Aaron’s head, and ran down to his beard and to the skirts of his garments; so the grace of God which is poured upon the head of our great High Priest, from him descends to all the members of his mystical body. And as the High Priests were consecrated with this oil; so are all believers: for they are made priests unto God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ. Nay, in virtue of this, they present
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sent themselves a holy and acceptable sacrifice to God; which is their reasonable service.

The prophets of old were also anointed with oil, to point them out as persons intended for that office; and our Lord Jesus Christ was anointed for that purpose, according to Isaiah. lxii. 1: *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.* So all the Lord's people are, by the grace of the Spirit, made, in some sense, prophets; for that anointing which they receive teaches them all things. The people of God not only learn much by reading the word of God, and hearing it preached by the ministers thereof; but also by their own experience. Those who have received the grace of God, have a witness in themselves to the truth of what they read and hear; and thereby are qualified, in some sort, to teach others, by conference and conversation.

Moreover, as Kings were anointed with oil; so our Lord Jesus Christ is for the same reason called the Messiah, or the anointed one: *I have set, or anointed, my King over my holy hill, of Sion.* So all the saints are made kings, as well as prophets. They are all anointed, by the grace of God, as kings. And this grace reigns in them, *through righteousness unto eternal life,* by Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus, in allusion to the holy anointing oil, the grace of God is frequently expressed by the word oil.

So it may also, in allusion to oil in common; which is of a very refreshing delightful nature. Hence it was made use of in antient times, and in the Eastern countries more especially, for the refreshment of travellers after their journey, and for the pleasure of guests, at a feast: to the latter of which David alludes, when he says, *Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over.* So the disciples of Christ.
Christ enjoy the grace of God, with spiritual pleasure and delight. Jehovah fills them with joy and peace in believing: for which reason, the grace of God is sometimes called the oil of joy that is given for mourning. Oil was made use of to beautify persons; as Esther and others made use of the oil of myrrh: so grace makes beautiful. It made the human nature of Christ beautiful: hence it is said, Thou art fairer than the children of men. How came he to be so, as a man? why it follows, Grace is poured into thy lips. Grace without measure bestowed upon him, made him fairer than all the sons of men. And in proportion as it is bestowed upon any of the sons of Adam, it makes them beautiful. The king's daughters are all fair: they appear in the beauty of holiness.—Grace, like oil, is of a fattening nature. Those who are partakers of it, in the exercise thereof, become fat and flourishing; fruitful in the house of the Lord our God.

Oil is of a suppling and healing nature. Hence where it is observed of the people of Israel, that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint; it is added, They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment, or oil. So the man that had fallen into the hands of thieves, the Samaritan that found him, poured oil and wine into his wounds, for the healing of them. Grace, and particularly pardoning grace, is of this nature, so that the inhabitants of Sion, who are partakers thereof, have no reason to say, I am sick: for the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquities.—Once more, Oil is of such a nature that it will not mix with any other liquids, neither will grace mix with the corruption of our nature. Though grace and sin dwell in the same heart, they will not mix together; they will continue and appear to be distinct principles. The one
one is called the law in the members; the other, the law of the mind. The one, the old man; the other, the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. The one is called the flesh, and the other is called the Spirit, and these two are contrary the one to the other, so that a man cannot do the things that he would. I proceed now.

II. To observe, that the empty vessels into which this oil of grace is put, are no other than the elect of God, who, in themselves, are like empty vessels. They are often called vessels, with different epithets, though expressive of the same thing. Sometimes, chosen vessels; so Paul is said to be a chosen vessel, to bear the name of Christ, that is, the gospel. He was chosen, indeed, to something higher than saints in common: chosen to be an apostle, to have extraordinary gifts, and do extraordinary work; but all the saints are in a sense chosen vessels also; chosen to enjoy grace here, and glory hereafter. In consequence of this choice they are, sooner or later, filled with the grace of God. For as many as were ordained to eternal life believed: they had the grace of God bestowed upon them, which is called the faith of God's elect. And they are not only chosen to that grace, but to all others. They are chosen to holiness in general; to sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. These are infused unto them by their being chosen, and they most certainly partake thereof, in order to enjoy eternal happiness. They are also called vessels of mercy*, a fore prepared unto glory. Vessels of mercy, not that they deserve the mercy of God more than others; for they are in no wise better than others, being all under sin. But they are

* Rom. ix. 23.
vessels of mercy, through the sovereign good will of God to them; who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. They are vessels filled with the mercy of God, in regeneration: when they, who had not obtained mercy, openly and visibly obtain mercy. The mercy of God is in a manifest way displayed in their regeneration and conversion. God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved them, quickens them when dead in trespasses and sins; and, according to his abundant mercy, begets them again to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance. Likewise, through the grace of God bestowed upon them in conversion, they become vessels meet for their master's use, as the apostle expresses it*. Now men, in a state of unregeneracy, are unmeet for every good work; but when persons are called by the grace of God, they are ready to every good work. They only are able and sufficient persons for that purpose, being created in Christ Jesus unto good works; having the Spirit of God bestowed upon them, to enable them to walk in the ways of the Lord, and keep his statutes, and do them.

Some vessels are of a larger, and some of smaller size; but all are sooner or later filled. Some are strong in faith, and have a larger measure of that grace than others: some are weak in faith, and have a less degree of it. Some are new-born babes; some are young men, and some fathers in Christ; but all in their natural state were empty vessels; had nothing good in them. Vain man, (says Zophar†) or, as it may be rendered, empty man, would be wise, though he is born like the wild ass's colt. It is said of the house of unclean spirits, that when the man returned into it, he found it empty.

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* 2 Tim. ii. 21. † Job xi. 12.
swept and garnished. This is the case even with external professors, outwardly righteous men, who are destitute of the grace of God. For, however they may be garnished with some external performances, or outward professions, they are empty of the grace of God. Indeed, the elect of God, while in a state of unregeneracy, are without Christ and without God in the world. They are destitute of the image of God, in which our first parents were formed. God made man after his own image, and in his likeness; but that image is greatly defaced, and obliterated. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; which lay chiefly in righteousness and holiness. God made man upright; but he hath fought out many inventions. There is none righteous, no not one. Man hath nothing that deserves the name of righteousness, that will stand him in any stead to justify him in the sight of God. He is empty of righteousness, and full of all unrighteousness. He is empty of all that is good: for, if the apostle says of himself, that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing; how can it be thought, that there should be any good thing in an unregenerate man. He is destitute of the fear of God; it is neither before his eyes, nor in his heart. As Abraham said of a certain town, Surely, the fear of God is not in this place; so it may be said of every unregenerate man's heart. The fear of God is not in it.—Carnal men are empty of the true knowledge of God; without any knowledge of him, especially as he is revealed in Christ Jesus. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. So far from it, that the language of their souls is, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

They are without Christ; and empty of the knowledge of him; of faith in him, of love to him; and so of the Spirit, and his various graces.
Senſual, not having the Spirit*. This now is the real condition of all men naturally. They are empty vessels, not having the grace of God in them.

Now, in conversion, the Lord’s people are made to see, that they are these empty creatures; and as such they come to Christ, and to his fulness to be filled from thence. No others, indeed, can receive out of his fulness; for if they are full, what can they receive from Christ? Paul, when addressing some vain, conceited professors in the church at Corinth, says: Ye are full, ye are rich; like the Laodicean members, who thought they were rich, and increased in goods, and stood in need of nothing, when they were poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Now let such persons come to Christ, what does it signify? They are so full, they can receive nothing from him; and they are sent away empty as they come. The rich hath he sent empty away. They came rich in their own conceit, and go away empty; but sensible souls, who see their emptines of the grace of God, and the need they stand in of coming to Christ, are filled. He filleth the hungry with good things.

III. I am to take some notice of the vessels being filled. We have compared the oil to the grace of God, and the empty vessels to the chosen vessels of salvation. Now let us enquire when they may be said to be full vessels? I answer, when they are filled with the Holy Ghost, as some persons in Scripture are said to be. The first churches were ordered to look out such men for deacons. Acts. vi. 3. And Stephen, one of them,

* Jude 19th.
is said to be full of the Holy Ghost. Acts. vii. 55.
The same is said of Peter and others, which, as it relates to them, denotes that they had superior gifts of the Spirit, whereby they were capable of defending the truth against opposers, with boldness, courage and intrepidity of mind; and as at that time the church consisted of all nations, who spake different languages, so they were filled with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, especially that of speaking with divers tongues. But while some have been filled with the gifts and graces of the Spirit in an extraordinary way, others have been so, in an ordinary way, as common believers; and who may be said to be so, when the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit; when they are full of joy and peace in believing, and are filled with the knowledge of the will of God in Christ, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. In a word, then may the chosen vessels of salvation be said to be filled, when they have received so much grace from Christ (in whom the fulness of it dwells) as shall make them meet for heaven; for out of his fulness they do receive grace in this life, in order to the perfection of grace, or glory, in the other.

IV. When all the vessels of salvation are thus filled, then will cease to flow the communications of grace, and not till then. Grace has been running ever since the fall of Adam. It has been flowing from the beginning of time, before the flood, and since the flood; and how many millions of vessels have been filled since grace began to be poured out! It is still flowing; and every vessel of mercy shall be sooner or later filled. Grace will continue to be dispensed till the last chosen vessel is called and filled. And then (to refer to the language of the prophet, when the head stone
is brought forth) there will be general shoutings, crying, Grace, Grace, unto it.

On the whole, you have, related in the text and context, a most surprising fact. A miracle is wrought for the supply of a prophet's widow and her family. We hence see what notice God takes of the families of his prophets. Let widows be encouraged, and prophets' widows especially, to trust in the Lord, and to leave their fatherless children with him. Let it be an instruction to us all to pay an attention to such persons and their families. We are to imitate God, and though we cannot work miracles, yet we are to do good and to communicate, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.
SERMONE XXV.

A Knowledge of Christ, and of Interest in Him, the Support of a Believer in Life and in Death. A Discourse occasioned by the Death of Mr. Joshua Hayes.

2 Tim. i. 12.

I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

The occasion of my reading these words, at this time, is the decease of Mr. Joshua Hayes, late member of this church of Christ; who frequently made use of them, and expressed his faith in a living Redeemer by them. It was therefore thought, by his friends, that they would be very suitable for the subject of a Funeral Discourse; in compliance with whose request, I have read them unto you.

In the 9th and 10th verses of this chapter, we have the sum and substance of the everlasting gospel; which
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which lies in salvation by the free grace of God (in distinction from the works of men), according to the eternal purpose of God, and the wise scheme of things formed in the divine mind from everlasting: where it was a secret and hidden thing, but now made manifest by the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ in our nature; who, by his obedience, sufferings, and death, hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. All this you will see in the verses I have referred to, which run thus: Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel. Which exactly agrees with what the apostle elsewhere affirms, that we are saved by grace, not by works, lest any man should boast*. And that those, who are the chosen of God are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus; according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world†. Christ incarnate is become the High Priest of these great things laid up in the everlasting purpose, covenant, and promise of God: and has abolished death, even corporal death, as a penal evil, and destroyed the second death, so that it shall have no power over those whom he has redeemed by his precious blood: and by his obedience, sufferings, and death, hath opened a way for them to enjoy eternal life. He came, that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly‡. This is a compendium of the grace of the gospel; of that gospel, of which the apostle says he was appointed a preacher. And a gospel preacher

* Eph. ii. 9. † Eph. i. 3, 4. ‡ John x. 10.

indeed
indeed he was. Never was the gospel more freely, fully, faithfully, powerfully or constantly preached, than it was by him. He was appointed to this work from all eternity. He was a chosen vessel of salvation (as the Lord himself says) to bear his name among the Gentiles*. He was also appointed by a gospel church at Antioch: for, said the Spirit of God in the prophets there, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work wherewith I have called them*. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ, and had all the signs of apostleship in him. *An apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ*: sent forth, commissioned and qualified by him for the important work of preaching the everlasting gospel. And particularly he was, as he said, a teacher of the Gentiles: for though all the apostles and ministers of the word were included in the same commission, and commanded to go into all nations, teaching and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; yet our apostle had a special and particular commission to preach the gospel among the Gentiles. As the gospel of the circumcision was committed to Peter (for he was the person more particularly pitched upon to preach the gospel to the circumcised Jews), so Paul was particularly pitched upon to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And it is not easy to say, to how many nations he was sent, among whom he preached the gospel, and among whom he was made successful in founding and raising churches for the honour and glory of God.

Now, on the account of this his office, and the faithful execution of it, he met with much persecution. *For the which cause* (says he), *I also suffer these things*; for he was at this time a prisoner at Rome.

* Acts ix. 15. † Acts xiii. 2. ‡ Gal. i. 1. § Verse 12.

Again,
Again, he says, I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. And this was no other than what he always expected wherever he came. He knew, from the nature of things, and from divine appointment, that bonds and afflictions awaited him wherever he went; and he cheerfully endured them for the good of souls, and the glory of the divine name. For the which cause, I also suffer these things, ver. 12. that is, for being a preacher of the gospel, an apostle of Christ. He was hated by Jews and Gentiles on this account: of the Jews, partly because he preached the gospel, and partly because he preached it to the Gentiles, that they might be saved; than which nothing more provoking to them. Hated by the Gentiles, because they thought he introduced a new religion among them, and that he was a setter up of strange Gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection*; because his ministry tended to the demolishing of idolatry and superstitution amongst them. Wherefore he was hated by them, and endured the things he did; to all which he was appointed, as well as to be a preacher of the gospel. Nevertheless, (he adds) I am not ashamed. Not ashamed of the sufferings I endure in a righteous cause: not ashamed of the gospel, for which I suffer these things, which is the power of God unto salvation. Nor am I ashamed of Christ, the sum and substance of this gospel; not ashamed of my faith in him, nor of my hope of eternal life and salvation by him; for hope makes not ashamed †. Now the ground of all this, lies in the words I have read: For I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that

* Acts xvii. 18.  
† Rom. v. 5.
he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day. This was the foundation of the apostle's joy and comfort, of the satisfaction of soul, and serenity of mind, which he enjoyed amidst all the sufferings he endured for the sake of the gospel. He had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew the object in whom he had believed. He knew him at first conversion; and had, throughout the whole of his ministrations, committed his natural life, and the preservation of it, into the hands of a good God, and a blessed Redeemer. He was therefore easy, come what would. Whatever sufferings he endured, he knew all was safe. I know whom I have believed. I know he will never leave me, nor forfake me; he will preserve and bring me safe to his everlasting kingdom and glory, where I shall enjoy the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day*

And that which was the ground and support of him, under all his trials and exercises, may be, and often is, the support of the people of God under all their trials and exercises; or what gives them relief under their present troubles, and in the view of an eternal world. This will better appear, and we shall have a clearer understanding thereof, by enquiring into, and observing the following things.

I. Who the object of the apostle's faith was, or who it was he believed and trusted his all with; I know whom I have believed, or trusted.

II. The knowledge he had of this object of Faith whom he believed and trusted. I know, &c.

III. The persuasion he had of the ability of this person he had believed in, to keep what he had committed to him against a certain day.

* 2 Tim. iv. 8.

IV. The
IV. The support this was to him in his present circumstances, and in the view of death and eternity, which he saw was near at hand; for he says in a following passage, *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand*.

I. Let us consider who it was that was the object of the apostle’s faith, and is the object of the faith of every true believer. Now this can be no other than our Lord Jesus Christ. How often do we hear him speak of his faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! This was the constant course of his spiritual life. This he assures us himself. *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*.

From hence it is clear, that the object he believed in, or trusted, was the Son of God: the Messiah: the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he is the object of every true believer’s faith, and ought to be so. Our Lord himself directs unto it when he says to his disciples, *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*. There is the same reason to believe in Christ as in God the Father because he is equally God with him; so is as proper an object of faith as the first person in the blessed Trinity. And it is unto him that souls, made sensible of their lost state and condition by nature, are encouraged to look, to believe in, and exercise faith upon, as you will observe in the instance of the Jailor. When he came in trembling and said, “Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?” they answer at once, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*.

Christ is the object of a sensible sinner’s trust: the object of a true believer’s faith in the business of salvation.

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*2 Tim. iv. 6. † Gal. ii. 20. ‡ John, xiv. 1. § Acts, xvi. 31.*
salvation. But then let us enquire a little into the nature of this faith he exercises upon Him. It is not to be considered as a mere historical faith: a bare assent to a set of propositions concerning Christ, his person, offices, and the like; no, the devils have a faith; they have a creed, and in many respects a more orthodox one too than some that call themselves Christians. The devils believe that there is a God, and that there is one God; though they tremble at it. They know and believe, that Jesus Christ is the Holy One of God; yea, that he is the Son of God, and that he is the Christ, the Anointed of the Lord, sent into the world to be the Saviour of men. All this they believe, and a great deal more that they are obliged to believe, and cannot help it, concerning the Son of God; but this is not the faith of God's Elect. There are some weak people in our days that talk of a bare belief of the simple truth, and call this, faith in Christ Jesus; but it falls greatly short of it. For a man may have all faith of this kind, may believe every thing that is proposed and revealed in the word of God, and yet not have that faith which is of the operation of God.

*Special faith* is a spiritual thing. It is a spiritual sight of Christ. Yea, faith is the eye of the ful, the enlightened eye of the soul, opened by the Spirit of God, to see the glory, the excellency, there is in our Lord Jesus Christ; to see his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth: to see him as the able, willing, all-sufficient, and most suitable Saviour. Faith is said to be the evidence of things not seen. It has a sight of unseen things, as of the unseen Saviour; and in its continual and constant acting is a looking unto Jesus. Looking off from every other object (a man's own righteousness, and every thing else)
else) unto Jesus Christ the Lord our righteousness, as the living Redeemer, the only and all-sufficient Saviour. It is no other than a soul's going out of itself to Christ, to lay hold upon him, trust in him for everlasting life and happiness. Expressed often by a coming to him, influenced by his Spirit and grace, and the declarations of grace he makes, saying, Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*. And all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out†. A poor sinner, sensible of his wretched lost state by nature, and of what he deserves, is encouraged to go out of himself to lay hold on Christ, who is the tree of life to them that lay hold upon him. It is, I say, a going forth and laying hold of Christ, under a sight of sin and a sense of danger, of ruin and destruction without him.

Some people in our days talk of faith as a very easy thing—only believe—only believe, say they; but it is to be feared these persons that talk in this manner, and make such an easy thing of believing in Christ, never saw their lost state by nature, the sinfulness of sin, and the ruin and destruction that it brings: never saw themselves upon the precipice of hell, dropping as it were into everlasting damnation. Let a person be in these circumstances, and then let him tell me, whether it is an easy thing for him to believe in Christ for life and salvation: and yet this is done, and herein lies the trial of faith. This shews the genuineness of it, when a soul under a sense of all its iniquities, with all their aggravating circumstances, demerits and deserts, can venture his soul upon Christ. Give me this man. It is he that knows what it is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But he finds a great many discouragements, doubts and fears; a thousand objections before he

* Matt, xi, 28.  † John, vi. 37.
can do this. He does not find it a very easy thing; it is a work of almighty power and efficacious grace.

It was under such a sense of sin as I have mentioned, that the apostle trusted in Christ; and he considers that grace as exceeding abundant which communicated faith and love to his soul who had been before a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious. 1 Tim. i. 13-14. And his faith arose to a full assurance, as the words of our text express; and else were he says, The life I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*. He had a firm belief of interest in Christ: an assurance of faith in Christ. And it is what the Lord is pleased to grant unto some of his children that have not that share of grace and gifts as that great man had; Let us (he says) draw near with a true heart†. He does not mean himself only, and his fellow apostles or men of the highest gifts and character in the church; but the children of God in general; believers in common: Let us, all of us, draw near to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. In full assurance of the object of faith prayed unto; that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. In full assurance of having those petitions put up unto him that are agreeable to his will answered; in full assurance of a Mediator between God and man, and of an interest in his prevailing mediation and intercession; “Let us draw near with true hearts in full assurance of faith,” by the blood of Jesus. For that is the ground and foundation of all assurance: even the precious blood of Jesus, shed for many for the remission of sins.

Now this faith, whether in a higher or in a lower degree, as to the principle of it, is of God. It is not

† Gal. ii, 20. ‡ Heb x. 23.
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of a man's self; no, it is by the grace God, and the power of God, that it is wrought. All men have not faith*: no, far from it. The greater part appear to have none, no true faith; and it is to be feared, that many that talk of it, are destitute of it, and know not what the thing is. And they that have it, have it not of themselves: By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God++. Hence our Lord says, No man can come unto me, (that is, believe in me) except it be given unto him of my Father++. Special faith is a gift of God's grace; and it is of the operation of the Spirit of God in the soul. He works it there. It is he that gives this spiritual eye, the eye of faith; which communicates light to the understanding, and enables the soul to go out of itself to Christ, and venture upon him for life and salvation. It is the fruit and effect of electing grace; and therefore it is sometimes called the faith of God's elect§. It is an exceeding precious grace in all, it is like precious faith||; for those that have the least degree of it, obtain the same precious faith as the greatest and strongest believer. It is precious faith, it can never be lost; it is more precious than gold which perisheth. Gold is a very durable metal, but it perishes; but faith never does. Christ, who is the object and the author of it, he is the finisher of it; and he prays for his people, as he did for Peter, that their faith fail not. That same Spirit of grace that works faith in the soul, performs the work of faith with power upon the soul. Those that truly believe in Christ, shall most certainly receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. So much for the

* 2 Thess. iii. 2. † Eph. ii. 8. ‡ John vi. 65. § Titus i. 1.
|| 2 Pet. i. 1.
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first thing, the object of faith; and the exercise of faith upon the object. I know whom I have believed.

II. I am to consider the knowledge the apostle had of the object of his faith; and which every true believer also has. I know whom I have believed.

Faith in Christ, is not a blind and implicit thing, a faith in an object unknown; no, it is in a known object. Faith and knowledge go together! where the one is, the other is also. Though there may be, and is, faith in an unseen Christ, that is, who is not seen with the bodily eyes; 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 *: yet an unknown Christ can never be the object of faith. He must be known, or he can never be believed in. Our Lord said to the blind man, whom he had cured, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? The poor man made answer, and very wisely, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? Suggesting, that he must know him, before he could believe in him. He knew there was such a person as the Messiah, that was to come into the world as the Saviour of Sinners; but as yet he did not know him, and therefore says, Who is he?

There is an external knowledge and hearing that is necessary, even to a bare assent, before any can know or believe in him; For how shall they believe in whom they have not heard†? So there is a special knowledge necessary to special faith. And as a man's knowledge is, so is his faith: if he has only an historical knowledge of Christ, he has only an historical faith: if he has a special knowledge of Christ, he has a special faith. And as his knowledge increaseth, so does his faith. They that know the Lord, follow on to know him; and as they know

* 1 Pet. i. 8.  † John ix. 35.  ‡ Rom. x. 14.
more of him, faith grows stronger and stronger in him. They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee*. And the more a soul knows of Christ, the more will he trust him; the stronger will his faith be in him. As it is among men, the more we know a man, a friend, the greater confidence we put in him; so the more we know of Christ, and of God in Christ, the stronger will our faith be in him. But then, this knowledge is not to be understood of a speculative knowledge: it is not a mere notional knowledge of Christ, of his person, his nature, and his offices: or, as he is revealed in the sacred Scriptures, as the Saviour of men; it is a more spiritual knowledge than this. Men may have a great deal of knowledge of Christ, and of things relative to him, and yet have no spiritual knowledge. They may have that kind of knowledge that may enable them to preach him to others, and plead in the great day, "Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils: and in thy name done many wonderful works?" To whom Christ will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." And therefore you may depend upon it, they never knew him, notwithstanding all the knowledge they may pretend to have had; or otherwise, he would not thus address them. Spiritual knowledge of Christ is joined with spiritual affection to him. It is a knowledge of approbation: a knowledge of his person, as the chiefest among ten thousand. It is a knowledge of Christ as a Saviour, altogether suitable and all-sufficient; and which determines a soul at once to look to no other but him, and to say, He also shall be my salvation.$ He first knows him, then believes in him, and commits his all unto him. And this is an experimental know-

* Psalm ix, 10. † Matt. vii, 22. ‡ verse 28. § Job. xiii. 16.
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ledge of Christ, which is expressed by the various senses; for there is that in the new man which answers to all the senses of the outward man. It is a seeing the Son, and believing on him *. It is a hearing his voice, so as to distinguish it from that of a stranger †. It is a tasting that the Lord is gracious ‡. A handling the word of life §; and a savouring the things of God, and not of man; smelling a sweet smell in Christ's garments, which smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia ||. These expressions set forth the exercise of faith in Christ, on a true knowledge of him, and show that knowledge to be not merely notional, but really experimental.

This is also an appropriating knowledge, more or less; a soul that thus knows Christ, is able to appropriate him, in a measure, to himself, and sometimes arrives to such a confidence as to point him out, and say with the church, This is my beloved, and this is my friend ¶. And with Thomas, My Lord and my God **! and with the apostle, Who loved me, and gave himself for me ††. The nature of the expression in the text is such, as when the apostle says, We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God ‡‡; that is, we are assured of it; it is not a mere conjectural knowledge, but a thing we are quite satisfied about. So Job expresses his faith in a living Redeemer, in such language, I know that my Redeemer liveth §§. He not only knew there was a Redeemer, and that he would appear upon the earth another day; but he knew him to be his, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Every degree of knowledge has something of certainty in it, or else it would be scepticism, a mere

* John vi. 40. † John x. 4, 5. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 3. § 1 John i. 1, ¶ Psal. xlv. 8. †† Cant. v. 16. ** John xx. 28. ‡‡ Gal. ii. 20, §§ Job xix. 25.
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conjectural knowledge; but this is not the case with the knowledge of true believers, they can say with the apostles, We believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*.

This knowledge, though it is imperfect in the present state, yet it is a growing knowledge. There is such a thing as growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, by means of the ministration of the word, and the administration of the ordinances. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day. Every degree of this spiritual knowledge of Christ has salvation inseparably connected with it. For this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent †. And therefore it must be the most excellent of all knowledge, which made the apostle say, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ‡.

What signifies what a man knows, if he don't know Christ crucified; and the way of life and salvation by him? All his knowledge in things natural, civil, or even in religious matters, is of no avail. What if his eyes are opened as Balaam's were, who saw the vision of the Almighty, and who said, he should see him (the Saviour) but not nigh? What signified all that propheticknowledge and light he had, while he was destitute of a spiritual knowledge of Christ? Nothing short of this will be of any avail: and if a man has but this, it is enough.—If he has but the smallest degree of it, he shall be saved; for every one which seeth the Son (it is not said, whoever has such and such a degree of spiritual sight) and believeth on him (even though his faith be but small) shall have everlasting life.§.
Now this spiritual knowledge comes from God, as faith does; it comes from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All the three Divine Persons are concerned in communicating this spiritual light and knowledge. The Father. To him our Lord ascribes it, when he says to Peter, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood, (carnal sense and reason) hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven*. Sometimes it is attributed to God the Son, We know, (says the apostle John) that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ†. And sometimes to the blessed Spirit, who is styled a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ‡. And it is a special gift of God’s grace, and for which we should be thankful who have any share in it.

III. We may observe the firm persuasion the apostle had of the ability of the person he had believed in, to keep what he had committed unto him against a certain day.

We will here enquire what he committed to him. Not his labours and sufferings, expecting they would hereafter be brought forth to his advantage. They were, indeed, great; but they were performed by the grace of, and through strength communicated from God. As for his sufferings, they were many indeed, more than others of his fellow-labourers in the gospel; but then he knew that the sufferings of this present life, were not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in him.

Rather he may mean the souls of the persons he had been instrumental in the conversion of; and we find him sometimes commending such persons to God and to the word of his grace§. These he

* Mat. xvi. 17. † 1 John v. 20. ‡ Eph. i. 17. § Acts xx. 32.
committed to Christ, and believed that he would keep them, and that he should meet them as his joy and crown of rejoicing in another day: or it may be interpreted, of his natural life which he had committed into the hands of his Redeemer, who he knew would take care of it, who told him, at first setting out, not to be afraid. And he had experienced many a time, that he had saved it when in imminent danger; though it seems best of all to understand it of his precious and immortal soul, and the everlasting concerns thereof. This he committed to his dear Redeemer at first conversion, when he first knew him, and he knew he was able to keep it safe against the day here referred to. So every true believer does the like; commits and commends his immortal soul into the hands of his Redeemer, and there he leaves it.

This act of committing it to Christ, supposes knowledge. No man that is wise, will commit any thing of worth into the hands of one unknown to him; and much less will any commit his immortal soul into the hands of one unknown. No, he must know him, they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee*; and it implies the giving the preference to Christ, above all others. We may consider the apostle as looking about among all the sons of the mighty upon earth, and angels in heaven, to see whether any of those were fit to commit his soul unto, and finding none of them were, he says, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth, that I desire beside thee. He saw an insufficiency in all others; that they were unequal to the task of saving his soul; that salvation was not to be hoped for from the mountains; that truly in the Lord, and in him only, was salvation to be found.

* Psalm ix. 10.
Such a view have all true believers, and therefore say they, Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, ye are our Gods; for in thee the fatherless find mercy*. Each of them addresses Christ, as Ahab did Benhadad, I am thine, and all that I have. "I give up my soul, and all that I have, to be saved in thee, with an everlasting salvation." It denotes trusting in Christ for grace here, and glory hereafter: leaving all with him, believing that he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him.

As to the day here referred to, this may be understood of the day of death. Death is appointed by the Lord, to every man; and against this day, the apostle committed, and so every true believer commits, his soul into the hands of Christ, when he hopes to meet with the Lord, and to be for ever with him, out of all danger from every enemy. Or it may be understood of the day of resurrection. The first resurrection. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and happy will they be; for on them the second death shall have no power, and they shall be for ever with the Lord. Or it may be understood of the day of judgment, in which they must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, in which he will make an open acknowledgment of them, and say, "These persons are the gift of my Father unto me: I have redeemed them with my blood; and by my grace they have been enabled to commit themselves into my hand: lo! here am I, and the children which God hath given me."

The ground and foundation of this trust in Christ, arises from his proper Deity. He being God over

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* Hos. xiv. 3.  † 1 Kings xx. 4.  ‡ Heb. ix. 27.
all, blessed for evermore, it is this that encourages a soul at first, and that from the declaration Christ himself has given, 

Look unto me, and be ye saved; all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.*

His being the former and the maker of all things, for making all things by the word of his power, is another argument. "He whose hands laid the foundations of the earth, and whose right-hand hath spanned the heavens," may well be considered as able to keep the soul which is committed to him against that day. His having already performed the work his Father gave him to do, is another foundation from whence this trust and confidence in him arises. He came, and his own arm has brought salvation. The work is done. He has obtained eternal redemption for all his people; and seeing it is done, what encouragement is here for a poor soul to commit himself into the hands of Christ; believing that he is able to keep him. To which may be added, the consideration of God the Father trusting Christ with the souls of his people. He has put all his beloved ones into the hands of his Son; he has trusted him with all their persons, grace, and glory; and he is faithful to him that appointed him, and will at last say, "Lo! here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." "Well then, (may a soul say) If God the Father hath trusted him with thousands of souls, surely I may trust him with mine. If he hath been faithful to him that appointed him, in keeping the souls that were committed to him; I may believe that he will keep mine."

IV. I pass on now to the last thing, namely, that this is the support of every true believer, in life and in death; that they know whom they have believed. This was the apostle's support under all his trials,

*Isa. xlv. 22.*
of a Believer in Life and in Death.

trials, afflictions, and sufferings, for the sake of the gospel. Hear his own words, For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless, I am not ashamed.

"I am easy under them, I know whom I have believed." So let the believer's afflictions and sufferings be what they will, if he knows whom he has believed, he is sure that they will all work together for his good; that ere long he shall be free from them, and be for ever with the Lord, into whose hands he has committed his immortal soul. This the apostle knew, that though men were able to kill the body, they could not reach the soul. That was in the hands of Christ, and therefore it was safe; bound up in the bundle of life; hid with Christ in God; laid and built upon that Rock of Ages, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. The apostle was now in the view of death and eternity; and this was his support in the view of an eternal world. And the same upholds every true believer, more or less. O what a support must this be to a dying saint, that though he is leaving the world, and all things in it; though he has no more an interest in his worldly substance, relations, friends, and acquaintance, and soul and body are parting, yet still his interest in a blessed Redeemer continues! He knows whom he has believed. When flesh and heart, and every thing else fails him, God is the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever. Christ is his Redeemer and Saviour; who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. What a supporting consideration must this be to him; that when he is brought to the streams of Jordan's river, that blessed Redeemer, who has been his God and guide through life, will not leave him now; but will be with him through the valley of the shadow of death;

* 2 Tim. i. 12.
death; therefore he fears no evil. Now he is not at a loss for a surety and Saviour; he knows whom he has believed. He knows the Lord his Righteousness; and that he has a righteousness in him that will answer for him in time to come. How delightful the thought, when he is just upon the borders of another world, that now he is departing from hence, to be for ever with the Lord! to be lodged in those mansions his Saviour and Redeemer is gone before to prepare for him; that he may be with him where he is, and for ever behold his glory.

But these are but some short hints of what gracious souls more largely experience under present troubles, and in the views of death and eternity.

This knowledge of Christ was the support of our deceased friend, whose death has been the occasion of my discoursing on these words. His standing in this church has been but a short time; though an ancient professor and disciple of Jesus Christ. He belonged to other churches in the country; who gave him the character of an upright man. For the time that he hath been with us, he has behaved as one that made a good profession of the grace of God. He walked answerable to it; and appeared to have a great deal of affection to, and liveliness in, divine and spiritual things.

In his last illness he was very comfortable. To one that visited him, he said, he had been many years walking through a dirty narrow lane; but hoped he was now come near the end of it; and he desired to depart, and be with Christ. He had no darkness nor fears upon his mind; all was bright and serene. He expressed his faith in Christ, as that foundation that will never give way; he knew whom he had believed. And so I find he continued, until he sweetly fell asleep in Jesus; and there we must leave him till the resurrection morn.

Upon
Upon the whole we may see, of what importance an interest in Christ is; to know whom we have believed, and to commit our souls to him. Of what use is this, both in life and in death! A soul may well say, "Give me an interest in Christ, or I die." There is no happiness without it: and a knowledge of that interest how comfortable it is!

As to those of us who have made a profession, let us enquire what is the object of our faith and trust? Is it any thing of our own, or is it Jesus Christ? If we trust in a wrong object it will do us no good. We should also consider what our knowledge of Christ is, whether it is notional or experimental; as it is the latter only which issues in eternal life. As to those of you who are trembling, doubting believers, I would say, Give not way to unbelief. Were not you enabled years ago to give up yourselves unto Christ; to venture your souls on him. And is he not the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? Why then should you give way to an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God? Leave all with him, and fear not.

To conclude, what encouragement is there for poor sensible sinners, to commit their souls into the hands of Christ, who is able to save to the uttermost; and who hath assured us, that whoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
SERMON XXVI.

The dejected Believer's Soliloquy. A discourse, Occasioned by the Decease of MRS. ANN BUTTON.

Psalm. xl. 11.

Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

The Psalmist (who, it is highly probable, was David), when he wrote this Psalm, seems to have been at a distance from the house of God. This was the cause of his distress and disquietude. He longed to return thither, that he might appear before God in his sanctuary; enjoy his presence, and hold communion with him. This panting of his soul after God in his house, he signifies by, and compares unto, the panting of the hart after the water-brooks, when pursued in hunting: which greatly resembles the case in which he then was. What is here figuratively expressed, is more plainly asserted by him elsewhere, when he says; That his soul longed, and even fainted, for the
thecourts of the Lord; and his flesh, and his heart, cried out for the living God *.

What made his distress the greater, was, his remembering with what good company he had frequently went up to the house of God; and what spiritual pleasure he had enjoyed when there. This was a cause of uneasiness unto his mind. However, he encourages himself in his God, and stirs up his soul to hope in the Lord, that he would bring him back again, and that he should see his ark, and his habitation. For this purpose, he calls to mind some past experiences of divine goodnes to him, when he was in a state of exile. I will remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill of Mizar: places where, it may be, he had met with God, where he had enjoyed the divine presence, or had been indulged with some remarkable favour.

We find, likewise, that at this time many afflictions attended him: which he compares to floods of water, to depths, and to the waves of the sea. Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water spouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. By which he intends various afflictions that he met with from his family, and from his friends; from within, and from without. Nor is it unusual, in Scripture, to express afflictions, and trying dispensations of Providence, by waves. So Heman, the Ezrahite, says, that God had afflicted him with all his waves: Psalm. lxxxviii. 7. with one affliction after another, which came rolling upon him as the waves of the sea. But God hath graciously promised, that he will be with his people, when they pass through the waters, meaning afflictions; and that they shall not overwhelm them. This faith the

* Psalm. lxxxiv, 2,
Psalmist had, that God would command his loving kindness, to him. For thus he speaks; Yet the Lord will command his loving kindness in the day time. He was well persuaded, that though he was afflicted of the Lord, yet he would not utterly, nor at all take away his loving kindness from him; but would, in due time, command some manifestations of his love to him, that should support, carry him through, and in due time deliver him out of all his trials.

He speaks also of the afflictions, distresses, and oppressions, that he met with from men. I will say unto God, my rock, why hast thou forgotten me; why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me: while they say daily unto me, where is thy God? Where is thy God, that thou hast so much talked of; in whom thou hast put thy trust, and who hath promised thee his protection? Where is he now? and where is thy confidence in him? This was cutting to him; like a sword in his bones. It was no unusual thing for the enemies of God's church and people, to insult over them in such language as this, when they were in distress, and there was not an immediate appearance on their behalf. Wherefore should the Heathen say, where is now their God? Our God is in the heavens, and he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

After this, follows the soliloquy in my text, or the Psalmist's address to his own soul. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, on account of those various trials? What reason is there for it? Why shouldst thou give way to any degree of despondency? Hope thou in God for protection and deliverance, which will

* Psalm. cxv. 3.
The dejected Believer's Soliloquy.

be granted in due time. Whilst he is thus encouraging his hope in the Lord, his faith grows strong; For I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. Faith never shines brighter than when it is exercised in trying dispensations.

The experiences of God's people, in all ages, are much the same. As, in water, face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man: the heart of one faint unto another. What was the experience of David, in those early times, is the experience of the people of God in latter ages, and in ours; both with respect to trials, and with respect to the exercise of faith and hope.——From these words I shall observe the following things:

I. That the saints often are, as David was, under dejection, and disquietude of soul, though they have not all that reason for it which they imagine: and, sooner or later, are sensible of it; and, therefore, expostulate with themselves, as He did; Why art thou disquieted? Why art thou cast down.

II. That true believers in the Lord, as David did, are helped to encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and to excite themselves, to hope in the Lord, for strength to support them under their trials, for power to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies; and to wait for his gracious presence with them, and his kind appearances for them. Hope thou in God. And,

III. That they are enabled, at such times as these, to express strong faith in the Lord; For I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

I. The saints are often, as David was, under foul dejections and disquietude: for which they have
have not all the reason they imagine; and therefore are helped, sooner or later, to expostulate with themselves thus, Why art thou cast down, O my soul?

Saints, in all ages, have had their castings down, and their liftings up. So it seems Job had. Ye see my casting down and are afraid *. And says one of his friends, in another place, When men are cast down; then thou shalt say, there is lifting up †: and so it is with the people of God. They have those returning seasons, one after another. A casting down, and a lifting up: a lifting up, and a casting down; and so they go on whilst they are in this imperfect state.

Various are the causes of this dejection and disquietude of soul, to which the saints are subject in this life. Sin is the principal one, especially indwelling sin. So the apostle found it, and so do all the saints. It hinders them from doing the good that they would, and it puts them upon doing the evil that they would not. To will is present with me (says the apostle), but how to perform that which is good I find not. What was the reason of it? It was sin that dwelt in him. For says he, When I would do good, evil is present with me, to hinder me from doing the good that I would perform, and put me upon the evil that I would not do. Now this occasions disquietude in God's people. There are two principles in them; sin and grace, flesh and spirit. And these are represented as if they were two persons whose desires and affections are contrary to each other. The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh lusteth against the spirit; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would ‡. This is a cause of great disquietude in the minds of regenerate persons.

* Job vi. 21. † Job xxii. 29. ‡ Gal. v. 17.
Sin wars against the soul; and wherever there is war, there is, more or less, disquietude: it cannot be without it. There is a war, an intestine war, in the heart of God's people. Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul *. I see a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members †. What is to be seen in the Shulamite, but as it were the company of two armies, flesh and spirit, sin and grace, warring one against another? It is sin that breaks the peace of God's people, and interrupts their communion with God. Sometimes there is no rest in their bones, because of their sin. They roar, as David says, because of the disquietness of their heart. They groan, being burdened with a body of sin and death. This interrupts their communion with God. Their iniquities separate between God and them. Though the union between them and God cannot be dissolved, the bond of which is his everlasting and unchangeable love; yet sin separates with respect to communion. It causes God to hide his face from them, and this occasions disquietude.

The same in-dwelling sin, by its powerful operations and effects, fills the soul of a believer, often times, with many fears, with regard to his state. Without, are fightings; within, are fears. On account of in-dwelling sin, the soul often times is ready to fear, that the root of the matter is not in him; that the truth of grace is not in his soul; that the good work of grace is not begun; that he is only an hypocrite, and is not really born again: or if he was, why is it thus with him? He cannot think that he belongs to Christ: that he hath an

* 1 Pet. ii. 11. † Rom. vii. 23.
interest in him; if he were Christ's and Christ were his, and the affections, the flesh with lusts would be crucified. He fears that he hath no part, nor lot, in the matter; that he shall one day perish by means of this, and the other, strong corruption, and that he shall come short of eternal glory. Hence our Lord says, Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Thus it appears that in-dwelling sin is the cause of disquietude in the people of God; though there is not that reason for disquietude and dejection of soul, as they imagine. For there is forgiveness with God. The blood of Jesus Christ hath been shed for the remission of sin. He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins. He hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed; and though sin rages, it shall not reign. Sin shall not have dominion over you. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.—Why, then, art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, on account of in-dwelling sin?

Another cause of dejection and disquietude, is Satan. He casts down the people of God. He disturbs their minds, by his solicitations, his accusations, and his temptations. By solicitations to sin. He hath great power over the minds of men, and can put things into their hearts; as he put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray his Lord, and filled the heart of Ananias and Saphira, to lie against the Holy Ghost; yea, he hath great power over the people of God themselves. They have a corrupt nature, that he can work upon, and stir up. He found nothing in the pure and holy Jesus.
to work upon; but he finds enough in the hearts of believers. He can stir up the lusts of their minds, as he prevailed over David, by stirring up his pride to number the people of Israel; which brought great distress upon both him, and his subjects.—He often disquiets the minds of the Lord's people by his accusations. He is called the accuser of the brethren. He goes about, to and fro, throughout the earth, and takes notice of what is done amiss; and then accuses for it, as he did holy Job. Thus he acted towards Joshua the high priest. He, though a good man, had fallen foully into sin. Satan sets his cafe in a sad light indeed; represents him as clothed with filthy garments, and then stands at his right hand to rebuke him and accuse him. And it would have gone hard with him, had it not been for the Angel of the covenant, the Mediator between God and man, who took his part, and rebuked Satan, saying; The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning? Then he ordered his filthy garments to be taken from him, and him to be clothed with change of raiment, saying; I have caused thine iniquities to pass from thee.

Satan disquieted the minds of God's people by his temptations. He is, on account of this, styled the Tempter. As such, he attacked our Lord Jesus Christ himself: and though he could find nothing to work upon in him (as before observed), yet he gave him trouble. He harrassed his pure and holy nature; insomuch that it is said, he suffered being tempted: suffered at the hands of Satan. Now, if the pure and holy Jesus suffered through the temptations of Satan, it is no wonder that his members should suffer, or that they should be disquieted and disquieted by his temptations, as Peter was, when Satan desired to sift him as wheat. This being in some degree granted, the tempter shook him so that he
he awfully fell.—The apostle Paul, though he did not fall by the temptation of Satan as Peter did, was greatly buffeted by him, and reduced to deep distress; insomuch that he cried unto God thrice that it might depart from him; and the answer he had was, My grace is sufficient for thee.

Satan's temptations are compared to fiery darts: and they are very poisonous, and occasion a great deal of grief and sorrow, where they fasten. But, notwithstanding all this, the saints have not so much reason as they imagine, to be dejected, or disquieted, because of them. For Christ hath Satan under his restraint; nor can he give believers the least disturbance, except by our Lord's permission. He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may, but not whom he will devour: and ere long, he shall be bruised under the feet of the Lord's people.

The hidings of God's face are another cause of dejection and disquietude. Thou hidest thy face, and I am troubled, says David. This was the reason of that distress in which Heman the Ezrahite was. God had forsaken him and hid his face from him; for his language is, Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? But there is not that reason for distress and disquietude, on this account, as they imagine. Sion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me. But what says the Lord himself? Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? She may; it is possible there may be here and there an instance of this kind. But it is added, yet will I not forget thee; behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Though God hide his face for a while; yet he appears again.
again: though in wrath, for a moment, he hide his face; yet with everlafting kindness will he have mercy upon his people, and gather them afterward into nearer communion with him.

Afflictions are another cause of disquietude. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. None of these are joyous, but grievous; and some of them extremely fo. The Christian, in certain infances, is ready to say with the church; There is no sorrow like unto my sorrow. But yet there is not that reason for disquietude, as is apprehended; for afflictions work together for the good of God's people; their spiritual and eternal good. They are light afflictions, which are but for a moment, and work for the saints, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. God will in due time, deliver his people out of all their afflictions. He will not suffer them to be tempted, or afflicted, above what they are able to bear; but will, with the temptation, or affliction, make way for an escape out of them.

There are many oppressions and distresses that the saints meet with from the men of the world, who persecute and reproach them. And it seems this was one part of David's trouble, as the context shews. For those that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution; must be abused, reproached, and insulted by the men of the world. But then, what reason is there for so much disquietude on that account? Rather, they should think themselves happy that they are reproached for Christ's sake; and esteem that reproach better than all the treasures in Egypt.—But I shall proceed;

II. To observe, that the children of God are enabled to do as the Psalmist David did, encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and excite themselves to hope in the Lord, notwithstanding these distresses. Hope thou in God;
Hope in God, for the forgiveness of sin; for there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared. Hope in God, for eternal salvation. Hope in God, for deliverance out of the hands of every enemy; and for support under every trial. Wait for the Lord, in his gracious appearances. He will appear again. The vision is for an appointed time: wait for it; it will come, it will not tarry. Hope thou in God. Hope in the mercy of God. Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy; and with him there is plentiful redemption. The Lord taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy. His eye is upon them. His eye, not only of providence, but of love and mercy is upon them that fear him, and that hope in his mercy. Hope in the power of God. His hand is not shortened that it cannot save. He is able to do more than thou art able to ask or think. Hope in his power, to protect and deliver thee out of the hand of all thine oppressors. Hope in the Lord to fulfil the great and precious promises which he hath made. This was the support of Abraham, when he believed in hope, against hope: for he believed, that God was able to perform his promise. Hope thou in the faithfulness of God; for God is faithful that hath promised; never suffering any of those good things to fall to the ground, which he hath promised unto his people. He never suffers his faithfulness to fail. He who hath begun the good work, notwithstanding what sin and Satan may do, will perform it until the day of Christ. He will sanctify them throughout, in body, soul, and spirit. Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it. Hope then in his faithfulness.

Hope in the Word of God. The Psalmist says, I have hoped in thy word. In God's word of promise, in which he causes his people to trust. And there is good reason to hope in the word of the Lord, the
word of promise; since all his promises are yea and amen, in Christ Jesus: that is, performed in due time. His word of promise is confirmed by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, the heirs of promise, might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. Hope in the essential Word of God, in the Lord Jesus Christ; who in the times of the Old Testament, was the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof in time of trouble. Hope in him, who is in the New Testament described as our Hope, as the hope of glory. Hope then in God.—But I proceed to consider,

III. That act of faith, which the Psalmist here so strongly expresseth. Notwithstanding all he had met with, which had occasioned distress, and disquietude, he declares, I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

This is remarkable; and herein lies the glory of faith, as it breaks forth in the midst of so much disquietude and distress. Yet shall I praise him. I know I shall praise him. I shall have reason, and leisure, and opportunity to praise him both here and hereafter. Yet shall I praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. An instance this worthy the imitation of all the Lord's people. O that we could all say, that we shall yet praise him, however it may now be with us! praise him in this life, and praise him in the life to come. They that dwell in the house of God shall be still praising him. They shall praise, and continue to praise him. The Psalmist lays, I will give thanks unto the Lord, as long as I live; I will sing praise unto my God, while I have my being. Happy souls that are enabled so to do! Yet shall I praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. Praise him for every temporal, and for every spiritual mercy.

For
For every temporal mercy. God is the father of mercies: the author and giver of all our temporal mercies. And we are to call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to bless the Lord, and forget not all his benefits: not any of them; no, not the least of his temporal favours. For we are not worthy of these; they are much above our deserts, and yet are communicated to us every day of our lives. His mercies are new every morning, and great is his faithfulness. The faint sees reason to praise the Lord at all times; every day of his life; every morning he rises, and all the day long, for the numerous blessings which are communicated to him: but especially, he sees reason to praise the Lord for spiritual mercies. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly things, in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world*. That is, let the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised: for that is the sense of the phrase. Let him be praised, because he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ. These blessings relate to the spiritual part of man, and to his spiritual welfare. All spiritual blessings, are new covenant blessings, and the sure mercies of David. Particularly a believer, when he is in a proper frame of soul, sees reason to praise the Lord for electing and redeeming grace; for effectual calling; and for every other blessing of grace.

He sees reason to praise the Lord for electing grace. For, if the apostle thought himself bound to give thanks to God, because he had chosen the Thessalonians, saying, We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord;
because God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, to the obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. I say, if he saw reason to praise the Lord on that account, no doubt but he saw still more reason to praise the Lord for chusing himself. And so every believer should say, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; who hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy, and without blame before him, in love.

There are many things that the name of God is to be praised for; but scarce any thing to be named, that is more worthy of praise than this. When the disciples of our Lord were so highly elated because the devils were subject to them, he said, Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven: or, in other words, that they were chosen and ordained to eternal life. Rejoice in this; for it is the source of all the blessings of grace: all are dispensed according to it. Blessed with all spiritual blessings, according as he hath chosen us in him. This seems to be the rule according to which God dispenses all his other blessings of grace. This stands at the head of them, and infures all the rest. Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified them he also glorified. The election hath obtained; and the rest were blinded. They have obtained, what? All the blessings of grace, life, righteousness, and eternal salvation. They have obtained all the graces of the Spirit; particularly faith, which is the free gift of his grace: but it flows from election; and therefore it is called the faith of God’s elect. As many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed. Eternal happiness is insured upon this footing. For the purposes of God, according to election, stands sure: not upon
upon works, but upon him that calleth. The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. Their eternal glory standeth firm upon this ground. As the saints are by it afore prepared for glory; so eternal happiness, or the everlasting kingdom, is afore prepared for them.

Saints, in the view of this, have reason to praise the Lord, that he hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world.—O, says the believing soul, hath God chosen me! hath he chosen me out of the mass of mankind! Hath he chosen me, to grace here, and to eternal glory hereafter! what reason have I to praise the Lord!—I shall yet praise him, for this blessing of electing grace.

Praise him also for redeeming grace; for that is the next blessing of grace, as it stands in Ephesians. Election first, then redemption. In whom we have redemption through his blood. This is a blessing of grace they have reason to praise the Lord for; and therefore David calls upon his soul, and all within him, to praise the Lord, because he had redeemed his life from destruction. He adores and admires this instance of the grace of God. O, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; and his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. They praise him for such a Redeemer as Christ is; the horn of salvation that God hath raised up, in the house of his servant David. The mighty Saviour; able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him. They praise him for such a redemption, as that which he hath wrought out for them; for it is a full and complete redemption from sin, Satan, the world, and hell: from this and the other enemy. An eternal redemption: for Christ hath, by his blood, obtained eternal redemption for us, and saves his people with an everlasting salvation. Therefore
they see reason to praise God on this account. They see reason to do it now. O, give thanks unto the Lord, for he hath remembered us in our low estate; when we were helpless and hopeless. Praise him because he hath done this; for his mercy endureth for ever. And they will praise his name for this to all eternity; when they shall have their harps in their hands, and tune to the song of redeeming grace; that song, which none but the redeemed of the Lamb can sing. Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings, and priests, unto God and his Father, to him be glory for ever and ever. They will for ever sing this song: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. I shall yet praise him, for redeeming grace.

So likewise they shall praise his name for effectual calling grace. God's end in calling his people by his grace; forming Christ in them, and in the implanting a principle of grace in them, is, that they might praise him. This people have I formed for myself. I have formed them for myself in regeneration; they shall shew forth my praise*. Saints, called by grace, see reason to praise the Lord, who hath called them out of worse than Egyptian darkness into his marvellous light. They see reason to praise him who hath called them out of a state of bondage and slavery, into the liberty of the sons of God: who hath called them out of the world, to communion with himself, who hath called them, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began: who hath called them to a participation of the blessings of grace here, and eternal happiness hereafter. Yet shall I praise him, for effectual calling grace, that

* Isa. xliii. 21.
hath called me, poor, vile sinner as I was; when I was (as the rest of mankind are) going on in a course of sin and rebellion; yet he called me, and not another! Called me, and yet took no notice of another! Called me, when running the strong career of sin; running headlong into ruin.—Called me by his grace!

Yet shall I praise him: praise the Lord for justifying grace. Justification proceeds from the free grace of God. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The matter of it is Christ’s righteousness; and that is imputed, without works, freely, by the grace of God. The righteousness of Christ is a free gift; a gift by grace. The soul that receives it, receives an abundance of grace; and therefore sees great reason to praise the Lord. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God. For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness. I shall yet praise the Lord for a justifying righteousness.

So for pardon of sin. Free forgivenes of sins, through the blood of Christ, is another blessing the believer sees reason to praise God for now, and will do to all eternity. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. A sinner, sensible of this great blessing, will call upon his soul, and all that is within him, to bless the Lord; because he hath forgiven him all his iniquity. “I (he will say) that was a sinner, the worst and chief of sinners, yet even I obtained mercy; and therefore am under the greatest obligations to praise the Lord.”

Praise him for adopting grace; for being made a child of God, and an heir of eternal glory. A believer praises God, that though he was a child of wrath, as others, yet he is made a child of God,
God, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. Saints praise the Lord for regenerating grace, which is an evidence of adopting grace. For this the apostle expresses his praise and thanks (1 Pet. i. 3.) Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ; which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven. It is owing to the same grace, that those who are adopted, and born again, are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and persevere in grace and holiness unto the end. When they come into the other world, these songs shall be all renewed, and sung to a better tune, and in a more perfect manner. Yet shall I praise him, for electing, redeeming, calling, justifying, pardoning grace; for regenerating and persevering grace. The saints will then praise him, that he hath brought them through all the troubles of this life, safe to his kingdom and glory. O, how will they praise his name then, in the most exalted strains! Just as Israel, when they had got through the Red Sea, and out of the hands of their enemies, and saw them dead upon the sea shore. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying; I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he hath thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. So the Saints, when they have got through this world into the other state, will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. The ransomed of the Lord will return to Sion with songs, and sing them in the best manner. Yet will I praise the Lord, and particularly for what follows: be-
cause: he is the health of my countenance, and my God.

God is the author and giver of health: as of natural, so of spiritual health. Men are naturally diseased with sin. Sin is an hereditary disease, and it is universal. It affects all human nature, and every individual of it. All the powers of the soul, and all the members of the body are affected by it. It is an incurable disease, except by the grace of God, and the blood of Christ: but by them all the maladies of the soul are healed. God heals the backslidings of his people, and loves them freely. This healing is by pardoning their transgressions. Hence the two following clauses are put together, as explanatory one of the other. Who healeth all thy diseases, who forgiveth all thine iniquities. Hence the inhabitants of Sion shall no more say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity. They shall be in good health, and so have no reason to complain of sickness.

The apostle John wishes for Gaius, that his body might prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered. Then may the soul be said to be in good health, when it hath not only spiritual food to eat, but a keen appetite to feed upon that food. As a man may be thought to be in good health, when he hath food to eat, and feeds upon it heartily; so, in a spiritual sense, when the believer hath food to eat, the pure doctrines of the gospel, feeds upon them, and finds them the joy and rejoicing of his heart: when as a new born babe, he desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby; he is in good health, in a spiritual sense. So, when the graces of the Spirit are in exercise; when he abounds in hope, and in love to God, and his people, he is in good health. But this is all from the Lord. When a believer grows in grace, and in the knowledge
knowledge of Jesus Christ: when, being planted in the house of the Lord, he flourisheth in the courts of his God, and is fruitful in every good word and work, his soul is in good health. All this fruitfulness is of God. He is that green fir-tree, whence all his fruit is found; and so hath reason to praise the Lord on this account. Yet shall I praise him, who is the health of my countenance.

The countenance is, in a great measure, the index of health; though it is not always a sure one. A person may have a good countenance, or look healthful, and yet may have diseases and complaints. For the most part, however, a man's health may be discerned in his countenance. A sickness may be observed by the paleness and wannedness of the countenance; so good health may be discerned by the ruddiness and freshness of the countenance. Now what is the saint's countenance? It is Faith: which looks to Christ; and he is pleased when people do so. Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. What was that comely countenance, but faith; and a look of faith to him? The church (to whom Christ then addressed himself), under a sense of her own unworthiness, and conscious of her own sinfulness, was so bashful, that she held down her head, or turned it aside. Therefore Christ encouraged her to look him full in the face; Let me see thy countenance. Very agreeable is this to Jesus, who is ravished with one of the eyes of his saints, with one chain of their neck: that is, with the grace of faith, and the exercise of it. Never does a poor believer look more comely in the sight of Christ, than when he looks him full in the face; looks at his person, blood, and righteousness.

Now, as is the countenance of a believer, so is his health. As is his faith, so is every other grace.
is his faith, so is his evangelical repentance. If faith be in exercise, evangelical repentance will be so. These go together, both as doctrines and graces. When faith is in exercise, then you will find the believer ingenuously confessing his sin, mourning over it in a gospel way, and taking shame to himself; confounded, and not opening his mouth, because that God is pacified towards him, for all that he hath done. Repentance is never so full, so free, so genuine, as when faith is in its greatest exercise upon the pardoning grace of God, flowing through the blood of Jesus.

As faith is, so is hope; for faith is the substance of things hoped for. If a man be strong in believing, he abounds in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. If he can see his interest in Christ, and in the Lord, as his portion, then he hopes in him. The Lord is my portion, faith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.

And as faith is, so is love: for faith works by love. To them that believe, Christ is precious. Faith works by love, to his word, ordinances, and people. As a man's faith is, so is his joy; hence we read of the joy of faith. The more he believes, the more he is filled with joy, unspeakable, and full of glory. Yet shall I praise him for the health of my countenance.

You will observe, that in the 6th verse of this Psalm, it is his countenance; that is, the countenance of God, or the health of his countenance. The same word is used there, as here, denoting, that it is the countenance of God, or the light of his countenance, that is the health of his people. And this is quite agreeable to the experience of the saints in all ages. Hearken unto David; Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance: thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and
their wine increased. Nothing so rejoices the hearts of God's people, as the light of his countenance. The light of Jehovah's countenance is like the latter rain, or the dew upon the mown grass, very refreshing and comforting.

There is another thing which the Psalmist mentions as a reason why he should praise the Lord, namely, because he was his God. I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. A delightful idea this! For what can be a greater happiness, than to have God for our God! The Psalmist, when he had reckoned up many temporal blessings of which men were possessed, says, Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord! People may be thought happy who abound in temporal enjoyments; but he is the truly happy man, whose God is the Lord. This is the substance of the covenant, I will be to them a God. This includes the favour of God, his care, protection, and preservation of his people; the communion he grants unto them here, and the happiness they shall enjoy with him to all eternity. All are included in this grand principal blessing; I will be their God. And this covenant interest always continues. He is so till death, at death, and after death; he is so in time, and to all eternity. As in the ultimate state of glory, when he shall be all in all; so in the New Jerusalem state, previous to that, and introductory to it, when the tabernacle of God shall be with men, he will say, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. What hath such an one to fear? If God be his God, what may he not expect here and hereafter? All supplies of grace now, and eternal glory hereafter. He therefore hath abundant reason to say, I will yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Thus
The dejected Believer's Soliloquy. 499

Thus have I endeavoured to say some few things upon this passage of Scripture, as time would allow; and, as appeared agreeable to the state of our deceased friend; she having received, it seems, much consolation from it. What I shall say concerning her, will be but short.

It pleased God to call her, by his grace, some years ago; and it seems, that the following words were the first passage of Scripture that gave her soul liberty. *I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron*. From which she gathered, that all difficulties and discouragements, that lay in the way of her salvation should be removed; and her soul brought to a comfortable liberty; to nearness to God, communion with him, and the enjoyment of eternal glory hereafter.

Her standing in this church of Christ, hath been but short. She was a member elsewhere some years before; and appears to have been an honourable member, behaving suitably to the profession which she made.

In her late illness, which issued in death, she had, as her castings down, so her liftings up. Her faith was directed to a precious Redeemer, to look unto him, and him alone, for eternal salvation. These words were of singular use unto her, *Though he lay me, yet will I trust in him: he also shall be my salvation*. "He only (said she) and there is none but " him, that is, or can be my salvation."

Toward the close of her life, she signified, that she was going, like Esther, into the presence of the King; and, if I perish, I perish there. And when it was observed to her, that the golden scepter would be held forth: *Yea, (said she) and I shall touch "it."* Signifying, that she expected a favourable admission, and a kind reception into the presence of

* Isa. xlv. 2. K k 2 the
the King of Kings, to be for ever with him. In other words, that she should yet praise him, who was the health of her countenance, and her God.

Now the principal use we are to make of what hath been said, is, to encourage our souls in the exercise of faith and hope, under all the distresses and difficulties of this life. Though we may meet with many things to disquiet us, yet let us not indulge despondency. On the contrary, let us hope in God: in the mercy, the power, the wisdom, and the faithfulness of God; believing, that we shall yet praise him, both in this life, and in the other world, to all eternity.
And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

This passage is part of the last words of the apostle Paul, to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, whom he had called together to deliver his mind unto. He was an eminent instance of divine grace, and an excellent preacher of that grace, which he was made a partaker of. His work lay chiefly in the Gentile world; great part of which he travelled over; and, wherever he came, spread the gospel of the grace of God. Thousands of souls were converted under his ministry; and it is hard to say, how many Churches were planted by his hands. The conquests which he, through mighty grace, was enabled to make, were far superior, to those of Alexander, or of Caesar;
and now he is returning to Jerusalem like a triumphant conqueror, as having with success fought the Lord’s battles in those parts. And, in his way thither, calls at Miletus; convenes the elders of the church of Ephesus, and declares his manner of entrance and his behaviour among them; how he had kept back nothing which was profitable to them, had used no artful methods to conceal his principles, but had made it his study, to declare all the council of God, and that in a way intelligible to the meanest capacities. This he did openly and publicly; testifying, both to Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Though, in so doing, he ran the greatest risk of his life, yet none of these things moved him; neither did he count his life dear to himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And knowing that they to whom he had preached, and to whose souls he had been useful, should see his face no more; he takes them, as witnesses of his faithfulness, and to shew his regard and care for them to the last, advises them to take heed both to themselves and to the flock of God; and assures them, that after his departure, grievous wolves would enter, and not spare the flock; and that even some among themselves should arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. And now, having discharged a good conscience, and acted the part of a faithful minister, he takes his leave; and having no longer the care of them, as a faithful shepherd, commits them again into the hands of him who had made them his care and charge, in the words which I have read. And now brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, &c. In which may be observed these three things:

I. An
I. An Endearing appellation, which he gives them, Brethren.

II. An instance of his regard unto them, and affection for them; and that is, commending them to God, and to the word of his grace. And,

III. The motives which induced the apostle to commend them to God, and to the word of his grace.

I. Here is an endearing appellation which he gives them, Brethren. This was a usual and familiar way of speaking among the Jews. Nothing more frequent with them, than to call any who were of their own country and nation, Brethren; though no otherwise allied unto them, in the bonds of consanguinity. Thus the apostle Paul calls all the Jews, being his countrymen, Brethren and Kindred according to the flesh, for whose salvation he had a great concern; which we must not suppose to be confined to those of his own tribe and family only. And so Stephen begins his oration thus; men, brethren, and fathers. And perhaps, from this usual way of speaking among the Jews, the primitive saints took up this appellation, and gave it to each other. Sometimes we find it given to the multitude of believers, or such who were in a private capacity in the churches, as distinct from apostles and elders. Thus it is said; The apostles, and elders, and brethren send greeting, unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch. In our text it is given to the elders, particularly, whom Paul calls so; either because they were partakers of the same grace, and so had this title in common with the rest of believers, or else, on account of their office, being labourers together in the Lord’s vineyard. And here may be observed the humility of the apostle; who was far superior to them in gifts, office, and usefulness. His
His gifts were, no doubt, far greater than theirs: and so was his office, being an extraordinary minister, an apostle of the Gentiles; and his usefulness abundantly exceeded theirs. Yet he does not treat them with an haughty and assuming air, but puts himself upon a level with them, and calls them brethren. Thus imitating his Lord and master; who, being of the same nature with us, is not ashamed to call us brethren, though he himself is Lord of all.

II. Here is an instance of his regard unto them, and affection for them; which appears in commending them to God, and to the word of his grace.

We are not to suppose that, in this commendation, the apostle intends the elders only, but the church also. These were addressed, as being officers and representatives of the church, and as men capable of delivering to it, what the apostle should say to them. There are three things to be considered in this commendation,

1. The persons to whom the brethren are here commended.
2. The act itself, and what is intended by it.
3. What induced the apostle to commend the fainsts as he does.

First, The persons to whom the brethren are commended; that is, God, and the word of his grace.

1. They are commended to God; by whom is meant God the Father. The apostle, in commending them to him, commends them to his grace, wisdom, and power. To his Grace; to supply their need; to fit them for every duty he shall call them to, and for every trial he shall exercise them with. Such a commendation suits both ministers, and private believers. The former, who, notwithstanding all their learning, parts, and gifts, are insufficient for their work, without fresh supplies of divine grace.
grace. And private believers, under all the trials and afflictions, should make their application to God, who sits upon a throne of grace, and has promised that his grace shall be sufficient for them; which they always find, more or less, made good unto them. Such a commendation as this you find in Acts xiv. 23, 26. They are also commended to his wisdom, to counsel and direct them in all their ways. Such a commendation is proper and useful, both to elders and others. Elders have need of wisdom from above, to behave themselves aright among the churches of the living God. Believers in common also, in their several states and conditions, should not lean to their own understandings, but acknowledge God in all their ways, who has promised to direct their paths. They should commit themselves to him, to be guided with his counsel, and directed by his wisdom; because the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps. Likewise, the saints are commended to the power of God, to keep and preserve them. For it is by that alone they are kept; being weak and liable to daily backslidings. They therefore should commit themselves to him, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless, before the throne of his glory, with exceeding joy. This they should do, to keep them from the sins and corruptions of the times; and from the errors and heresies which are now broached. They should with Jabez pray, that God would keep them from evil, that it may not grieve them: not only from the evil of punishment, but from the evil of sin, which brings it; which, as it dishonours God, so it wounds their own souls. We should not imagine, that we are able to keep ourselves, from being carried away there with. The greatest believer, who has the largest measure of grace, if God should withdraw, leave him.
him to himself, and not grant him fresh supplies of his grace, would not be able, with all the grace he has received, to withstand the snares of the world, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of his own heart. We should always suspect our own hearts, and put no confidence in them. For who can understand his errors? Therefore we should, with David, pray, That God would cleanse us from secret faults, and keep us back from presumptuous sins.

Saints should commend themselves to God, to be kept from error and heresies; and so the saints are here commended to God, for this purpose. It is manifest that the apostle had a regard to this; for he had observed, in the preceding verses, that grievous wolves should enter among them; and that persons from among themselves should arise, speaking perverse things, and should draw away disciples after them; and therefore he commends them to God, to be kept from falling in therewith. He commends them to one, who is able to preserve them safe unto an inheritance: when false teachers, and those who followed their pernicious ways, should bring upon themselves swift destruction. Though the elect of God cannot totally and finally be seduced by men, who lie in wait to deceive; yet they may fall from their steadfastness in the doctrine of faith; and therefore such a commendation of them to God, is very proper; that they may not be like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. For that is both unbecoming and uncomfortable to them. Let not, therefore, the most established saint in the doctrine of faith, presume in his own strength, and think himself immoveable; but being conscious of his own weakness, let him commend himself to God, who is able to keep him from the evil of the world, and the errors of the times.
2. The apostle commendeth them to the word of divine grace. By which I understand, not the gospel, or the written word, but the Lord Jesus Christ; who is frequently in Scripture called, Ὁ υἱὸς, or the Word. John makes mention of Christ under this name or title, in all his writings; in his gospel, in his epistles, and in his Revelation. He makes use of it in his gospel, chap. 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Which manifestly declares his Deity, Eternity, and Co-existence with the Father; and that he is a Person distinct from him: and that we may not be at a loss which Person in the Trinity he intends, by the Word, he tells us, (in verse 14) that this Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Also, mention is made of Christ, under this name, by John, in his epistles. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life*. Christ was from eternity with the Father, but has been manifested in the flesh; and the apostle informs us, that it was not imaginary, but real flesh, which he assumed. This he proves against some heretics of that day, by three of the natural senses, hearing, seeing, and feeling. They heard him speak; they saw him walk, eat, drink, &c. and they handled him, and thereby knew that it was a real body which he assumed, and not a phantom. He calls him the Word of Life, because he is life itself, and the author and donor of it. In chap. v. 7. where he takes notice of three who bear record in heaven, he tells us, that they are the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and, that these three are one. So likewise in his Revelation, he speaks of him more than once, as the Word. In

* 1 John i. 1.
chap. i. 2. he tells us, that he bore record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ. And in chap. xix. 13. he represents Christ as a triumphant conqueror, and says, that his name is called, The Word of God.

Now the reason why John makes use of this name, seems to be, because it was well known to the Jews, being frequently used in their Targums; some of which were then wrote. It is also thought by some*, that ἀγος, being a term used by Plato, and his followers, as expressive of something divine; and Ebion and Cerenthus, with whom John had to do, understanding the platonic philosophy, he makes use of this term on purpose, it not being ungrateful to them, that he might the more easily gain upon them. It is reported of Amelius, a platonic philosopher, that when he read the beginning of John's gospel, he thus broke out, and said, "By Jove, this Barbarian, (meaning John) is of the same mind with our Plato, when he says, In the beginning was the "Word." But I rather think, the former is the true reason why John uses it. Nor is it peculiar to him; but used by other inspired writers of the New Testament. So Luke, (chap. i. 2.), is thought to intend Christ, the Word, when he speaks of the disciples as eye witnesses and ministers of the Word; who with much greater propriety of speech, may be said to be the eye witnesses of Christ, (according to 2 Pet. i. 16), than of the gospel, or the written word. And it seems very agreeable, that Luke, intending to write an history of Christ's life and actions; should, in his preface to Theophilus, make mention of him, under some name, title, or character; which he does not, if he is not intended by the Word. The apostle Paul is also thought to use

* Brugenfsis, and Arrowsmith. in Joh. i. 1. † Gomarus, in Luc. i. 2. ‡ Gomarus & Owen, in Heb. 4. 12.
it in this sense, in Heb. iv. 12. For the Word of God, is quick and powerful, 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 discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This, I think, is not so applicable to the written word, as to Christ. He is ζων δύστος τε Θεός, the living Word of God; or the Word of God which liveth, as it may be rendered. It is true, this Word was made flesh, and was put to death therein. He was dead, but, as himself says, is now alive, and lives for evermore. He is the living Word, or Word of Life. Also he may be truly said to be everywh, powerful, efficacious; for so he is in his death and sufferings, being mighty to save; and now he is in his intercession at the Father's right-hand. He will also, ere long, appear to be sharper than any two-edged sword, when he comes to judge the world at the last day. He will then pierce, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and will shew himself to be a discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Then he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness; and will let the world know, that he it is, who searcheth the reins and hearts; which, I think, cannot be said of, and applied unto, the written word. The following verse makes it still more plainly to appear, which is closely connected with this by the copulative κατά. Neither is there any creature which is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Where the apostle manifestly speaks of a person, and not of a thing; and of one who is omniscient, and to whom we must give an account at the day of judgment; for these words in the last clause may be rendered, τῷ οίκες λόγος, to whom we must give an account. But to whom must we give an account? Not to the written word,
but to a divine person, to God. Thus the apostle says *, So then every one of us shall give an account to God. We ministers are accountable for our preaching the word, and you for hearing it; but the account must be given, not to the written word, but to Christ, the living Word. Nay, in verse 14, this Word is said to be an high priest. Christ, the Word, assumed our nature, and in it offered himself a sacrifice for us, as our High Priest; and as such, is passed into the heavens, and ever lives to make intercession for us. The apostle uses this as an argument with believers, to hold fast their profession, and to come with boldness to the throne of grace, for what they want. And, as the apostle uses it in this sense here, so he does, I apprehend, in the words of my text. My reasons for it are these,

1. Because the saints never commend themselves, or others, either in life or in death, to any but a Divine Person. The word signifies the committing a person or thing, to the care, charge, and protection of another. Now, none but a Divine Person is capable of taking the care and charge of the saints, neither will the saints trust any other. They commit their souls to God, as unto a faithful Creator; and rest entirely satisfied herein, as the apostle Paul was, who could say, I know in whom I have believed; (whom I have trusted with my immortal all, and with my eternal salvation) and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day †. Now, certainly to whom he committed himself, he committed others. Having had experience of Christ's care, faithfulness, and ability, he could here, as undoubtedly he did, commend the saints unto him, with the utmost pleasure and satisfaction. And, as in life, so in death, they com-

* Rom. xiv. 12. † 2 Tim. i. 12.
mend themselves to none but a Divine Person; and
that in imitation of Christ, who in his last moments
said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

2. Because to put the written word upon a level
with the Divine Being, does not appear agreeable.
A commendation of the saints, equally to the writ-
en word, as to God himself, seems to be a lessening
of his glory, and ascribing too much to the writ-
ten word; but suits well with Christ, the essential
Word, who being in the form of God, thought it no
robbery to be equal with God. To commend the saints
equally to Christ, as to God the Father, is no di-
munition of the Father's glory; nor does it give
Christ more than his due, or than he is able to per-
form: but a commendation of them to the gospel,
seems to do so.

3. Because, never in the whole book of Scripture,
as far as I have observed, are the saints commended
to the gospel; but rather that to them. The writ-
ten word is committed to the care and keeping of
the saints; not the saints to the care and keeping of
that. They are in the hands, and are the care
and charge of Christ Jesus. We frequently read of
God committing the written word unto the saints;
more especially, to the ministers of it; and of their
committing it to others: (See 2 Cor. v. 19. 1 Tim.
i. 11—18. and vi. 20. 2 Tim. i. 14. and ii. 2.)
but never of the saints being committed to the writ-
ten word.

4. Because what is here ascribed unto it, suits
better with Christ, than with the gospel, viz. which
is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance,
&c. It may indeed be replied, That saints are here
commended to God, as the efficient, and to the gos-
pel, as the instrumental cause of their building up,
and having an inheritance: the ingrafted word be-
ing said to be able to save us, and the inspired writ-
ings
ings able to make us wise unto salvation. It must be acknowledged, that the gospel, in the Spirit's hands, is an instrument of building faints up. But then Christ is the great master-builder; he builds the temple, and he must bear the glory. The gospel is, indeed, the map which shews us where our inheritance lies, and points out to us the right way unto it: but it is Christ who gives it, and puts us into the possession of it. It is in, by, and through him, that we obtain the inheritance. Therefore, if we understand it of the gospel, it must be in a much lower sense, than if we understood it of Christ: for which reason, together with others before mentioned, I prefer the latter. Not but that the words may be profitably insisted on, agreeably to the analogy of faith, in the other sense; but then a Hendiadis must be supposed in the text, as Grotius and others think. According to which, the words, as to their sense, must be read thus: And now, brethren, I commend you to God, who, by the word of his grace, is able to build you up, &c. But I see no reason, or necessity, to suppose such a figure in the text, when there occurs a good sense of the words without it; and one far more noble than that which must be affixed to them with it, and every way as agreeable to the analogy of faith. The sense which I have given of this text, and of some others already mentioned, is not singular; but what has been observed, and approved by some valuable divines*. Taking this to be the sense of the words, it will be proper to enquire these two things. Why Christ is called the Word: and why the Word of God's grace.

1. Why he is called the Word. Some think † he is so called, because as the mental word, or the con-

* Gomarus, Arrowsmith, and Owen, in locis supracitatis.

ception
ception of the mind, which is called λογος, enειν θετος, is the birth of the mind, begotten of it, intellectually and immaterially, without passion or motion, and is the very image and representation of the mind; of the same nature with it, and yet something distinct from it. So Christ is the begotten of the Father, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; and is of the same nature with him, though a distinct person from him. But this may be thought too curious, and as falling short (as all things else in nature do) of expressing that adorable mystery of godliness. And, indeed, oftentimes, when we indulge our own curiosity, and give a loose to our thoughts in his way, we run into confusion, and every evil work. For though Christ is certainly and really God, as well as man; yet I am afraid that our abstracted ideas of him, as God, of his Generation and Sonship, distinct from him, as Mediator, often lead us into labinths, and draw off our minds from the principal things we have in view. God having set bounds around his inscrutable and incomprehensible Deity, as he ordered to be set about mount Sinai, when he descended on it; that we may not curiously gaze upon it, and perish. It seems to be his will, that our saving knowledge of him, and converse with him, should be all in and through Christ the glorious Mediator. With this we should be contented. It is enough for us, that this Divine Person, who is called λογος, the Word, who is God; for John expresses it in so many words. As for those who deny it, they are not worth regarding; but ought to be treated as the enemies of Christ's Person and Glory. Therefore I rather think that he is called the Word, from some action or actions, which he has done, or still continues to do. That the Jews, in their * Targums, understood by the word

* Vid. Rittangell Not, in Jetzirah, p. 81,96,97,99,100.
Memra, which they so frequently make use of, a Divine Person, seems plain and undeniable; and that this was the promised Messiah, is as manifest.

I will only name one place, in the room of many, which makes it appear, and that is, Hof. i. 7. which we thus read; But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God. The Targum thus: But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will redeem them by the Word of the Lord their God.—Now I apprehend, that Christ is called the Word,

1. Because he spake for his people in the council of peace; and covenanted with his Father on their account. He then presented himself, and in effect, said, "I will be surety for these persons; of my hand shalt thou require them. And though it is certain, that they will fall into the depths of sin and misery; and bring themselves into the most ruinous circumstances; and become altogether undeserving of thy regard: yet, if I bring them not unto thee, and set them before thee, in all that glory which I viewed them in, in the glass of thine eternal decrees, then let me bear the blame for ever." When, in this antient council, the method of man’s salvation was agreed upon; he addressed his Father, and signified his ready compliance with his will, after this manner: Sacrifice and offerings thou wouldest not; in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure. As if he said, It appears to be thy will, that man should not be saved by any sacrifice of his own, whatever. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God*. The whole covenant of grace, which is an everlasting one, ordered in all things, and sure, was made with him, as the Word. He

* Heb. x. 5, 6, 7.
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spoke for every blessing, and every promise of grace, in that covenant, for his people; and entered into articles with his Father, for the security of them. You have a text (Hagg. ii. 4, 5), which speaks of Christ, as the Word, with whom God covenant-ed; where the Lord, by the prophet Haggai exhorts Zerubbabel, and Jofedech the High Priest, and all the people of the land to be strong, and work, in rebuilding the temple; and for their encouragement says, For I am with you, faith the Lord of hosts; according to the Word, that I covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt; so my Spirit remaineth among you. Here are all the Three Persons mentioned. Here is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, the first Person, who promises to be with them; together with the Word, the second Person. The words, according to, are not in the Hebrew text; which Junius renders, Cum verbo, quo pepigerum vobiscum. That is, with the Word, in, or with whom I covenanted with you: and in his notes on the text, applies it to Christ, as it should be. So my Spirit, the third Person, stands and abides among you, to make application of it, and see all made good; which I, and my Word, have covenanted about and agreed upon.

2. He is called the Word, because he spake all things out of nothing, in the first creation. Moses and John entirely agree in their account of the creation; and it remaineth no longer a mystery, why Moses so often, in the history of the creation, takes notice that God said, Let it be so, and it was so. For it was God the Word that said so; as appears from what the evangelist says*, when he tells us, that the Word was in the beginning with God; that all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made.

* John i. 2, 3.
made that was made. All the three Persons had a hand in the creation of the universe; as may be observed from the three first verses of the first chapter of Genesis. It was God, the first Person, who created the rude unformed mass. It was the Spirit of God, the third Person, who moved upon the face of the waters. And it was God the Word, the second Person, who said, Let there be light, and there was light. All which three Persons, as being concerned in creation, are mentioned by the Psalmist in one verse: By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them, by the breath of his mouth*. Where are Jehovah the Father, the first Person; and Christ the Word, the Second; and the Breath, or Spirit of his mouth, the third. And because of Christ's particular concern herein, in speaking, and it was done; in commanding, and it stood fast: he is called the Word.

3. Because he is to us the interpreter of the Father's mind; like as our words, or speech, which is called λόγος προφητικός, verbum prolatum, or the word expressed, is the interpreter of our minds. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. Christ is the Word, who hath discovered the secrets of the Father's grace, the hidden purposes of his heart; and hath declared his mind and will to his people in all generations. It was he, the Word of the Lord God †, whose voice Adam heard in the garden. It was he the Word, who said unto Adam, Where art thou? And it was the same Word of the Lord, who continued his discourse with him, his wife, and the serpent; and made the first discovery of grace to fallen man. It was he, the Word, who

* Psalm xxxiii. 6, 9. † Vid. Targum of Onkelos, & of Jonathan, on Gen. iii. 8. & the Jerusalem, on ver. 9.
appeared to the patriarchs and prophets in after ages; and made still greater discoveries of God's mind and will: but never so fully and clearly as when he was made flesh, and dwelt among us. For then, God, who at sundry times and divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers, by the prophets, did in these last days speak unto us by his Son. He, the Word, has spoken all his mind, and has made the clearest discoveries of his grace that ever was.

4. He is the Word, who now speaks for us in the court of heaven. He there appears in the presence of God for us; acts the part of an advocate; demands the blessings of grace for us, as the fruit of his death; pleads our cause, and answers all charges and accusations. His blood speaks better things for us, than that of Abel. Now for such reasons as these I am inclined to think that Christ is called the Word. But,

2. Why is he called the word of God's grace? I answer.

1. Because in him is highly displayed and revealed, his Father's grace to poor sinners. God in pitching upon him to be a Saviour, and in sending him, his only begotten Son; and not sparing him, but giving him up into the hands of justice, commends his love to sinners, and shews forth the exceeding riches of his grace.

2. Because in him, it hath pleased the Father, that all fulness of grace should dwell. Saints behold him, as full of grace and truth; rejoice in him, and receive from his fulness grace for grace. I shall now consider,

Secondly, The act itself of commending them, which signifies to commit to the care, keeping, and protection of another; depending upon his ability and fidelity. Thus the apostle must be supposed to commit the saints to the care, keeping, and protection, of God the Father and of God the Son; being well assured of the ability and fidelity of them both.
And his commending them to both, not only shews the equal esteem and regard he had for them; but also the greatness of his concern for the brethren here. This act of his must be considered prayer wise, as expressing the desires of his soul, that God, and the Word of his grace, would take them under their care, and preserve them safe to glory. Or else as an advice, or direction, to whom they should make application, and whence they might expect comfort, support, and safety. And so it is much like the advice which Paul gave to Timothy, when he said; My son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. I proceed now to consider,

Thirdly, The motives which induced the apostle to commend the saints into the hands of those divine persons. This is expressed in the following part of the text. Which, or who, is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance, among all them that are sanctified. This may have reference, either to God or to the Word of his grace. I rather choose to consider the apostle as referring to the latter. I have already hinted what might induce the apostle to commend them unto God; namely, his grace, wisdom, and power: nor need we wonder, that he also commends them to Christ, seeing he is the Word of God’s grace. All fulness of grace is treasured up in him. Here are two things particularly mentioned, which seem to be the motives that induced the apostles to commend them to Christ, the Word of God’s grace.

1. Because he is able to build them up. Ministers are instruments in building up of saints. They ministerially lay the foundation, Christ. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit, which are bestowed upon them, are for the edifying Christ’s body, the church: and though they have not dominion over people’s faith; yet they are oftentimes blessed and made
made useful, to be helpers of their joy. Saints also may be useful one to another, to build up one another on their most holy faith; by praying together, by conversing with each other, and declaring what God has done for their souls. But Christ is the great master builder. He is the chief architect; and, except he, the Lord, build the house, they labour in vain that build it. The work is his. He is the builder; and he is the foundation on which saints are built, and the corner stone that knits them all together, though they have lived in the world at different times, and in different parts, and are of different denominations. It is he that raises, and finishes, the noble superstructure of grace in the soul. He only having begun the work, is able to finish it: and he will do it. We may be confident of it; for he is both the author, and the finisher of faith.

2. Another reason why the apostle commends the saints, not only to God, but also to the Word of his grace is; because he is able to give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified. And here are two things to be considered. The inheritance which he gives; and the persons among whom it lies.

1. The inheritance which Christ gives. This is the heavenly glory. That inheritance which Peter speaks of, and says, that it is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven. This is not procured by the works of the law; for the inheritance is not of the law; neither are they, who are of the law, heirs. It is true, we read of the reward of the inheritance: but then it must be understood of a reward of grace, not of debt. For Christ gives the inheritance freely. He took possession of
it in the name of his people, and is, as I may say, a feoffee in trust for them. He is made heir of all things, and the saints are co-heirs with him. He gives them a title to it, which is his own justifying righteousness; and the evidence and earnest of it, which is his own Spirit. It is he that makes them meet for it, by his own grace, and will ere long put them into the possession of it, saying; Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

2. The persons among whom it lies. These are, all them that are sanctified: which at once points out the persons to whom it belongs, and discovers the excellency of it. The persons to whom it belongs are, all those that are sanctified. That is, who are set apart by divine grace, and distinguished from others, by a sovereign act of love, for the enjoyment of this blessing. So the word is used, Jude ver. 1. where Jude inscribes his epistle, and wishes an increase of mercy, peace and love, to them that are sanctified by God, the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus, and called. That is, who are set apart and distinguished from others, by the electing love of the Father; preserved in the hands of Christ, the head of the everlasting covenant, notwithstanding their fall in Adam, and their numerous transgressions; and called by the grace of the Spirit, to be partakers of all that which is prepared and designed for them. Or else, by sanctified ones, are meant, such as are sanctified by the Spirit of God; have a principle of grace and holiness wrought in them; and are enabled by faith to deal with Christ, for sanctification, as well as righteousness. For much of a believer's holiness lies in faith's acting and living upon, dealing with, and receiving from Christ, grace for grace; and, therefore, in another text, this inheritance is said to be, among them which are sanctified.
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sanctified by faith, that is in me. Thus I have endeavoured to explain the text, and shall conclude with a few words, by way of reflection upon the whole.

1. Hence it appears, to whom souls should make application in their time of need; that is, to God, and to the Word of his grace. Here only may they expect relief; from hence their wants may be supplied. Here they may rest in safety, depending upon divine ability and fidelity. Souls, here, have the greatest encouragement they can wish for to come and make application under all their trials. For one of these divine Persons is the God of all grace; and the other has an inexhaustible fulness of all grace dwelling in him. The apostle knew what he did when he commended the brethren to these sublime Persons; and those souls may rest entirely satisfied, who have committed themselves into their hands; for, from thence, none can pluck them.

2. This evidently shews, that those ministers have the greatest concern for souls, who commend them to God, and to the Word of his grace; who direct them to Christ, and his fulness; and not to their own works or frames, but to the grace that is in him.

3. It is also manifest, that such commendations and directions as these, are likely to meet with most success. It is the most likely way to build up souls, by sending them to Christ and his grace; and not to pore upon their own frames and duties. When the minister has given them a long bead-roll of marks and signs, what is the consequence of it? Plucking down, and not building up. Says one, "I am none of Christ's, for I have not done so and so." "Nor am I in such and such frames of soul;" says another, "therefore the work of grace was never begun in me." So that here is tearing, rending, plucking down, and denying the very work of the Spirit.
instead of building up; and what else can be expected from it? If souls would be edified and built up, they must go to Christ, and his grace; and if ministers would be useful that way, they must direct them to that great fountain of supplies.

4. Let us adore boundless grace, that we have the God of all grace, and the Word of grace to apply to; and that we have any reason to believe that these divine Persons have took the care and charge of us; we having been enabled, by an act of faith, to commit ourselves to them; believing that they are able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

FINIS.