

Several Sermons Upon
The Most Important Subjects
Of Practical Religion.



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Several Sermons Upon The Most Important Subjects Of Practical Religion.

The Publisher To The Reader.

There are no sermons I know of any divine or pastor in this kingdom, that have been more frequently printed, or more universally read and esteemed, than the elegant and judicious discourses of Mr. Binning, which were published after his death, at different times, in four small volumes. As there was a great demand for these valuable writings, about twenty six years ago; so these printed copies of them were compared with his own manuscript copy now in my hand, carefully revised, and then printed, in a large 4to of 641 pages, by Robert Fleming, Printer at Edinburgh, in the year 1735, to which was prefixed a short account of his Life, chiefly taken from the large memoirs of his Life, that the Reverend Mr. Robert M'Ward, some time minister of the gospel at Glasgow, wrote, in a long letter to the Reverend Mr. James Coleman, Minister of the gospel at Sluys in Flanders, who translated Mr. Binning's Sermons into High Dutch, and printed them for the benefit of the Christian congregations in Holland and Flanders. Some of the most memorable particulars of this great man's life have been also published, anno 1753, by the reverend, learned, and industrious Mr. John Wesley, late Fellow of Lincoln college, Oxford, in his Christian Library, which contains about fifty volumes in 8vo of Extracts from, and Abridgments of, the choicest pieces of practical Divinity, we have printed in our language. It is prefixed to Mr. Binning's Sermons upon the first and part of the second chapters of the first Epistle of John, in the 29th volume of that useful work.¹

Mr. Binning's elegant and judicious Treatise of Christian Love was first printed from a manuscript in my hand, at Edinburgh, 1743, in an octavo pamphlet of forty-seven pages, in short print, by Robert Fleming, to which he hath prefixed a short preface. And the publisher tells us, "That he had revised about twenty four sermons, upon very edifying and profitable subjects, to print in a separate volume, from which they [his readers] should receive as great improvement and satisfaction, as from any of his printed treatises, which every person may easily discover from the style and language to be Mr. Binning's genuine compositions, as his manner of writing can scarcely be imitated by any other

person.” These sermons were carefully transcribed some little time ago, and revised by the assistance of a friend, and are now printed in this small volume. And not to detain the reader further from the serious and candid perusal of this book, I shall only add, that I have faithfully transcribed these sermons from the manuscript copy without the smallest alteration of his sentiments. I have endeavoured to rectify a few grammatical errors of the transcribers and the old form of spelling, and altered a few words not now used in our modern sermons, for words of the same meaning. As I have added several sermons of this author upon the kingdom of God, which I transcribed since the proposals of this book were printed, so I could not insert the sermons upon Acts xxvi. 18; Acts xiv. 11, 12, without almost doubling the price, which I feared would not be agreeable to some of the encouragers of this work. I intend to put the other sermons I have transcribed, or may yet copy, into the hands of some friends to revise before they be printed; as also Mr. M’Ward’s Life of this worthy gentleman, taken from his own papers....

It is my sincere wish, that all the readers of this book may be builded up in spiritual wisdom and goodness unto eternal life.

Brousterland, September 12th, 1760

Sermon I.

1 John iii. 23.—“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another.”

It is a common doctrine often declared unto you, that the most part of those who hear the gospel do run, in their pretended course to heaven, either upon a rock of dashing discouragement, or the sands of sinking presumption. These are in all men’s mouths; and no question they are very dangerous, so hazardous, as many fools make shipwreck either of the faith, or a good conscience,—of the faith, by running upon and dashing upon the rock,—of a good conscience, by sitting down upon the quicksand. But I fear that which is commonly confessed by all is cordially believed by few, and so, little regarded in our course and conversation. All Christians pretend to be making a voyage heaven-ward, and that is only home-ward. Now the gospel is given us to direct our course, and teach us how to steer between these two hazards, both safely and surely. This is the shore that shall guide us, and conduct to our intended haven, that is heaven, if we set our compass by it, and steer our course accordingly. Yet strange it is to behold the infinite wanderings and errors of men, on the one hand or the other:—some presuming upon the news of mercy, and the sound of God’s grace, to walk after the imagination of their own hearts, and to live and continue in sin, for which Christ died, that he might redeem us from it, fancying a possibility of living in sin, and escaping wrath, and so abusing the tender of grace to promote licentiousness;—others, again, apprehending the wrath of God, and their just deservings, abusing the notion of God’s justice, and the perfection of his holiness, to the prejudice of the glory of his grace and mercy, and their own salvation. This is certainly the cunning sleight of Satan, with the deceitfulness and ignorance of our own hearts, that leads men, and sometimes one and the same man, at diverse times, to contrary misapprehensions of divine truths. The wind of temptation gets fires to one corner of the house and then to another, and sometimes over-persuades the notion of mercy, and another time overstretches the apprehension of his justice; and yet in effect

there is no true persuasion of any of them, but a cloud or shadow is apprehended instead of them.

Now I say, there is one cure for both these,—the right apprehension of the gospel in its entire and whole sum, the right uptaking of the light which shines in a dark place, and is given to lead us to our place of rest—to have a complete model, and a short summary of the gospel, always in our heart and eye. For truly it is the apprehending of parcels of divine truth, which leads men into such opposite mistakes and courses. To remedy this, we have some brief comprehensive models of the gospel set down by the Holy Ghost, and none in better terms than this here: “This is his commandment, that ye believe,” &c. You have it in two words, faith and love. This is the form of sound words which we should hold fast, 2 Tim. i. 13. This is the mould of doctrine delivered by Christ and his Apostles. It is the separation of these two in some men's fancy, that leads too many in such paths of destruction. Truly they can as little be divided as the sun's light and heat, but the motions and shadows of them may, and it is the following the shadows of some of them which shipwrecks souls. Now not only the common multitude of the hearers of the gospel are in hazard of this, but even God's own children, who have believed in him.

The taking up of these things apart, creates the heart much trouble and perplexity, and occasioneth much sin and stumbling. I do think it is the ignorance and advertency of this conjunction, that makes our case both more sad and sinful than otherwise it would be. And these two indeed have a mutual influence upon one another, loosing reins to sin more freely, for it unquestionably disturbs the soul's peace, and procures it much bitterness. And again, the quitting hold of the promise of grace in Christ Jesus, and the indulging our own sad and sullen apprehensions, cannot but in the issue disable the soul from the duties of love, and expose it unto the violence of every temptation. As these two do mutually strengthen one another, the faith of Jesus Christ, and the lively apprehension of his grace and goodness, so they are the most noble and effectual persuasives to live unto him, and to walk in love. Besides, faith is the mean and way which God hath appointed to convoy his influence unto the soul; and then again, love carrying itself actively in duties to God and men, bestirring itself for God and those who are beloved of God, it brings in a supply to faith, and returns by a straight compass to the spring from whence it first issued, and increases it still more. Believing on the name of the Son sends forth the stream of holy affection to him, and all begotten of the Father, and this returns again by the circuit of obedience to his commands and submission to his easy yoke, to unbosom itself in the fountain from whence it first issued; and whereas faith was at first one simple soul adherence to a Saviour, and a hearty embracing of him, this accession of the fruits of it exalts it unto that height of assurance, and gives that evidence which it wanted; and faith being thus strengthened, and rooted, and built up to the top of assurance of God's grace, love, and salvation, it becomes more able to bear the yoke of his commands, which are not grievous. The spring of believing, thus swelled by the concurrence of so many streams, it breaks forth the more, and sends out more love and delight in God, and more charity, compassion, and meekness towards men. And this is the circle and round Christianity runs, until that day come that the head-spring of faith shall be obscured and shrivelled up in the great sea of the love of God, which shall overflow all the saints' graces in due time, when we shall see God face to face.

This is a true Christian, which this apostle so beloved of God describes. Here is one under a commandment, and not above it, as some fondly conceive. He is a keeper of his commands, and a doer of these things which are pleasant in God's sight. This is no legal notion, if it be right taken.

It is not the bondage of the creature to be under the command of God, truly it is the beauty and liberty of a reasonable soul. Some speak of all subjection unto a law as slavery, but is it not an infinitely greater slavery to be at liberty to sin, and serve our own lusts? O wretched and base liberty! the Son indeed makes us truly free, and that from sin; and he is truly a Redeemer who redeems us from all iniquity, John viii. 32; Psal. cxxx. ult.; Tit. ii. 14.

But this commandment here spoken of, would not indeed be gospel, unless there was a prior command, a brighter precept, given by the Father to the Son. I find two commands given by the Father, and received by the Son, which two you may conjoin and make one of, as here faith and love are made one commandment. The first is, John x. 18, "I lay down my life of myself, no man taketh it from me. This commandment have I received from my Father, and no other." John xii. 49, 50, "The Father gave me a commandment, what I should say and speak, and I know that his commandment is life everlasting." This is more expressly and clearly set down, John vi. 39, 40, "This is the Father's will that sent me, that of all that he gave me I should lose none, but raise them up at the last day. This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have everlasting life." Here, then, beloved in the Lord, is the foundation of our hope, and that which makes all commandments given by God to us to come under a gospel notion, that which makes Christ's yoke easy, and his burden light, and his commands not grievous. The great commandment was imposed upon our Saviour. The great weight of that wrath due to our sins was put upon his shoulders. This was the Father's will, that he should lay down his life for his sheep; this command he received willingly, and obeyed faithfully and fully. And by his obedience to this, that great obligation to satisfy God's justice, and pay a ransom for our souls is taken off us; inasmuch as he died, justice cannot come and demand it at our hand. Now, therefore, there is another commandment given to Christ, which directly concerns us, and it is this in substance: "I will and command that thou who hast come in the place of sinners, and resolvest to die for them, that thou give eternal life to whom thou wilt, even to as many as believe in thy name; I give to thee the absolute disposal of life and death; I command thee to preach life everlasting to all pious souls, that shall flee unto thee upon the apprehension of the danger of death, and that thou bestow that life upon them, and raise them up at the last day to be partakers of it." This is the commission the Father gave to the Son, a sweet commission for poor sinners, and the charter of our salvation. And for this errand he was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and sent into the world; nay, the commission extends further than grace, even to eternal glory also. Christ has received commandment of the Father, to give repentance and remission of sin, both to give faith, and love, and all other graces, else it were defective. Thus Christ comes instructed to the world. He lays open his commission in preaching the gospel. He obeys the first commandment in his own person, by offering up himself upon the cross a sacrifice for sins, and he is about the fulfilling the next commandment, that is, the giving life to them that believe: and that he may accomplish it, having ascended himself unto heaven to intercede for us, he also sent his ambassadors into the world, to whom he hath committed the word of reconciliation, and he gives them commission to publish and proclaim this commandment in his own name. This is his command, that ye "believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And this we do proclaim in his name, since he has gotten a commandment to give life everlasting to believers. This, then, is his charge to you, to come and receive it from him. Come and embrace him, and ye shall have life and all in him. This is the hardest and heaviest burden he imposes upon you, the weight of your life and salvation he hath taken upon himself. But O! now come and lay hold on him, who is thus offered unto you. Know that you are lost and undone in yourselves, consider the impossibilities you lie under to escape his wrath. Behold the anger of God hanging over your head, ready to be revealed in flaming fire, and a tempestuous cloud of eternal misery. Will ye consider that ye are born heirs of wrath? Your natural inheritance is in the lake of fire; and whatsoever your endowments by nature, or your privileges by birth be, nothing shall exeeem you from this. Shall not then this Saviour be welcome to you? For truly faith is but a cordial salutation and embracement of our blessed Redeemer. The soul brings him into the house, and makes him welcome, and he is standing ready to come in to your heart, and to bring in salvation with him.

Now whatever soul hath obeyed this commandment by belief of the truth, and receiving of Christ into the heart, there is but one commandment behind, and it is not grievous, viz., love me, and love one another; love me, and live unto me. This is an easy yoke; and there is good reason for it, though it had never been required to love him, and live to him, who loved not his life unto the death for us. There is mention made only of brotherly

love here, but certainly the other love to God flowing from the sense of his love, is the right wing of the soul, and brotherly love the left; and by these the pious soul mounts up to heaven with the wings of an eagle. The love of our brother is but the fruit and consequent of this love, but it is set down as a probation, and clear evidence of the love of God in our souls.

Love is commanded as the very sum and substance of the whole law, as the fountain of all other duties. Things are compacted in their causes, and lie hid within the virtue of them. Truly this is the way to persuade and constrain you to all the duties of godliness and righteousness, of piety towards God, and charity towards men,—if once we could fasten this chain of affection upon your hearts, and engage your souls by love to God and man. We cannot but beat the air, while we seek to persuade you to the serious practice of religious duties, of prayer in secret and in your families, of reading and meditation upon the word, of sanctifying the Sabbath, of dealing justly and moderately with all men, of sobriety and temperance in your conversation, of denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, of walking humbly with God and towards men, of restraining and subduing your inordinate lusts and passions; I say, it is almost in vain to press these things upon you, or expect them from you, till once the Spirit of power and love enter into your hearts; and indeed the spirit of love is a powerful spirit, the love of God possessing the heart within, cannot but conform all within and without to his love and good pleasure. Love only can do these things which are pleasant in his sight, for it doth them pleasantly, heartily, and cheerfully; and God loves a cheerful giver, a cheerful worshipper. Brotherly love is rather expressed, because little or not at all studied by the most part. Other duties to God, if men come not up in practice to them, yet they approve them in their soul and mind. But there is scarce a notion of the obligation of charity and love towards our brethren, yea, not so much as in the minds of Christians, let be in their practice. It is the special command which Christ left to his disciples when he was going away, John xiii. 35. But, alas! we have forgotten it, it is so long since.

Sermon II.

1 John iii. 23.—“This is his commandment, that,” &c.

We commonly make many rules in religion, and turn it into a laborious art, full of intricate questions, precepts, and contentions. As there hath been a great deal of vanity in the conception of speculative divinity, by a multitude of vain and unedifying questions which have no profit in them, or are beneficial to them that are occupied therein, but only have stirred up strife and envy, and raised the flame of contention in the Christian world; so I fear that practical divinity is no less vitiated and spoiled in this age amongst true Christians (by many perplexed cases relating to every condition), than the other among the schoolmen. Hereby it seems to me, that Christ and his apostles did not suppose it to be so perplexed a business as we now do make it; neither did the hearers weary themselves or others with so many various objections against the practice of the fundamental commandment of the gospel, believing in Jesus Christ. The plain nature of the gospel being holden forth and received, I am persuaded, was and is able (like the sun arising in brightness) to dispel and scatter all these mists and clouds which do arise both in the one and other, from ignorance at first, and which are elevated to a greater height by the custom of the times. The matter, my brethren, is not so dark as you make it. Here it is plainly and simply expressed: “This is his commandment, that ye believe in the name of

his Son;” and then, “love one another.” Ye all know that we had commandments given us by God, which were by nature impressed on the heart of man; but by his fall into sin, the tables of the law (which I may say were in Adam's mind and heart, understanding and affection), those two tables were broken in the fall, and since there could be no obedience, because of ignorance and perversion, the tables breaking in pieces, their ruptures have produced these two opposite principles. The fall of man hath broken his mind, and so darkened his understanding, and broken his will, and put it in a wrong set. This appointed it, set it in a posture of enmity against God. However, we are by this fall utterly disabled to stand up before God in acceptable obedience. There is no man breathing, how blameless soever he be before the world, but must fall down as guilty before God in many things, yea, in all things. But the law being thus obliterated out of men's consciences, as he lost ability to obey, so he lost almost all conscience of sin and disobedience. He not knowing his charge and obligation, could not accuse himself for falling in rebellion. Therefore it pleased the Lord to cause the law to be written in tables of stone in mount Sinai. He transcribes the commandments over again, that all the world may see their obligation, and how infinitely short they have come in their subjection, and how just their condemnation may be. For this purpose, the Lord causes proclaim the old bond in the ears of men with great majesty and authority, as it became the Lawgiver, that all may become guilty, and stop their mouth before God, Rom. iii. 19. He would once have all men knowing that they are under infinite breaches of his commandments, that they may see themselves also subject to his judgment. Now, what do you think of a soul that stands at the foot of this mountain, and hears a dreadful accusation read against it, to all which the conscience within must subscribe unto, and both together pronounce the person guilty and liable to eternal punishment? I say, what can such a soul do, who has with trembling heard his voice? Satisfaction there cannot be given for an infinite offence against an infinite nature. The curse and sentence which was the sanction and confirmation of this commandment is just, and there appears no way how, without violation of God's justice, it can be repealed. Obedience to these commandments is now both impossible and unprofitable;—impossible, I say, because of the weakness and wickedness of the flesh, that has no ability nor willingness but to offend and disobey; and unprofitable, because it cannot at all relax the former sentence of condemnation. Now obedience, being a present duty, cannot pay old debts, or satisfy for our former rebellions, and so it must leave a man to seen condemnation. I fear this is a puzzle that all consciences must come unto here, or elsewhere. Here is a strait indeed.

But yet there is an enlargement, there is a way found out of bringing the soul out of the miry clay, and deep pit of misery; and it is this, God hath found out a ransom for himself, without our procurement, or consent, or knowledge. He hath provided a satisfaction to his justice in his Son Jesus Christ. Having laid upon him our iniquities, he exacts of him our deserved punishment, and makes him a curse who knew no sin. Now this being done, the Lord sends forth to all poor sinners who are trembling at mount Sinai this proclamation,—this is my last and most peremptory command, that ye believe in the name of my Son Jesus Christ. This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased, hear ye him. Have ye heard me the lawgiver condemning you? Now go and hear him, the Mediator and Saviour, absolving you, for I have committed all judgment unto him. Though I pronounce the sentence in this world against you, yet I have committed all the execution of it to him, and if you come to him, you may prevent it. You have broken all my former commandments, and I have pronounced a sentence against you for that. But now I give a new commandment instead of all the former, which if you obey, then the sentence of death is relaxed. You who cannot obey the law and give satisfaction in your own persons, I charge you to flee unto my Son Christ, who hath given me full satisfaction both to the curse, by suffering, and to the command, by obedience, and lay hold on his righteousness as your own, and in him ye are justified, and delivered from all these sentences and hard writings against you. I give a new commandment as the cure and remedy of all broken commandments. Believe on this name, in which is salvation. Take his obedience and suffering for your cure, and present me with that, I shall be as well satisfied as with your own personal satisfaction.

This now is very plain business. All commands are broken. There is yet one published in the gospel to help all, and it is in substance to embrace and welcome Jesus Christ for all, to seek our life and salvation in him, to take him as a priest to offer sacrifice for us, and expiate our sins, and to come to him as a prophet to seek wisdom and illumination, and all grace from him; to choose him as our King, henceforth to submit to his easy yoke of government. Now I say there will be no more debates about this. Will ye yet dispute whether ye may believe or not? Will ye inquire after this whether you have a warrant or not? Truly such a question would occasion much jealousy and provocation among men. If a man had signified as much willingness by command, by invitation, by request, by frequent repetition of these, yet to call in question or dispute whether or not I may go to such a person, will he make me welcome, were it not the greatest affront I could put upon him? Would it not alienate his affection more than any thing, to be jealous of his real kindness to me.

I would desire to hold out unto you the sin, the danger, and the vanity of such a way. I say the sin is great, it is no less than the highest and most heinous disobedience to the gospel, which of all others is of the deepest dye. You have disobeyed the law, and broken all the ten commandments. And will ye therefore disobey the gospel, too, and break this fundamental commandment? Is it not enough that ye have broken the rest, and will ye break this also, which was given for the cure of all?

Consider, I say, this is his commandment. Now commands should be obeyed, and not disputed, coming from an infallible and uncontrollable authority. Would ye not silence all the rebellions of your hearts against the commands of praying, hearing, reading, dealing justly, and walking soberly, with this one word, it is his command, it is his sovereign will? And why do ye not see the stamp of that same authority upon this? Now if you consider it aright, it hath more authority upon it than upon others, because it is his last command, and so would be taken as most pungent and weighty. When your hearts rise upto question and dispute this matter, I pray you cut all these knotty objections with the sword of his commandment. You use to go about to loose them by particular answers and untie them at leisure with art and skill, but truly it would be a readier and wiser course to cut them in pieces at one stroke, by this piercing and pungent precept. If your reasons and scruples be weighty, and you cannot get answers to overbalance them, I pray you put this weighty seal of divine authority into the balance, and sure I am it will weigh down all. Consider then the danger of it. It is the last and most peremptory command, after which you may expect no other, but the execution of justice. How sad and severe is the certification, "He that believeth not is condemned already," and "the wrath of God abideth on him." There needs no new sentence to be pronounced against you. Why? Because, if you believe not, that prior sentence of the law is yet standing above your heads to condemn you, that wrath abides on you. This is the only way to remove it, to come to him, who hath taken it on himself, after the breach of all commands. Ye have this retreat, this refuge to flee unto, a new command to come unto the Son, and have life; but after this disobedience of the Son, you have none. There is nothing after unbelief, but ye are turned over, or rather left over, in the hand of the law and divine justice. Therefore it is the most dangerous and damnable thing to disobey this. It is to refuse the very remedy of sin. Consider also what vanity and uselessness is in these debates. What an unreasonable and senseless thing is it to dispute against our own soul, and against our own happiness! All is wrapt up here, and we do no less than the highest act of self-murder that can be. He that hateth me, wrongs his own soul. What an unreasonable thing then is it, because ye are miserable, to refuse mercy; because ye are unclean, therefore to maintain that ye are not to come to the blessed fountain of cleansing; because ye have broken the rest of the commands, therefore ye may not obey this? Is there any sense or reason in such things; because I am a sinner, therefore I will not come to a Saviour? Alas! to what purpose was the Son sent and given, and for what end came he? Was it not to seek and to save such as are lost and undone, and to deliver them from misery? What do you gain by such questions? For at length you must turn and enter in at the door of a naked command and promise, when you have wearied yourselves to find that in your hearts which is not in them, to seek waters in the wilderness, and springs in the desert,

qualifications and graces in your own hearts to warrant your boldness in coming to the promise. I say, when you have sought and all in vain, you must at length come to this fountain in which is all grace and happiness. If you had what you seek, yet if ye would indeed believe in Christ, you must deny them and look upon yourselves as ungodly, to be justified by faith. Why then do you grasp after that which can do you no good, (though you had it), I mean, in point of your acceptance? Consider it, my beloved, that the honour of God and your own happiness lies most in this, nay not only that, but your holiness too, which you pretend to seek after, lies in it. Till you come to Christ, it is in vain to seek it elsewhere.

Sermon III.

1 John iii. 23.—“And this is his commandment,” &c.

There are different tempers of mind among men, some more smooth and pliable, others more refractory and froward. Some may be persuaded by love, who cannot be constrained by fear. With some a request will more prevail than a command. Others again are of a harsher disposition. Love and condescension doth rather embolden them, and therefore they must be restrained with the bridle of authority. It would seem that the Lord hath some regard to this in the administration of the gospel. He accommodates himself to the diverse dispositions of men, and (if we may say with respect to him which yet can be no disrespect, seeing he hath humbled himself lower) he doth become all things to all men, that he may gain some. You see the gospel sometimes running in the channel of love and kindness, sometimes in the channel of authority and majesty. God sometimes stoopeth down to invite, and affectionately to beseech sinners to come unto his Son for life. He hath prepared a marriage and banquet for us in Christ. He hath made all things ready for the receiving, for the eating, and he sends forth his servants to entreat and invite all such, who have no bread and clothing, who are poor and lame, to this wedding. He gives an hearty invitation to all that stand at an infinite distance from God, and so are feeding upon empty vanities without him, to come and enjoy the riches of his grace, which runs as a river in Christ between these two golden banks, the pardon of sin, and the purification of our soul from its pollution. You have a hearty invitation, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters.” But he comes yet lower to request and obtest poor sinners, as if he could have advantage by it; he will not stand² to be a supplicant at any man's door, to beseech him to be reconciled to God, 2 Cor. v. 14, 19, 20. As if we could do him a favour and benefit, he requests us most earnestly. Truly it is strange that this doth not melt the heart, and make it fall down into the belief and obedience of the truth. Affection is the most insinuating and prevailing thing with an ingenuous spirit, most of all when it is accompanied with majesty in the person that hath it, and humility in the carriage and disposition. For a great personage to descend out of love, to affectionate and humble requests and solicitations, this cannot but have a mighty influence on any spirit that is not wild and savage. But because the heart of man is desperately wicked, and hath lost that true ingenuity and nobleness of spirit, and is now become stubborn and froward, as a wild ass, or as a swift dromedary traversing her ways, therefore the Lord takes another way of dealing with men suitable to their froward natures; he gives out his royal statute backed with majesty and authority; “This is his commandment,” &c.—that when fair means could not prevail, other means more terrible might reduce lost rebellious men. He hedges in our way with threatenings and promises annexed to the commandment, “He that believeth has everlasting life, but he that

believeth not is condemned already, and shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” He declares all men traitors if they come not in to his Son, to be reconciled to God, before the decree of wrath pass forth.

Truly it is a wonder that there should be any need either of an invitation, or a request, or a command, or a threatening; that we should need to be invited, or requested, or commanded, or threatened to our own happiness. Might not a bare and simple offer, or proposal of Jesus Christ, his nature, and offices, of the redemption and salvation purchased by him, suffice? What needed more, but to declare unto us that we are lost and utterly undone by nature, and that there is a refuge and remedy provided in Christ? Surely in any other thing of little importance, we needed no entreaty. Were it not a good enough invitation to a man that is like to starve for hunger, to cast meat freely before him; or to a man that is in hazard of drowning, to cast a cord to him? We would seek no other persuasion to go and dig for a treasure of gold, than to show us where it is hid. But strange is the rebellious and perverse disposition of man's heart. What an enmity is in it to the ways of God! What strange inclination to self-murder, ever since man destroyed himself! We cannot express it unto you; but you may perceive it well enough, both by the Lord's frequent obtesting, and protesting to us in his word, and the experience of the great barrenness of all such means. Whence is it, I pray you, that there should need so many means to persuade you to that which is your own advantage, and to call you to shun the ways of destruction? And whence is it that notwithstanding of all those invitations, entreaties, commandments, promises and threatenings often sounding in your ears, yet the most part are not reduced to obedience, nor reclaimed from the ways of death, and do not take hold of the path of life. Truly it may plainly point out to you the desperate wickedness of the heart, the stubbornness and rebelliousness of our disposition, and if once we could persuade you of this we had gained a great point which few do seriously consider, and so do not abhor themselves.

The commandments mentioned in the text are these two, to believe in Christ, and to love our brother. It is no wonder they are recommended with so much seriousness and earnestness; for they are both the most comprehensive, and the most pleasing commandments. They are most comprehensive; for it appears that all the commands spoken of in the preceding verse, are summed up in this one precept, “And this is his commandment,” &c. And that they are most pleasant in God's sight is evident, for the true Christian being described from this, that he does these things that are pleasing in God's sight,—that he is one that studies to conform himself to his good pleasure, this is subjoined, as the two most pleasing exercises of Christianity, “This is his commandment,” that is, his pleasing commandment, that ye should believe in Christ, and love one another.

This command of believing in Jesus is comprehensive, because it takes in all precepts, and that under a threefold consideration. It takes them all in as broken and transgressed by men, as fulfilled by Christ, and also takes them all in as a rule of righteousness, according to which the believer ought henceforth to walk.

The command of believing in Christ doth first of all import this—that a sinner should examine himself according to the law of God,—that he should lay his whole life and course his heart and ways, down before the perfect and holy commandments,—that he may stop his own mouth with shame and silence, and find himself guilty before God. Many use to speak of humiliation preparatory to believing, and the work of the law preparatory to the gospel. But truly I conceive it would be more fitly expressed, if it were holden out thus, that it is one of the essential ingredients in the bosom of believing, and one of the first articles of the gospel law, to charge all sinners to acknowledge their sin and misery, to discern their own abounding iniquity, and danger of perishing by it, how guilty they are before God, and how subject to his judgment, that so finding themselves undone, they may have recourse to a Saviour.

Truly the Spirit's work is to convince of sin, and then of righteousness, and when we are commanded to believe, the first part of our believing is crediting and subscribing to the law, to the justice and righteousness of God against us, and then the believing and acknowledging the gospel is the end and purpose to that. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." This takes in completely the two books of saving faith towards God as a Lawgiver and Judge, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour and Redeemer; and it doth but beget misapprehensions in many, when the one is looked upon as a condition without which we shall not be welcome to the other. Truly, I think, both are proposed as essentials of saving faith; none of them in such a way as to procure right and warrant to the other, but only in such an order as is suitable to any reasonable nature to be wrought upon, and that is all. It is only required of you, upon that account, because fleeing unto a Saviour for refuge is a rational and deliberate action, which necessarily includes the sense of misery without him. But the sense of sin and misery is not urged as one thing which ye should go about to prepare, and fit yourselves for more welcome at Christ's hand as commonly it is taken. Here it is easy to understand how the command of believing belongs unto all who hear it, even to the vilest and grossest sinners, who are yet stout, hard hearted, and far from righteousness, (Isa. xlv. 12.) those who are spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfies not, and those whose hearts are uncircumcised, and their lives profane. And yet the commandment of coming to the Son and believing on him for life, is extended unto them all. All are invited, requested, commanded, and threatened to this duty. There is no bar of exclusion set down in the gospel to hold out one, and let in another; as many suppose these promises, that sound condition wise, to be limitations and restrictions of the right and warrant to persons to believing. Indeed it is true all are not exhorted at the first hand to assurance of God's love, and an interest in Christ. There is no question that none have right to this seal, but them who have believed and set to their own seal to the character or truth of the word. But all are charged to believe in Christ that is, out of a sense of their own lost estate, to embrace a Saviour for righteousness and strength. Neither is there any fear that men can come too soon to Christ. We need not set down exclusions or extractions, for if they be not sensible of sin and misery, they will certainly not come to him at all. And therefore the command that enjoins them to believe on the Son, charges them also to believe that they are lost without him. And if the most presumptuous sinners would once give obedience to this commandment, really there would be no fear of presumption in coming too soon unto Jesus. A sense of sin is not set as a porter, to keep out any who are willing to come in, but rather to open the door, and constrain them that were unwilling to enter in, so that if the least measure of that can do this, we are not to stand till we have more, but to come to the Prince exalted to get remission of sins, and more true gospel sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation from dead works. You should not therefore understand any promises in the scriptures so, as if there were any conditions set down to seclude any from coming, who are willing to come. For they do but declare the nature and manner of what they are invited to, that no man may mistake believing, and take his own empty presumptions or fancies, which embolden him to sin more, for that true faith which is full of good fruits.

Now, in the text, the pious soul, having once subscribed to the guilt and curse of all the commandments by believing the law, he looks also upon the Son, Jesus Christ, and finds the law fulfilled, the curse removed, all satisfied in him. He finds all the commandments obeyed in his person, all the wrath due for the breach of them pacified and quenched by his sufferings. And he gives a cheerful and cordial approbation of all this. He receives Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, which Christ made up by obedience and suffering to supply our disobedience. We should stay or rest upon this, as that which pacifies the Father's wrath to the full. This is what gives the answer of a good conscience, and pacifies every penitent soul, and secures his title to heaven. Now this presents God with a full atonement and obedience to all the law, which he accepts from a believer as if it were his own. This is the large comprehension of believing, it takes in its arms, as it were, in one bundle,³ all the precepts and curses, and devolves them over on Christ, puts them in an able hand, and then takes them all, as satisfied and fulfilled by him, and holds them up in one bundle to the Father. And hence it proceeds, in the third place, that

believing on the Son takes in all again to be the rule of walking and the mark to aim at. Finding such a perfect exoneration of by-gones⁴ in Christ and standing in such favour with God, the soul is sweetly constrained to love and delight in the divine laws. And truly this is the natural result of faith. I wish you may rightly observe this conjunction, that this is inseparably knit with it, love to God and men, delight to do his will, to love him, and live unto him. Do not deceive yourselves with vain words. If you find not the smartness of the gospel, and the doctrine of grace laying this restraint upon the heart, ye are yet in your sins. This is the reasoning of a believing soul. Shall I, who am dead unto sin, live any longer therein? Shall I not delight in those commandments, when Christ hath delivered me from the curse of the law? Though such a one fall, and come short, yet the pressure of the heart is that way. But then attend unto the order, ye must first believe on the Son, and then love him, and live unto him. Ye must first flee unto his righteousness, and then the righteousness of the law shall be wrought in you. Therefore do not weary yourselves to no purpose. Do not wrong your own souls by seeking to prevent this order, which was established for your joy and salvation. Know that you must first meet with satisfaction in all the commands of Christ, before obedience to any of them be accepted, and having met with that, know that the sincere endeavour of thy soul, and the affectionate bent⁵ of thy heart to thy duty, is accepted. And if ye find yourselves thereafter surcharged with guilt and unanswerable walking, yet ye know the way is to begin at this again, to believe in the Son. This is the round you must walk, as long as ye are in the body. When you are defiled, run into the fountain, and when you are washed, study to keep your garments clean, but if defiled again, get your hearts washed from wickedness. "These things," says John, "I write to you that ye sin not," who believe but if any sin, who desire not to transgress, you have a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

Now love is a very comprehensive command. It is the fulfilling of the whole law, Rom xiii. 10, Matth. xxii. 37, 38. It is indeed the true principle and pure fountain of our obedience unto God and men. All fruits of the Spirit are moral virtues that grow out of the believer. Whether pleasant unto God, or refreshing unto men, they are all virtually in this root of love, all the streams are compacted in this fountain. Therefore he names one for all, viz. brotherly love, which is the bond of perfection, Col. iii. 14. It is a bundle of many divine graces, a company or society of many Christian virtues combined together. They are named bowels of mercies, long suffering, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, forbearance, and forgiveness, all which are tied to the believer's girdle by charity, so that where love is, every good comes. After it a troop of so many sweet endowments and ornaments also come, and where this is wanting, (as truly it is the epidemical disease of the time), there are many sins abounding, for when iniquity abounds "the love of many shall wax cold," Matt. xxiv. 12. Oh! that is our temper or rather our distempered nature,—love cold, and passion hot! When charity goes away, these wild and savage beasts of darkness come forth, viz. bitter envying and strife, rigid censuring and judging, unmercifulness and implacableness of spirit upon others' failings and offences. Self love, that keeps the throne, and all the rest are her attendants. For where self love and pride is, there is contention, strife, envy, and every evil work, and all manner of confusion. Thus they lead one another as in a chain of darkness, Prov. xiii. 10, James iii. 16. Think not that love is a complimentary word, and an idle motion of loving, it is a more real thing, a more vital thing. It hath bowels of mercy, they move themselves when others are moved, and they bring their neighbours misery into the inmost seat of the heart, and make the spirit a solemn companion in misery. And it is also exercised in forbearing and forgiving. Charity is not easily provoked, therefore it can forbear, is easily appeased, therefore it can forgive, it is not soon displeased, or hard to be pleased, "forbearing and forgiving one another in love." Study then this grace more. See it to be the fulfilling of the law, for "the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." The end of the law is not strife and debate, nor such intricate and perplexed matters as minister endless questions and no edification. Though men pretend conscience and scripture, yet the great end of both is violated, that is charity, which mainly studies edification in truth and love. And therefore it is a violent perversion of the commandment, or word, to overstretch every point of conscience, or

difference, so far as to the renting of Christian peace and unity. What hath kindled all these names of bloody war, what hath increased all these fiery contentions among us, but the want of this? As James says of the tongue, so I may speak of uncharitableness and self love, they set on fire the course of nature, and they are set on fire of hell. The true zeal and love of God, is like that elementary fire of which they speak, that in its own place hath a temperate heat, and doth not burn or consume what is about it. But our zeal is like the fire that is mixed with some gross matter, a preying, devouring, and consuming thing, zeal down in the lower region of man's heart, it is mixed with many gross corruptions, which are as oil and fuel to it, and gives it an extreme intemperate destroying nature.

But then consider, that this commandment of love is our Lord and Saviour's last testamentary injunction to his disciples, John xiii. 34, 35. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It is Christ's latter will, and given us as a token and badge of discipleship. Every profession hath its own signs and rules, every order their own symbol, every rank their own character. Here is the differential or peculiar character and livery of a Christian, brotherly love,—“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,” &c. I remember a story of a dying father who called his sons to him on his death bed, and having sent for a bundle of arrows, he tried them one by one if they could break them, and when they had all tried this in vain, he caused loose the bundle, and take the arrows one by one, and so they were easily broken, by which he gave them to understand, that their stability and strength would consist in unity and concord, but, if love and charity were broken, they were exposed to great hazard.⁶ I think our Lord and Saviour gives such a precept unto his disciples at his departure out of this world,—“A new command I give unto you,” &c. (John xiii. 34)—to show them that the perfection of the body, into which they were all called as members, consisted in that bond of charity. And indeed love is not only a bond or bundle of perfection in respect of graces, but in regard of the church too. It is that bond or tie which knits all the members into one perfect body, Col. iii. 14, 15, 16. Without this bond, all must needs be rents, rags, and distractions.

Now I shall add but one word of the other, that these commands are pleasing in God's sight. And truly believing in the Son must be grateful to him, not only from the general nature of obedience to his will, but also because this doth most honour both to the Father and to the Son. The Father counts himself much honoured, when we honour the Son, and there is no honour the creature can be in a capacity to give unto him like this, to cast all our hope, and hang all our happiness upon him, (John v. 23, 24), to set to our seal that he is true and faithful, (John iii. 33), which is done by believing. But most of all, this is pleasing in his sight because the Father's good pleasure concentrates in the same point with the soul's good pleasure, that is, on the well beloved Son, Christ. Therefore faith must needs be well pleasing to the Father, for what is faith else but the soul's complacency and satisfaction in the Son. As the Father is already well pleased with his death and sufferings, so he propones and holds him out in the gospel, that you may be as well pleased with him as he is. This is believing indeed, to be pleased with him as the Father is pleased, and this pleases the Father too. Oh that you could understand this! The gospel is not brought unto you, that you may reconcile God, and procure a change in his affection, but for this end, to beseech you to be reconciled unto God, to take away all hostile affections out of your heart. And this is the business we have to do, to persuade you that the Father holds him abundantly contented with his Son. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And to move you to be as well contented with him as he is, he says, “Hear him. I hear him for you, hear ye him for me. I hear him interceding for you, hear ye him beseeching you.” Now this may take down all ground of jealousy concerning our welcome and acceptance, it cannot but be an acceptable and pleasing thing to God, that the affection and desire of the soul fall in and embosom itself with his good pleasure upon Christ his Son.

And then, in the next place, it is well pleasing to God that ye love one another, not only because he shall see his own image and likeness in your love, (for there is nothing in which a Christian more eminently resembles his Father, or more evidently appears to be a child of the Highest, than in free loving all, especially the household of faith, and forbearing and forgiving one another, and so he cannot choose but like it well), but especially, because your love concentrates too, and meets upon the same objects with his love, these whom the Father so loved, that he gave his only begotten Son for them, and the Son so loved them, that he gave himself for them. If these be thy delight, and thou forbear them as the Father and the Son hath done, that conspiracy of affections into one point cannot but be pleasing unto him. Now, if these please him so well, whom should they not please?

Sermon IV.

James iii. 14.—“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not,” &c.

It is a common evil of those who hear the gospel, that they are not delivered up to the mould and frame of religion that is holden out in it, but rather bring religion into a mould of their own invention. It was the special commendation of the Romans, that they obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which they were delivered, (Rom. vi. 17) that they who were once servants, or slaves of sin, had now become voluntary captives of truth, and had given themselves up to the gospel, to be modelled and fashioned by it; and if so, then certainly the most substantial points of religion would be most deeply engraven upon them. Every thing would have its own due place with us, if we were cast in the primitive mould of godliness, but when we cast godliness in a mould of our own apprehension, they cannot choose but a miserable confusion and disorder will follow in the duties of religion. For according as our fancy and inclination impose a necessity upon things, so we do pursue them, and not according to the real weight that is in them. I find the scripture laying most weight upon the most common things, placing most religion in the most obvious and known things, and for other things more remote from common capacity, I find them set far below, in the point of worth and moment, even these things that seem least. But I find that order quite perverted in the course of Christians. Some particular points that are not so obvious to every understanding, are put in the first place, and made the distinguished character of a Christian, and others again, in which true and undefiled religion doth more consist, are despised and set in a low place, because of their ceremonies. I think this apostle hath observed this confusion, and hath applied himself to remove it, by correcting the misapprehensions of Christians, and reducing their thoughts and ways to the frame of true Christianity. Even as Christ dealt with the Pharisees, who brought in such a confusion in religion, by imposing a necessity upon ceremonies, and an indifferency upon the very substance itself, truly, I think, it may be said unto us, you tithe mint, anise, and cummin, and pass over judgment and the love of God, these things ye ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, faith and truth, and in the room of these ye have misplaced things, that are higher in God's esteem from an apprehension of their necessity. Thus by your traditions and opinions of things so remote from the kingdom of God, ye have made the unquestionable commandments of God of none effect, Matth. xv. 6. You think possibly, if this apostle was coming out to preach unto you this day, that he would certainly resolve you in many controverted points, and would bring some further light to

the debates of the time. But truly I think if he knew the temper of our spirits, he would preach over this sermon to us again, "My brethren, be not many masters," &c. I suppose he would bring that old primitive light of pure and undefiled religion, the splendour of which our present ways and courses could not endure, but would be constrained to hide themselves in darkness. What would you think of such a sermon as this, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain?" Jam. i. 26. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man," Jam. iii. 2. This is accounted a common and trivial purpose. But believe it, sirs, the Christian practice of the most common things, hath more religion in it than the knowledge of the profoundest things, and till you learn to do what you know, it is a mockery to study to know further what to do. There is a strange stirring of mind after more light and knowledge in some particulars of the time. But I would fain know, if there be as much ardour and endeavour to practise that which we have already. To him that hath shall be given, to him that makes use of his knowledge for the honour of God, and the good of mankind, and their edification, more shall be given, but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath, and yet really and cordially hath not, because he hath no use of it. Therefore he may by inquiry find more darkness, because his old light shall rather be put out. Do you not all know that ye should bridle your tongues, that it is a great point of that Christian victory over the world to tame and danton⁷ that undantoned wild beast, to quench that fire brand of hell? Do ye not all know that we should be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath? And as the apostle Paul speaks on another subject, "Doth not even nature itself teach you when you have but one tongue, and two ears, that ye should hear much, and speak little?" Are not our ears open, and our tongue enclosed and shut up, to teach us to be more ready to hear than to speak? Now I say, till Christians learn to practise these things that are without all controversy, you may make it your account never to want controversy, and never to get clearness. For to what purpose should more light be revealed, when that which is revealed is to no purpose?

But it is in vain to think to reform the tongue, till you have the heart first reformed. They say the belly hath no ears. Truly the tongue is all tongue, and has no ears to take an admonition or instruction. We must, then, with the apostle, retire into the heart, and abate from the abundance of the superfluity and naughtiness that is within; and therefore our apostle descends to the cure of pride, envy and strife in the heart, that are fountains of all that pestiferous flood which flows out of every man's mouth. "Is there any wise man among you?" &c. And indeed this is the orderly proceeding both of nature and grace. Nature begins within to probe among the superfluous and noisome humours which abound in the body, and desolate the members, and doth not think it sufficient to apply external plasters. Grace must begin within too, to purge the heart, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, the eye looks, and the feet walk. If there be no destroyer in the members or outward man, it is not the preserving of rules and cautions that will suffice to restrain, to abate, or to cure, but the disease must be ripped up to the bottom, the cause found within, as our apostle doth here. Hence, says he, proceed all these feverish distempers among you, your hot and passionate words, your evil speakings and reproachings, your contentions and wars about matters either civil or religious. Whence are all these? From a vain persuasion of wisdom, from a foolish imagination of some excellency in yourselves, and some inward affection to be accounted something of among men. "Who is a wise man," &c. You would be accounted wise, and so you do account yourselves, and this begets strife and envy in the heart, and predisposeth the mind to strife and contention with others. And therefore he takes the mask off, by deciphering the very nature of such a wisdom; he embowels that pretended wisdom in religion and gives it its own name, and because things are best known, and most lively comprehended in their opposition and comparison with one another, he shows wherein true wisdom and religion consist, and sets the one against the other, that the deformity of the one and the beauty of the other may appear. We shall then speak a word of this that is supposed, and then of that which is expressed, the descriptions of true wisdom, and pretended wisdom. I conceive this interrogation, "Is there a wise man among you?" imports chiefly these two one is,—that it is the natural disease of all men to esteem themselves something, and desire to be esteemed such by others; another is,—that the

misapprehension of that wherein true wisdom and excellency doth especially consist, is the ground of many miscarriages in the seeking or venting of that.

It was an ancient remark, that “vain man would be wise, though he be born like a wild ass's colt.” Empty man is wise in his own eyes, and would be so in other men's too. He hath no reality nor solidity, but is like these light things which the wind carries away, or the waters bear above, and tosses hither and thither, yet he apprehends some solid and real worth in himself, and would impose that apprehension upon others. And truly this is a drunkenness of mind, which makes a man light and vain, to stagger to and fro. It is a giddiness of spirit, that makes him inconstant and reeling, but insensible of it. Though he be born as stupid and void of any real wisdom and excellency, as a wild ass's colt, yet he hath this madness and folly superadded to all that natural stupidity, that he seems to be wise and understanding, and truly it was a more ancient disease than Job's days. We may trace the steps of its antiquity to be from the very beginning, and there we shall find the true original of it. What was it, I pray you, did cast the angels out of heaven, down to the lowest hell, to be reserved in chains for everlasting darkness? I do not conceive what their natures so abstracted from all sensual lusts could be capable of, but this spiritual darkness and madness of self conceit, and an ambitious aspiring after more wisdom, whence did flow that malcontent and envious humour, in maligning the happiness of man. And this was the poison that Satan, the chief of these angels, did drop into man's nature, by temptations and suggestions of an imaginary wisdom and happiness, “You shall be as gods knowing good and evil.” And truly this poison is so strong and pestilent, that having once entered into the body, it spreads through all the members, it infects all the posterity that were in Adam's loins. Being once distilled into the lump, it diffuses itself through the whole, such a strange contagion is it. That wretched aim at a higher wisdom, hath thrown us all down into this brutish and stupid condition, to be like wild asses colts. Yet this false and fond imagination of wisdom and excellence remains within us, which is so much the nearer madness, that now there is no apparent ground left for such a fairly.⁸ And if one of a cubit's height should imagine himself as tall as a mountain, and accordingly labour to stretch out himself, we would seek no other sign of madness. Truly this malignant and poisonous humour is so subtle that it hath insinuated itself into all the parts and powers of the soul, and steals in without observation into all our thoughts, purposes, affections, ways, and courses. It is of so infectious and pestiferous a nature, that it defiles all that is in the man, and all that comes out of theman.

The apostle speaks of covetousness, that it “is the root of all evil.” Truly I think that comprehends many inordinate affections in it. Now, both self love and earth love arise from some false imagination of that which is not. Whether it be an imagination of some excellency in ourselves, or some worth in these worldly and earthly things, man first makes a god of it, and then worships it. Therefore covetousness is called idolatry, self idolatry and earth idolatry. We first attribute some divinity to ourselves like these people (Isa. xlv. 17) to their idols. We then fall down and worship ourselves, but we do not consider in our heart, that we are but dust. And then we ascribe some divinity to the perishing things of the world, and then worship them, but do not consider that they are earthly and perishing vanities. Thus we feed upon ashes, a deceived heart hath turned us aside, and we cannot deliver our own souls, by discovering the lie that is in our right hand. We feed partly on the element of the air, by seeking that of others that we have of ourselves, and partly upon the element of the earth, by the love of this world. And these two degenerated evils, are the root of all evils, self estimation, and creature affection.

I think this apostle in this one word “Is there any wise man among you, or any endowed with knowledge” and that word, “glory not,” strikes at the root of all the forementioned and aftermentioned evils. From whence I say doth that promptitude and bensal⁹ to speak, that slowness and difficulty to hear, that readiness and inclination to pride, (reproved, James i. 19, 20) proceed? Is it not from an overweening conceit of our own wisdom, that we are so swift to speak, and so slow to hear, and that we would teach others and yet be taught of none? We are so much in love with our own apprehensions,

that we imagine they shall find as much esteem and affection among men, and so being like barrels full of liquor, in our own conceit, we are like to burst if we vent not, and are as incapable of taking from others as of retaining what is within. The word of God was a fire in Jeremiah's heart that would have consumed him, if he had not given it vent. Truly self love is a fire that must vent one way or other, or it would burn up all within by displeasure, and then it is the over apprehension of some excellency in ourselves, which so disposes us to anger, that makes us combustible matter, like the spirit of gunpowder, for the least spark of injury or offence, will set all in a flame. It is certainly the fond imagination of some great worth in ourselves, that is the very immediate predisposition to the apprehension of an injury. Humility cannot be affronted, it is hard to persuade of an injury. Why? Because there is no excellency to be hurt or wronged. Therefore Christ conjoins these, "meek and lowly in heart," (Matth. xi. 29,) lays poverty of spirit down as the foundation of meekness, Matth. v. 3-5. Whence is it that we accept of men's persons by judging according to the outward appearance, and are so ready to displease our brethren, especially these who are inferior to us in body, or mind, or estate? Is it not from this root, self admiration? This makes us elevate ourselves above others, and to intrude ourselves among these who are chiefest in account. Whence doth our unmercifulness and rigidity towards other men proceed, but from this fountain, that we allow so much licence and indulgence to ourselves, that we can have none to spare for others, and that we do not consider that we ourselves stand in need of more mercy from God, and cannot endure a mixture of judgment in it? Therefore we have judgment to others without mercy, James ii. 13. And is not this self pleasing humour the fountain of that contentious plea after the pre-eminence, and censorious liberty of judging others, and usurping authority over them? James iii. 1, "My brethren, be not ye many masters." Truly this is the root of all contentions and strifes. It is this which rents all human and Christian society. This looses all the pins of concord and unity. This sets all by the ears, and makes all the wheels reel through other. The conceit of some worth beyond others, and the imagination of some pre-eminence over them, even in the best creatures—he best, and he best, that is the plea, he greatest, and he greatest, that is the controversy. As bladders puffed up with wind, they cannot be kept in little room, but every one presses another, but if the wind were out, they would compact in less room, and comply better together. The apostle implies this, when he puts every man in mind of his own failing, "in many things we offend all," and if this were considered, it would abate our security, and cool our heat and fervour, and moderate our rigour towards others. There would not be such strife about places of power and trust, if we were not swelled in our own apprehensions to some eminency. And is not this the very fountain which sends out all these bitter streams of the tongue, these evil speakings one of another, these sharp and immoderate censures of our neighbours? Truly this is it, every man accounts himself to be wiser and more religious than his brother, to have more knowledge, and so he cannot endure any difference in opinion, to have more holiness, and so he cannot bear any infirmity in practice. But the way to help this, would be to humble ourselves before God, James iv. 10. Lowliness and meekness are the ground stones of these Christian virtues which preserve Christian society, Eph. iv. 2, 3. And is not this, I pray you, the foundation of wars, strifes, contentions, and jealousies? "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" Is it not from these imperious lusts which war in our members? Only from pride cometh contention, Prov. xiii. 10. The head spring of all envy, also issues out from pride, and this divides, in many streams and waters, all our courses and ways, with putrified and pestilent corruptions. While every man hath this opinion of himself, all is done in strife, no condescendence, no submission one to another, Phil. ii. 3. While all make themselves the centre, it cannot otherwise happen, but designs, courses, thoughts, and ways, must interfere and jar among themselves. Self-seeking puts all by the ears, as you see children among themselves, if an apple be cast to them. Any bait or advantage of the times yokes them in that childish contention, who shall have it? All come, strive, and fight about it, and it is but a few can have it, and these that get it cannot keep it long. Others will catch it from them. Now what vain things are these, which can neither be gotten, nor kept, but by strife? Oh that we could seek better things, which may be both sought and kept, without emulation or strife!

Now the other thing is, that the misapprehension of that wherein true excellence consists is the ground of many evils. "Who is a wise man?" &c. You all affect the title, and ye seek the thing, as ye suppose. But alas! ye mistake that wherein it consists. Truly there is in all men (ever since we tasted of the tree of knowledge of good and evil) a strange innate desire of knowledge, and affectation of wisdom, and desire of excellence. But since the first endeavour in paradise succeeded ill, there hath nothing gone well since. We weary ourselves to catch vanities, shadows, and lies. "How long, O ye sons of men, will ye love vanity, and follow after lies?" That divinely taught prophet could not but pity the children of men. And as Paul speaks to the Athenians of another purpose, "Him whom ye ignorantly worship, we show unto you," so he declares unto men that which they ignorantly and vainly seek elsewhere. This I assure you consists in this, that ye show out of a good conversation your works with meekness and wisdom.

All our mischief proceeds from this, that we misapprehend and mistake that which we would gladly have. And so once being in the wrong way, that cannot lead to our purposed end, the faster we run, the farther we go from it. The more we move in affection and diligence, the less we indeed promote in reality to the attaining what we seek. How greatly have we fallen! I might instance this in many things, but I shall be content with these two. There is a desire in all men after happiness, but there is a fundamental error in the imagination supposing it to consist in the enjoyment of temporal pleasure, honour, advantage, or the satisfaction of our own natural inclinations. Now this leads all mankind to a pursuit after these things. But how base a scent is it? And how vain a pursuit is it? For the faster they move in that way, the further they are from all solid and true contentment. Again, in all godly men, there is something of this rectified, and they suppose religion to be the only true wisdom, and this wisdom the only true happiness. But oftentimes there are even mistakes in that too. As many of the world call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet, because of the vitiated and corrupted palate; so the godly, being in some measure distempered, call that which is not so sweet sweetest, and that which is not so bitter, bitterest. They change the value of things, and misplace them out of that order in which God hath set them. One great mistake is this. We impose a great deal of weight and moment upon these things in religion, which are but the hay and stubble, or pins in the building, and we esteem less that wherein the foundation and substance of true religion consists. We have an over-apprehension of a profession, and an undervaluing thought of practice. We overstretch some points of knowledge, and truth of the least value;¹⁰ and have less value for the fundamental statutes of the gospel, faith and love, mercy and judgment. This our Saviour reproveth in the Pharisees. "I will have mercy (says God) and not sacrifice." A ceremony of opinion in some particulars of the time hath more necessity with us than the practice of true godliness: and this is the root of the most part of these vain janglings, strifes of words, and perverse disputings of men, whereof cometh envy, strife, malice, evil surmisings, and no edification in faith and love, which were so frequent in the primitive times, and so often hammered down by Paul. This is it, a misapprehension of the value of them. Fancy imposes a worth and necessity upon them. But Paul doth always oppose unto them true godliness (1 Tim. vi. 3, chap. iv. 7), and prescribes that as the cure, that true godliness in practice of what we know, and charity towards our brethren, may be bigger in our apprehension, and higher in our affection. Would ye then know, my brethren, wherein true religion consists, and wherein genuine Christianity stands? It is in showing out of a good conversation, our works with meekness and wisdom. I reduce it to these two words, in joining practice to knowledge, and meekness to both; and this makes our religion to shine before men, and glorify our heavenly Father.

Wherein then do ye think this mystery of wisdom which the gospel reveals consists? Not in the profound and abstracted speculations of God, or the secrets of nature,—a work about which learned men have racked their inventions, and beaten their brains to no other purpose, than the discovery of the greatness of man's ignorance. It doth not consist in the sounding of the depths of divinity, and loosing all these perplexing knots of questions, and doubts, which are moved upon the scripture, in all which men really bewray their own ignorance and misery. "The world by wisdom knew not God." Living right is the

first point of true wisdom. It costs many men great expenses to learn to know their own folly, to become fools, that they may become wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18. Man became a fool by seeking to become wiser than God made him; and that is all the result of our endeavours after wisdom since, Rom. i. 22. But here is the great instruction of Christianity, to bring man down low from the height of presumption and self-estimation, and make him see himself just as he is by nature, a fool, and a wild ass's colt. Nebuchadnezzar had much ado to learn this lesson. It cost him some years brutality to learn to know his brutishness, and when that was known his understanding returned to him.

Now this is the first and hardest point of wisdom. When it is once learned and imprinted on the heart, O what a docility is in the mind to more! What readiness to receive what follows! It makes a man a weaned child, a little simple child, tractable and flexible as Christ would have all his disciples. A man thus emptied and vacuated of self-conceit, these lines of natural pride being blotted out, the soul is as a *tabula rasa*, "an unwritten table," to receive any impression of the law of God that he pleases to put on it; and then his words are all "plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge," Prov. viii. 9. Then I say it is not difficult to understand and to prove what is the good and acceptable will of God, Rom. xii. 2; Eph. v. 10-17. It is not up unto heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall ascend to bring it down? Neither is it far down in the depth, that thou shouldest say, who shall descend and bring it up from hence? But it is near thee, "in thy mouth, and in thy heart," &c. Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what is required of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God," Micah vi. 8. There is the plain sign of Christian wisdom, the abridgment of all that is taught in the school of Christ. Here is the course of moral philosophy, "The grace of God hath appeared, to teach us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world." And when the scholar is brought along by these degrees, he is at length laureated¹¹ in that great day of our Saviour's appearance. Then he hath the degree of glory and immortality conferred upon him. He is a candidate of immortality and felicity, Tit. ii. 12, 13.

We are in the Christian school like many scholars who labour to know so many things, that indeed they know nothing well; as the stomach that devours much meat, but digests little, and turns it not into food and aliment, incorporates it not into the body. We catch at many great points of truth, and we really drink in none of them; we let none sink into the heart, and turn into affection and practice. This is the grand disease of the time, a study to know many things, and no study to love what we know, or practise any thing. The Christian world is all in a flame, and the church is rent asunder by the eager pursuit and prosecution of some points of truth, and this is the clamour of all men, who will show us our light? Who will discover some new thing unto us? But in the mean time we do not prove the unquestionable acceptable will of our God; like a fastidious squeamish stomach, that loathes what it receives, and always longs for something else. Thus the evil is vented here. Who is a wise man, do ye think? Not he who knows many things, who hath still a will to controversy, who hath attained some further light than others of them; not he, brethren, but he that shows out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom, he that proves and practiseth as well as knows, the good will of God. "For hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keeps not his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," 1 John ii. 3, 4. This proves that knowledge is not in the head, but in the heart, and that it is not captivated and shut up in the mind, but that a man is delivered up as a captive to the truth, Rom. vi. 16.

All men complain of the want of light and knowledge, though perhaps none think they have much. But is the will of God so dark and intricate? Is it so hard to understand? Truly it is plain, "He hath showed thee what is good," he hath showed thee what to do; but that thou neglectest to do, and therefore men know not what to do further. Do ye not all know that ye should walk soberly, righteously, and piously, and humble yourselves to walk with God, and in lowliness of mind each should esteem another better than himself? Ye should forbear and forgive one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Ye

should not seek great things for yourselves, especially when God is plucking up what he hath planted, and casting down what was built. Ye should mind your country above more, and live as sojourners here. Are not these words of wisdom all plain and obvious to the meanest capacity? Now, my beloved, with what face can ye seek more knowledge of God, or inquire for more light into his mind, when you do not prove that known and perfect will of his? When you do not occupy your present talent, why do ye seek more? "To him that hath shall be given." Truly it is the man that fears and obeys as far as is revealed, to whom God shows his secret, and teaches the way he should choose, Psal. xxv. 12. I know not a readier way to be resolved in doubtful things, than to study obedience in these things that are beyond all doubt. To walk in the light received, is the highway to more light. But what hope is there of any more light from the Lord, when our ways and courses, and dispositions and practices, even in our endeavours after more knowledge, cannot endure the light of that shining will of God, that is already revealed? In ordering our conversation, we catch at the shadow of our points of truth, and lose the substance that was in our hands, lowliness, meekness, charity, long suffering, sobriety of mind and actions, and heavenly mindedness. All these substantial we let go, that we may get hold of some empty unedifying notions. We put out our candle that is already enlightened, that is, the knowledge of good conversation that we may seek more light, and that is the way to find darkness and delusion. Because they received not the truth in love, that they might be saved, God gave them up to strong delusions and the belief of lies, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. There is the ground of delusions, truth received, but not loved or obeyed, many things known, but the stamp and seal not impressed on the heart we express in the conversation. Therefore God is provoked to put out that useless light of truth and deliver that man captive to delusions, who would not deliver his soul a captive to truth. And is not this righteousness, that he who detained the known truth in unrighteousness of affection and conversation, be himself detained and incarcerated by strong delusions of mind and imagination?

As a good conversation and good works should be joined to knowledge, and meekness must be the ornament of both, this meekness of wisdom is the great lesson that the wisdom of the Father came down to teach man. "Learn of me, for I am meek." And truly the meekness of that substantial wisdom of God Jesus Christ, is the exact pattern and copy, and the most powerful motive and constraint to this kindness of Christian wisdom. Our Saviour did not cry nor lift up his voice in the streets. He made little noise, nor cried with pomp, he was not rigorous, nor rigid upon sinners. Though he was oppressed and afflicted yet he opened not his mouth, being reviled he reviled not again, being cursed, he blessed. Though he could have legions of angels at his command, yet he would show rather an example of patience and meekness to his followers, than overcome his enemies. If many of us, who pretend to be his disciples, had the winds, rains, heavens, and elements at our commandment, I fear we would have burned up the world. We would presently have called for fire from heaven, to devour all whom we conceived enemies to him, or ourselves, and that under the notion of zeal. Zeal it is indeed, but such as is spoken of in the next verse. "If ye have bitter envying (the word is bitter zeal) in your hearts, glory not, nor lie against the truth." Christ's zeal was sweet zeal. It might well consume or eat him up within, but it did not devour others without. "The zeal of thy house (says he) hath eaten me up." But our zeal is like the Babylonian furnace, that burnt and consumed these that went to throw the pious children into it. At the first approaching it gets without the chimney, and devours all around it. If the meekness or gentleness of a person who received the greatest injuries that ever any received, and to whom the greatest indignities were done, and who endured the greatest contradiction of sinners, if his calm composed temper do not soften our spirits, mitigate our sharpness, and allay our bitterness, I know not what can do it. I do not think but if any man considered how much long suffering God exercises towards him, how gentle and patient he is, after so many provocations, how Jesus Christ doth still forgive infinite numbers of infinite wrongs done to his grace, how slow he is to wrath, and easy to be entreated, surely such a man would abate much of his severity towards others, he would pursue peace with all men, and esteem little of wrongs done unto him, and not think them worthy of remembrance, he would not be easily provoked, but he would be easily pacified. In a word, he could not

but exercise something of that gentleness and meekness in forbearing and forgiving, as Christ also forgave him and truly there is no ornament of a man like that of a meek and quiet spirit, 1 Pet. iii. 4. It is both comely and precious, it is of great price in God's sight. It is a spirit all composed and settled, all peace and harmony within. It is like the heavens in a clear day, all serene and beautiful, whereas an unmeek spirit is for the most part like the troubled sea, tossed with tempests, winds, and dashed with rains, even at the best, it is but troubled with itself. When there is no external provocation, it hath an inward unrest in its bosom, and casts out mire and dirt. Meekness is so beseeeming every man, that it is even humanity itself. It is the very nature of a man restored, and these brutish, wild and savage dispositions put off. Meekness is a man in the true likeness of God. But passion, and the evils which accompany it, is a man metamorphosed and transformed into the nature of a beast, and that of a wild beast too. It hath been always reckoned that anger is nothing different from madness, but in the continuance of it. It is a short madness. But what is wanting in the continuance is made up in the frequency. When spirits are inclined to it, there is a habitual fury and madness in such spirits. It is no wonder then, these are conjoined, meekness and wisdom, for truly they are inseparable. Meekness dwells in the bosom of wisdom. It is nothing else but wisdom, reason, and religion ruling all within, and composing all the distempered lusts and affections, but anger rests in the bosoms of fools, it cannot get rest but in a fool's bosom, for where it enters, wisdom and reason must go out, Eccles. vii. 9. "A fool's wrath is presently known," Prov. xii. 16. For if there were so much true and solid wisdom as to examine the matter first, and to consider before we suffer ourselves to be provoked, we would certainly quench anger in the very first smoking of an apprehension of a wrong. We would immediately cast it out, for there is nothing so much blinds and dimmeth the eye of our understanding, and when this gross vapour rises out of the dunghill of our lusts, nothing so much uncovers our shame and nakedness. "A prudent man covereth shame," but hastiness and bitterness takes the garment off our infirmity, and exposes us to mockery and contempt, Prov. xii. 16. There is not a greater evidence of a strong solid spirit, than this, to be able to govern this unruly passion, whereas it is taken far otherwise. Meekness is construed by some to be simplicity and weakness, and many imagine some greatness and height of spirit in the hotter natures, but truly it is far otherwise. "For he that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that takes a city." Wrath is an impotency and weakness. It hath no strength in it, but such as ye would find in madmen. But this is true magnanimity, to overcome thyself, and "overcome evil with good."

As there is nothing which is a greater evidence of wisdom, so there is nothing a better help to true wisdom than this. For a meek spirit is like a clear running fountain, that ye see the bottom of, but a passionate spirit is like a troubled fountain, the shadow of truth cannot be seen in it. A glass that is pure and cleanly, renders the image lively, but if it be besmeared with dust, you can see nothing, so is a composed mild spirit apt to discern the truth without prejudice. And indeed it is the meek whom God engages to teach his ways, Psal. xxv. 8, 9. He that receives with meekness the ingrafted word, is in the readiest capacity to receive more. When the superfluity of naughtiness is cast out, and all the faculties of the soul composed to quietness and calmness, then his voice will best be heard, and himself readiest to receive it. Our affection keeps a continual hurry within the tumultuous noise of our disordered lusts, that are always raging and controlling the voice of God, so that we cannot hear his teaching. A passionate temper of spirit is very indocile. There are so many loud sounds of prejudices within, that the truth cannot be heard. But a meek spirit hath all quietness and silence, as Cornelius and his house had waiting for the mind of the Lord. And such he delights to converse with most, and reveal most unto, for it gets readiest entertainment. Let me tell you, beloved in the Lord, you disoblige the Lord (if I may speak so) and hinder him to reveal any more of his mind to you, ye disengage him to teach you his way in those dark and untrodden paths, because ye do not study this meekness in the wisdom and knowledge ye have already, nor his meekness and moderation in seeking further knowledge. And it is no wonder he be provoked by it, to choose your delusions, because it is certainly these graces of meekness, charity, patience, gentleness, long suffering, humbleness of mind, and such like, which go always in a chain together. These are an ornament of grace upon the head,

and a crown of glory, and that chain about the neck, Solomon mentions, Prov. iv. 9. Now when you cast off your crown of glory, your noblest ornament, your chain of dignity, should he give such precious pearls to swine? When you trample under foot the greater commandments of mercy, judgment, sobriety, humility, meekness, and charity, should he reveal lesser commandments, or discover his will in lesser matters? Consider the manner of expression here, "Let him show forth out of a good conversation," &c. Truly it is good works with meekness of wisdom, it is a good conversation, with a true profession, that shows forth a Christian, and shows him most before men. "Let your light (says Christ) so shine before men." What is the shining beauty of Christian light? It is the works of piety, charity, equity, and sobriety. These glorify the Father, and beautify all his children. You may easily conceive what that is, that chiefly commends religion to the ignorant world. Is it not the meekness of Christian wisdom? Is it not this harmless simplicity, that divine-like candour, that shines in every true Christian? Will rigidity, severity, passion, blood, violence, persecution, and such like, ever conciliate the hearts of men? Have such persons any beauty, any light in them, except a scorching consuming light? The light of a good Christian is like the light of the sun, of a sweet, gentle, and refreshing nature, conveying influence to all, doing good to the household of faith. Peter will tell you what that is, that will most engage the hearts of the world, to a reverend esteem of true religion, 1 Pet. ii. 12. It is a conversation honest, and void of offence, giving to every one their own due, honouring all men, loving the brotherhood, not using our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, and not overstretching it, to the loosing of other natural or civil bands. When men see Christianity making us do that really and cheerfully, which even nature itself teacheth all to do that makes the light of it shining and beautiful. Are not these higher mysteries of faith, than some conceive? It is not other points of truth and profession, that are either above natural reason, or seem something opposite to it, that can engage natural beholders, and far less the prosecution of a temporal worldly interest of the people of God, to the destruction of all opposite to it, at least to the diminishing of all other men's gain and advantage, the engrossing of all earthly privileges into the hands of saints. That is such a thing that never entered into the heart of the shining lights of the primitive times. O how doth the stream of their exhortations run cross to this notion! I am sure there is nothing in its own nature, such a stumbling block to the world or represents religion so odious and abominable to other men, as when it stands in the way, and intercepts all these natural immunities or privileges of life, or estate. This makes natural men to hate it, even at a distance, and become irreconcilable enemies unto it. Since it will not let them live by it, they are engaged not to let it live by them. I wish indeed all the places of power and trust in every nation, were in the hands of godly men, not so much for the interest of the godly as for the public interest, because men fearing God, and hating covetousness, can only rule justly and comfortably. But to monopolize all power and trust to such a particular judgment and way (as it is now given out) is truly, I think, inhuman and unchristian. These deserve not power and trust who would seek it, and engross it wholly to themselves.¹² But there is another thing which savours greatly of the flesh, at least of that spirit which Christ reproved in his disciples, to take away men's lives, liberty, and livelihood given by their Creator, upon every foot of opposition and enmity to our way and interest. Is this to love our enemies, blessing them that curse us, or praying for them that despitefully use us, or persecute us? Let us remember we are Christians, and this is the rule of Christianity, that stops even the mouth of adversaries. But some still find an evasion for this. They will say they are God's enemies, and not my particular enemies only. But I pray you were not the enemies of Christians in these days more properly enemies to Christ than now? For they had nothing then to persecute them for, but the very profession of that name. And truly I confess in our days we make more particular enemies, by particular injuries and disobligements, than either our profession or practice of religion make. But to put it out of all doubt, we learn that they are persecutors, and do all manner of evil against us, for Christ's name sake. I have said this because I know nothing that more darkeneth and obscures religion nor such worldly and temporal interests, so eagerly pursued, and nothing makes it more to shine among men, than a good conversation with meekness of wisdom.

Sermon V.

James iii. 14.—“But if ye have bitter envying,” &c.

The cunning of Satan, and the deceitfulness of our own hearts, are such that when a grosser temptation will not prevail with conscience in some measure enlightened, then they transform themselves into angels of light, and deal more subtilly with us. And there is no greater subtilty of Satan, nor no stronger self deceit, than this, to palliate and cover vices with the shadow of virtue, and to present corruptions under the similitude of graces. It is common unto all temptations to sin, to have a hook under their bait, to be masked over with some pleasure or advantage or credit. But when such earthly and carnal pretences do not insinuate strongly unto a believing heart that has discovered the vanity of all that which is in the world, so dare not venture upon sin for all the pleasures which attend it, then he winds about and tarries and changes his likeness unto light, conscience, and duty, presents many works of darkness and corruption under the notion of duty and honesty, according as he finds the temper of a man's spirit to be. I can give no instance more pregnant, and even common, than this which is given here, viz., contentions and strivings among brethren, bitter envying, maligning and censuring one another, which are very manifest works of the flesh, and works of darkness, fitter for the night than the day, and for the time of ignorance, nor the time after the clear light hath shined. Now if Satan were about to persuade a church or a Christian of this, how do ye think he would go about it? Would he present some carnal advantage to be gained by it, some more profit or preferment from it? May be that might be very taking with some more unconscientious self seeking spirits, and I fear it be too much taken with many. But sure it will not relish with every man. It will not entice him that hath the fear of God, and the love of Jesus stirring within him. Therefore he must seek about, and find some false prophet, that may come out in the name of the Lord, and disguise himself, and by such means he will do it. Let a point of truth or conscience come in debate, let a notion of religion, and one far off from an interest in Christ be in the business, and then he can take advantage to make a man overreach himself in it. He will present the truth as a thing of so great weight and consequence, that he must contend for it, and empty all his wit and power and parts for it. This good intention being established, he raises up men's passions under a notion of zeal, and these be promoted under that pretence for such an end. Whatsoever mean may be sought, profitable for that end, all is chosen and followed without discretion or knowledge of what is good or evil. It is apprehended that the good principle of conscience, of duty, and the good intention, may justify all. And by that means he hath persuaded the churches of Christ, and the Christian world, unto more rigidity, severity, cruelty, strife, contention, blood, violence, and such works of darkness, than readily have been found in the times of ignorance. Is Christendom a field of blood, rather than any other part of the world? Truly this is the reproach of Christianity. By this, God's name is daily blasphemed. Here our apostle sets himself to unmask this angel of light, and to decipher him in his own proper nature and notion. He takes off the vizard of religion and wisdom, and lets you see the very image of hell under it. “But if ye have bitter envying and strife, glory not.” Ye glory as if ye had the truth, you glory in your zeal for it, you boast that ye are the wise men, the religious men, and so you take liberty upon the account of envy, to malign, despise, and contend with others. Glory not, if you cherish such strifes and contentions, to the breach of Christian peace and concord. You are liars against the truth, which you profess. Do not think these proceed from true zeal, nay, nay, it is but bitter envy, and bitter zeal. Do not flatter yourselves with an apprehension of wisdom, or knowledge, or religion. That is wisdom indeed, but mark of what nature. It is earthy, sensual, and devilish. And indeed, that is a foolish wisdom, to say no worse of it.

You see, then, what need we have of the exhortation of the apostle (Eph. vi. 11), "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Truly we may stand against his darts, and violent open thrusts at our conscience; when we,¹³ being ignorant of his devices, and not acquainted with his depths (2 Cor. ii. 11, Rev. ii. 24) will not be able to stand against his ways. For we have a great and subtle party to wrestle with, principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, or heavenly things (as some render the word). He exercises much wickedness, spiritual invisible wickedness in heavenly and religious things, in which it is hard to wrestle, unless we be endowed with faith, knowledge, and righteousness, and shod with the gospel of peace, the peaceable gospel reducing our spirits to a peaceable temper. I conceive there is nothing the world hath been more abused with, than the notion of zeal, justice, and such like, and there is nothing wherein a Christian is more ready to deceive himself than this. Therefore I conceive the Holy Ghost has undeceived us in this, and hath of purpose used the word zeal as often in a bad sense as in a good one, and usually chooses to express envy and malice by it, though another word might suit as well, and be more proper. So here bitter zeal, ζήλος φρενοῦς, is reckoned among the works of the flesh, Gal. v. 20. And we are exhorted to walk honestly as in the day, not in strife and envy, or zeal. And therefore the apostle rebukes sharply the Corinthians: "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men, whereas there is among you envying, or zeal, and strife," 1 Cor. iii. 3. Zeal is a vehemency of affection in any earnest pursuit, or opposition of a thing, and to make it good, it must not only be fixed upon a commendable and good object, but must run in the right channel, between the banks of moderation, charity, and sobriety. If it overflows these, certainly that excess proceeds not simply and purely from the love of God, or the truth, but from some latent corruption or lust in our members, which takes occasion to swell up with it. I find in scripture the true zeal of God hath much self denial in it. It is not exercised so much concerning a man's own matters, as concerning the matters that are purely and merely concerning God's glory. It is the most flexible, condescending, and forbearing thing in those things that relate to ourselves and our own interests. Thus Moses is commended as the meekest man, when Aaron and Miriam raise sedition against him, Num. xii. 3. He had not affections to be commoved upon that account. But how much is he stirred and provoked upon the apprehension of the manifest dishonour of God, by the people's idolatry? How many are lions in their own cause, and in God's as simple and blunt as lambs? And how much will our spirits be commoved when our own interest lies in the business, and hath some conjunction with God's interest, but if these are parted, our fervour abates, and our heat cools? I lay down this, then, as the fundamental principle of true zeal, it is like charity that seeketh not its own things.

But to make the nature of it clear, I give you three characters of it, verity, charity and impartiality. I say it hath truth in it, a good thing for the object, and knowledge of that good thing in the subject, for the principle of it: "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing," Gal. iv. 18. Zeal is an evil thing, hath something of the impatient and restless nature of the devil in it. There is nothing we should be more deliberate and circumspect in, than what to employ or bestow our affections upon. We should have a certain persuasion of the unquestionable goodness of that which we are ardent and vehement to obtain, else the more ardour and vehemency, the more wickedness is in it. The Jews had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, and that is a blind impetuous self will. For if a man take a race at his full speed in the dark, he cannot but catch a fall.¹⁴ The eager and hot pursuits of men are founded upon some gross misapprehensions.

Secondly, There must not only be a goodness supposed in the object, but some correspondence between the worth and weight of that goodness and the measure of our desires and affections, else there wants that conformity between the soul and truth which makes a true zeal of God. I mean this, the soul's most vehement desires should be employed about the chiefest good, and our zeal move in relation to things unquestionably good, and not about things of small moment, or of little edification. This is the apostolic rule, that not only we consider that there be some truth in the thing, but that we especially take notice, if there be so much truth and goodness as requires such a measure of

vehemency and affection. Therefore in lesser things we should have lesser commotion, and in greater things greater, suitable to them. Otherwise the Pharisees who exercised their zeal about trifles, and neglected the weightier matters of the law, (Matt. xxiii. 23.) would not have been reprov'd by Christ. And indeed this is the zeal to which we are redeemed by Christ. Tit. ii. 14. Be ye zealous of good works, of works that are unquestionably good, such as piety, equity, and sobriety. There is nothing more incongruous than to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel, to spend the vital spirits upon things of small concernment to our own or others' edification, and to have nothing to spare for the weightier matters of true godliness. It is as if a man should strike a feather or the air with all his might: He must needs wrest his arms. Even so, to strike with the spiritual sword of our affections, with such vehemency, at the lighter and emptier matters of religion, cannot choose but to disjoint the spirit, and put it out of course, as there is a falsehood in that zeal that is so vehement about a light matter, though it have some good in it. For there is no suitable proportion between the worth of the thing and the vehemency of the spirit. Imagination acts in both. In the one it supposes a goodness, and it follows it, and in the other, it imposes a necessity and a worth far beyond that which really is, and so raises up the spirit to that height of necessity and worth that hath no being but in a man's imagination. I think there is no particular that the apostle doth so much caveat. For I find in 1 Tim. i. 4 he takes off such endless matters that minister questioning rather than godly edifying, and gives us a better subject to employ our zeal upon, ver 5, the great end and sum of all religion, love to God and man, proceeding from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, from which we must needs swerve, when we turn aside to such empty and vain janglings, ver 6. For truly we have but narrow and limited spirits, and it must needs follow, when we give them very much to one thing, that they cannot attend another thing seriously, as Christ declares, (Matt. vi. 24.) "no man can serve two masters," &c. And therefore there is much need of Christian wisdom to single out and choose the most proper and necessary object. For as much as we give other things that have not so much connexion with that, we take from it as much; and the apostle counsels us, (1 Tim. iv. 7.) rather to exercise ourselves unto true godliness, and to the most substantial things in it, rather than vain things, and opposition of science, chap vi. 3-5, 20. There he opposes the wholesome words of Christ, and the doctrine that is according to godliness, unto questions, and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, railings, evil-surmisings, and perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds. And it is very observable that he is pressing the duties of believing servants towards their masters, whether believers or infidels, that the name of God be not blasphemed, nor the gospel evil spoken of. For there is nothing so much exposes it to misconstruction, as when it is stretched and abused unto the prejudice of natural and civil duties, and doubtless there would be many doubts and questions about it in these days, some contending for worldly pre-eminence over the Pagans, and some for the levelling of all Christians. But, says he, "If any man teach otherwise," or contend about this, "he is proud, knowing nothing," &c. He hath forsaken the substance of true godliness, which consists in good works shining before men, and disabuses the notion of Christian liberty to the dishonour of Christ, and hath supposed gain, a worldly carnal interest of the godly, to be piety, and so pursues that fancy of his own. He renews this in the Second Epistle, (chap. ii. 14-16.) showing that these strifes about words, albeit they seem to be upon grounds of conscience at the beginning, yet they increase unto more ungodliness, ver. 23. And unto Titus he gives the same charge very solemnly, (Tit. iii. 8, 9.) "I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who believe in God should be careful to maintain good works. But avoid foolish and unlearned questions," &c. For "this is a faithful saying." But again,

Thirdly, Zeal must have charity with it, and this all the scriptures cited prove. It must be so tempered with love, that it vents not to the breach of Christian peace and concord. Charity envieth not, or is not zealous. When zeal wants charity, it is not zeal but envy. And hence it is that there are so frequent and fervent exhortations to avoid such questions as may gender strifes, and contentions, and malice. Now certainly there was some truth in them, and something of conscience also in them. Yet he dissuades entirely the prosecution of them to the rigour, as men are apt to do, but wills us rather to have faith in

ourselves. And truly I think the questions that did then engender strifes, and rent the church, were as much if not more momentous nor the most part of these about which we bite and devour one another,—the questions of the law, the circumcision, and eating of things sacrificed to idols, of things indifferent, lawful, or not lawful. Yet all these he would have subordinated unto the higher end of the commandment, charity, 1 Tim. i. 4, 5. And when he exhorts the Corinthians to be zealous for spiritual gifts, he would yet have them excel in these things which edify the church, 1 Cor. xiv. 1-12. “Covet earnestly the best gifts,” says he, and yet he shows them a more excellent way, and that is charity, (1 Cor. xiii. 1.) to do all these things for the good and edification of the church, rather than of our own opinion, 1 Cor. xii. 3; chap. xiv. 12. I find where the word zeal is taken in a bad sense it hath these works of darkness attending it, wrath, strife, malice, &c. Gal. v. 20; 1 Cor. iii. 3; Rom. xiii. 13. It is accompanied with such a hellish crowd of noisome lusts. Let me add a differential character of it. It is uncharitable, contentious, and malicious. It can do nothing, condescend to nothing, and is conversant about nothing, but what pleases our own humour, for the peace and unity of the church. It is a self-willed impetuous thing, like a torrent that carries all down before it. But truly right zeal runs calmly and constantly within the banks; it will rather consume its own bowels within with grief, than devour others without.

Sermon VI.

Matth. xi. 28.—“Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are wearied,” &c.

It is the great misery of Christians in this life, that they have such poor, narrow, and limited spirits, that are not fit to receive the truth of the gospel in its full comprehension; from whence manifold misapprehensions in judgment, and stumbling in practice proceed. The beauty and life of things consist in their entire union with one another, and in the conjunction of all their parts. Therefore it would not be a fit way to judge of a picture by a lineament, or of an harmony by a discrepant, nor of the world by some small parcel of it; but take all the parts together, all the notes and draughts, as conjoined by art in such an order, and there appears nothing but beauty and consent. Even so it falls out in our conceptions of the gospel. The straitness and narrowness of our spirits takes in truth by parcels, disjointed from the whole, looks upon one side of it, and sees not the other. As for example, sometimes there appears unto us our duty and strait obligation to holy walking and this being seen and considered alone, ordinarily fills the soul with some fear, jealousies, and confusion. Another time, there rises out from under the cloud, the mercy and peace of Christ in inviting, accepting, and pardoning sinners, by his blood, that cleanses from all sin; and in that view (such is our weakness and shortness of sight) there is nothing else presented but pardoning grace; and hence there is occasion given to the corruption of our hearts, to insinuate secretly and subtilely unto us some inclinations to more liberty, and indulgence to the flesh. Thus you see what stumbling in practice, and disorder in walking, this partial way of receiving the truth occasioneth. But it hath no less influence upon the many controversies and differences in doctrine and opinion, about grace and works. For from whence arise these mistakes on both hands, but from the straitness of our apprehensions, that we do not take the truth of God in its full latitude, but being eager upon one part and zealous of it, we almost lose the remembrance, and sometimes fall, in wrangling with the other? Many that proclaim the free grace of the gospel, their fault is, not that they make it freer than it is, for truly it is as free of any Antinomian can apprehend it, but rather because they take it not in its entire and full

complexion, which best declares the freedom of it, as comprehending both the pardon of sin and purity from sin, grace towards us and grace within us; and so, while they only plead for the one, they seem at least to oppugn the other. And, in like manner, others apprehending the necessity, beauty, and comeliness of holiness and new obedience, are much in pressing and declaring this in opposition to the other way; in which there may be some mistake, not in making it more meritorious than it is, but at leastwise¹⁵ in such a manner it may be holden out, as may somewhat obscure the freedom of God's grace. The occasion of both these misapprehensions may be from the scattering of these diverse parcels of truth, as so many pearls in the field of the scripture; one is found here, and one takes it up, as if there were no more; here is repentance, and away he goes with that, without conjoining these scattered pieces into one body. But yet our Saviour sometimes gives us complete sums and models of the gospel, in which he presents all at one view at once, and especially in these words now read. The sum of all the gospel is contained in two words, "Come unto me," and "take my yoke upon you." All the duty of a Christian, and all his encouragement is here. His duty is to believe in Christ, and to give himself up to his obedience, and become his disciple, and to follow his example; and his encouragement is the rest promised, rest to his soul,—which is the only proper seat, of rest or disquiet. It is most capable and sensible of both,—and this rest includes in its bosom, not only peace and tranquillity of mind here, which all the creatures combined cannot give, but all felicity besides; that eternal rest from all the labours of this life, and complacency in the fruition of God for ever. You see, then, what is the full invitation of the gospel. It is nothing else but come, and have rest. "Take on an easy yoke, and ye shall find rest. Come and be happy. Come and receive life. That which you seek elsewhere, both ignorantly and vainly, here it is only to be found. Come (says Christ), and I promise to give it unto you. Wait upon me by obedience, and you shall at length find by experience, that rest which I am willing to give you."

I desire you may consider both the order and the connexion of these integral parts of the gospel. The order of the gospel is a great part of the gospel. In some things method is arbitrary, and it matters not which go before, or which follow after, but here they become essential, and so a great part of the matter itself. There must be first coming to Christ, and then taking on his yoke; first believing, then obeying his commandments. This is as essential an order, as is between the fruit and the root, the stream and the fountain, the sun-beam and the sun. Will any man expect fruit till he plant? There must then first be the implanting of the soul into Christ by faith, and then in due season follow the fruits of obedience by abiding in him. The perverting of this order makes much disorder in the spirits and lives of Christians. But how can it choose but all must wither and decay, if the soul be not planted by this river, whose streams gladden the city of our God, if the roots of it be not watered with the frequent apprehension and consideration of the grace of Christ, or the riches of God's mercy? The way and method of many Christians is just opposite to this. For you labour and weary yourselves, how to attain some measure and satisfaction in the latter, before you adventure the first, to have the heart humbled by godly sorrow, and the soul inflamed by love to God, and the yoke of his obedience submitted unto; while in the mean time you deliberately suspend the exercise of faith, and apprehension of the pardoning grace of Christ. Now, how this can consist either with sound reason or religion, I do not see. For were it not a point of madness to seek fruits from a tree that is lying above ground, and to refuse to plant it till it give some experience of its fruitfulness in the air? And what can be more absurd, than to imagine to have the Spirit of Christ working in the heart godly sorrow, or Christian love, and so renewing it again to his image, and yet withal Christ not received into the heart by faith? Do you not know that this is his first entrance into the soul? He enters there by the door of faith, and a soul enters into him at the door of the promise by faith. How then do ye imagine he shall work in you, before you will admit him to come in to you? Besides, either you apprehend that you may attain to such gracious qualifications by your own industry without Christ, which is blasphemous to his name and office; for if you may, what need have you of him? Or, if you believe that he is the only treasure of all grace and wisdom, and that all things are delivered to him of the Father, then how do you seek these things without him? It must be wretched folly to seek them elsewhere, and not

come to him. And indeed it is observable, that this exhortation to come unto Christ is subjoined unto ver. 27, "All things are delivered unto me by the Father." And therefore, seeing all grace, and life, and happiness is enclosed in me, seeing without me there is nothing but a barren wilderness, in which you may toil and labour, and weary yourselves in fruitless pursuits, come hither where it is originally and plentifully seated, and you cannot miss your end, nor lose your labour. And for the farther illustration of this subject, I shall only add that,

Secondly, There is another woful mistake possesses your minds who take up this way, for certainly you must think that there is some worth or dignity in it, whereby you intend to recommend yourselves unto Christ. For to what purpose is that anxious and scrupulous exaction of such previous qualifications, if it be not to give some more boldness and confidence to thy mind, to adventure to believe the promises and come to Christ, because thou thinkest thou canst not come when thou art so unclean and so unworthy? And therefore thou apprehendest that thou canst so purge thyself from sin and adorn thyself with graces, as may procure some liking, and procure some favour at Christ's hand, which is indeed very opposite to the tenor of the proposal of free grace in the gospel in which there is nothing upon the creature's part required as a condition or qualification to make them the more welcome in coming to Christ.

Let this word then abide with you: "Come unto me, and take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," which in substance is this, Come and cast your burdens on me first, and then take my burden upon you. O it is a blessed exchange! Cast your heavy burden upon my back, and take my light burden on yours. For what is it to invite them that labour and are ladened to come, but to come and repose themselves for rest upon him? And that is directly to lay over that which burdens and ladeneth them upon him. There is an unsupportable burden of sin, the guilt of sin, and there is an intolerable weight of wrath. "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head (Ps. xxxviii. 4.) and as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." And when the wrath of God is joined to this burden, the name of the Lord burning with anger, how may you conceive a soul will be pressed under that burden, which is so heavy, that it will press the mountains into valleys, make the sea flee out of its place, and the earth tremble? Now here is the invitation. Is there any penitent soul that feels the burden of the weight of sin and wrath? Let them come and disburden their souls of care, fear, and anxiety, in this blessed port of rest and refuge for poor sinners. Is there a yoke of transgressions wreathed about thy neck, and bound by the hand of God, (Lam. i. 14) a yoke that neither men nor angels are able to bear? Then, I beseech you, come hither, and put over your yoke upon Jesus Christ. Tie it about him for God hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all, and he bore our sins. He did bear the yoke of divine displeasure, and it was bound about his neck with God's own hand, with his own consent. Now, here is the actual liberty and the releasement of a soul from under the yoke, here is its actual rest and quiet from under the pain of this burden, when a soul is made to consent unto, and willingly to put over that burden upon Christ. And this freedom and vacancy from the unsupportable yoke of guilt, will certainly dispose the soul, and make it more capable of receiving the easy and portable yoke of his commandments. I or you may easily perceive how easy love maketh all things, even difficulties themselves. Let once a soul be engaged that way to Christ, (and there is no possibility of engaging it in affection without some taste and feeling, or believing apprehension of his love and sufficiency for us,) and you will see that the rough way will be made plain and the crooked way straight, heavy things light, and hard things easy. For what command can be grievous to that soul who apprehends that Christ hath taken the great weight of wrath off it, and carried away the intolerable pain of its guiltiness, which would have pressed and depressed it eternally, without any hope of relaxation or ease? Hath he borne a yoke bound on by the majesty of God, and fastened with the cords of his displeasure? And can it be so heavy to a believing soul to take up that obedience which is fastened with the cords of love? And besides, how much will faith facilitate this, and make this yoke to be cheerfully and willingly submitted to, because it delivers the soul from those unsufferable cares and fears, which did quite enervate its strength, and take away its courage? For, I pray you, what is there in a soul under the fear of wrath, that is

not totally disabled by that heavy pressure for any willing or cheerful obedience? The mystery¹⁶ of the spirit is spent that way, the courage of the soul is defeated, the heart is weakened, and nothing is suitable to the yoke of Christian love and obedience. But when once a soul apprehends Christ, this is a reposition of all his cares and burdens, and comes to exoner¹⁷ his soul in him, and cast his burthen upon him. Then the soul is lightened as it were for this journey, then he may walk in the ways of obedience, without the pressing fear and pushing anguish of the dread of condemnation of the law. To conclude this head, nothing will make you take up this yoke willingly, or bear it constantly, except you be delivered from the other yoke that was so heavy even to Christ, and that made him cry, "My soul is exceeding heavy and troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour."

Now, these who are here in the text invited to come unto Christ,—you see them described to be labouring and heavy laden persons. "Come unto me, all ye that labour," &c. At least it seems to hold forth a previous qualification and condition of believing, without which we may not venture to come unto Christ. Indeed it is commonly so taken, and mistaken. Many conceive that the clause is restrictive and exclusive, that is to say, that this description of burdened and wearied sinners is a limitation of the command of believing, and that it circumscribes the warrant of coming to Christ, as if none might lawfully come unto him but these that are thus burdened, and thus it is supposed to be a bar, set upon the door of believing at which sinners must enter in to Christ, to hold out, and shut out all those who are not thus qualified for access, which I truly conceive is contrary to the whole strain and current of the dispensation of the gospel. Therefore I take it to be rather declarative, or ampliative, or both. I say, it is partly for declaration, not of the warrant to come, but of the persons who ordinarily do come to Christ. It declares not simply and universally who should come, but those who actually do come unto Christ. Take it thus then. All persons who hear the gospel are invited to come unto our Saviour without exception, the blind, the lame, those on the highways, not only the thirsty and the hungry, (Isa. lv. 1.) but those who have no thirst or hunger for righteousness, but only for things that do not profit (ver. 2), not only the broken hearted, that desire to come near to righteousness, but even the stout hearted that are far from righteousness. Such are commanded to hearken, and incline their ear, Isa. xlvi. 12, lv. 2, 3. Now, this command that reaches all, gives an immediate actual warrant and right to all to come, if they will. For what is required previous to give warrant to obedience, but the command of obedience? And therefore the Jews were challenged, because they would not come to Christ that they might have life. Now then there is no bar of seclusion set upon the door of the gospel, to keep out any soul from entering in. There is no qualification or condition prescribed by the gospel, and without which if he come, he is actually welcomed and received by Christ, whatsoever you suppose he wants. It is true, men's own security and unbelief will exclude them from Christ, but that is no retraction on the gospel's part. It is a bar set on a man's own heart, that shuts him up from coming to the patent entry of the gospel.

Therefore I take it thus, that though all ought to come to Christ, and none that are indeed willing are debarred for the want of any supposed condition, yet none will actually and really come, till they be in some measure sensible of the weight of their sins, and the wrath of God, till they are labouring under the feeling of their own misery and desperate condition. And whatsoever be the measure of this, if it give so much uneasiness to a man that he can be content with rest and ease in Christ, he may, and certainly ought, to come unto Jesus, and cast all his burdens upon him. I think then, that way that is in so frequent use among Christians, to sit down, and essay to bring our hearts to some deep humiliation, and so to prescribe and order it, as we will deliberately delay, and suspend the thoughts of believing, till we have attained something of this,—I say, this way crosses the very intention of Christ in uttering these words, and such like. For certainly he meant to take away impediments, and not to cast delays in our way. And therefore I said the word was rather for ampliation, that is, rather to encourage these who accounted themselves excluded, than to exclude any who desire to come. "Come unto me, every one, but especially you that labour, ye should make the greatest haste. Come unto me

even though ye apprehend the wrath of God to be intolerable, and have foolishly wearied yourselves in seeking rest by other ways. Ye that are most apprehensive of your sins, and so are apt to doubt of any acceptance,—you that think yourselves worse than any, and so to have least warrant to come to me,—yet come, and I will by no means cast you out, but give rest to your souls.” So that it is not intended to exclude those who are most ready to think themselves excluded, because they see so much sin in themselves.

Therefore, my beloved, without further disputing about it, let me exhort you in the name of Jesus Christ, who here invites and commands you, that you would at once put a period to this, and bring it to some conclusion. Since you are diseased and disquieted in yourselves, and cannot find rest in your own bosoms, I beseech you come here, where it is most likely to be found, and it is most certain, if you come you shall find it. Do not continue wrangling and contesting about the matter; for what is that but to increase your labour, and vexation, and add to your heavy burden? It will be so far from giving you any ease in the result of it, that it will rather make your wounds more incurable, and your burdens more intolerable, which is both opposite to the intention of the gospel and the nature of believing. Here then is your rest, here is your refreshing rest. Here it is in quiet yielding to his gracious offers, and silent submitting to the gospel, not in bawling or contending with it, which is truly a contending against ourselves. Isa. xxviii. 12. This is the rest, wherewith you may cause the weary to rest. It is nowhere else, not in heaven or earth, for there is no back that will take on this burden or can carry it away from us. There is no disburdening of a sinner of guilt and wrath, in any other port or haven, but in Christ, who is the city of refuge. Wheresoever you think to exoner yourselves besides this, you will find no refreshing, but a multiplication of burdens and cares. Your burden shall be rolled over upon you again with double weight. Therefore, my beloved, if you will not hear this, consider what follows, viz. you shall refuse this rest and refreshing and restlessly seek another rest. You may go and be doing, but you shall fall backward, and be broken and snared. Your burden shall fall back upon you, and you shall fall and be broken under it. That which the Lord said to Israel when they would flee to Egypt, is most true in this case. “In returning, and in rest ye shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength;” but alas! they would not, that is a sad close.

Sermon VII.

Matt. xi. 20.—“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,” &c.

Self love is generally esteemed infamous and contemptible among men. It is of a bad report every where, and indeed as it is taken commonly, there is good reason for it, that it should be hissed out of all societies, if reproaching and speaking evil of it would do it. But to speak the truth, the name is not so fit to express the thing, for that which men call self love, may rather be called self hatred. Nothing is more pernicious to a man's self, or pestilent to the societies of men than this, for if it may be called love, certainly it is not self love, but the love of some baser and lower thing than self, to our eternal prejudice. For what is ourselves, but our souls? Matt. xvi. 26, Luke ix. 25. For our Lord there shows that to lose our souls, and to lose ourselves, is one and the same thing. But what is it to love our souls? Certainly it is not to be enamoured with their deformed shape, as if it were perfect beauty? Neither can it be interpreted, any true love to our souls, to seek satisfaction and rest unto them, where it is not at all to be found, for this is to put them in perpetual pain and disquiet. But here it is that true self-love, and soul love centereth, in

that which our Saviour propounds, namely, to desire and seek the everlasting welfare of our souls, and that perpetual rest unto them, after which there is no labour nor motion any more. Therefore, to draw unto himself the souls of men the more sweetly, and the more strongly too, he fasteneth about them a cord of their own interest, and that the greatest, real rest; and by this he is likely to prevail with men in a way suited to their reasonable natures. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are wearied, and I will give you rest." Self interest is ordinarily exploded, at least disowned and disclaimed in men's discourses, as a base, wretched, sordid thing, which, though all men act by it, yet they are all ashamed to profess. But yet, if the interest be so high as indeed to concern self, and that which is truly our self, then both nations and persons count it the most justifiable ground of many of their actions, self preservation. But yet there is a higher interest than that, that relates to the eternal interest of our souls. And truly to own and profess, and prosecute that interest of soul preservation, of eternal rest to our souls, is neither ignoble, nor unbeseeming a Christian; neither is it any way inconsistent with the pursuance of that more public and catholic interest of God's glory, in respect of which all interests, even the most general and public, are particular and private. For this is the goodness of our God, that he hath bound up his own honour and our happiness in one bundle together; that he hath knit the rest of our precious souls, and the glory of his own name inseparably together, not only to condescend to our weakness, but to deal with us suitably to our natures. He proposes our own interests chiefly, to draw us to himself, and allows this happy self seeking in which a man loses himself, that he may be found again in Christ. Seeing then it is thus, that elsewhere, wheresoever you turn yourselves, within or without, there is no rest, but endless labour, and fruitless toil, (you find this already by experience, you who apprehend the weight of your sins, and the greatness of divine wrath,) that there is an intolerable pressure upon your souls already, and that this is nothing diminished, but rather augmented, by your vain labours and inquiries after some ease and peace,—your endeavours to satisfy your own consciences, and pacify God's wrath some other way, having filled you with more restless anxiety, and seeing there is a certain assurance of true rest and tranquillity here, upon the easiest terms imaginable, that is, "come to Jesus Christ, all ye who are disquieted and restless, and he will give you rest,"—O should not this be an invincible and irresistible attractive to your hearts, to draw them to our Redeemer over all impediments? The rest is perfect happiness; and yet the terms are easy. Only come and embrace it, and seek it nowhere else. There is a kind of quietness and tranquillity in the seeking and attaining this rest. All other rests are come to by much labour and business. Here Christ would have you,—who have laboured in vain for rest, and lost your toil and your pains,—to come at it, by ceasing from labour, as it were, that which you could not attain by labour, to come by it, *cunctando* (by keeping quiet), which you could not gain *pugnando* (by fighting). There is a quiet and silent way of believing promises, and rolling yourselves upon Christ offered in them, which is the nearest and most compendious way to this blessed rest and quietness, which, if you think to attain by much clamour and contention of debate or dispute, or by the painful labour and vexation of your spirits, which you call exercise of mind,—you take the way about, and put yourselves further off from it. Faith has a kind of present vacancy and quietness in it, in the very acting of it. It is not a tumultuous thing, but composes the soul to quietness and silence, to a cessation from all other things but the looking upon Christ holden out in the gospel, and this in due time will give greater rest and tranquillity. Consider what the Lord speaks to the people that would take a journey upon them to Egypt, (Isa. xxx. 15). "In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Their peace was near hand, but they would travel abroad to seek it, and they find trouble. Their strength was to sit still and be quiet, and trust in the Lord. Nay, but they would not sit still, but flee and wander abroad to their old house of bondage, and therefore, says the Lord, you shall flee. Now, may not this represent the folly and madness of souls that are under the fear of wrath and sense of sin, and be as it were a type of it? Our rest is in resting on a Saviour, our peace is in quiet confidence in him, it is not far off, it is in our mouth. "The word is near" (says Paul), it is neither in heaven above, nor in the depth below. We need not go abroad and search for that happiness we want. It is nigh at hand in the gospel, but while we refuse this, and give ourselves to restless agitation and perplexity about it, sometimes we apprehend that

we are eased in our travels and endeavours, but it shall prove to us no better than Egypt a house of bondage. Wheresoever we seek shelter out of Christ, we will find it a broken reed, that not only will fail under us, but in the rent will split our hand, and pierce us through with many sorrows. To conclude then this head, coming to Christ with our burdens is a motion towards rest. For he adds, "I will give you rest." But moreover, there is a kind of rest in this motion. It is an easier, plainer, and pleasanter motion, than these troubled and laborious windings and wanderings of our hearts after vanity. He persuades you to walk in this path of pleasantness and peace, and you shall find a great rest at the end of it, "receiving (says Peter) the end of your faith the eternal salvation of your souls."

Now the next thing in the text is, having come to Jesus, and found rest and happiness in him, we must take his yoke upon us. And this is the other integral part of the gospel, of which I desire you to consider these few particulars, that occur in the words,—The order in which it is to be taken on,—The nature of this yoke,—And the most ready and expeditious way of bearing it.

The method and order in which Christ's yoke is to be taken upon us, is first, To come unto our Saviour, and give over the yoke of our transgressions to him, and then to take up the yoke of his commandments from him, to believe in his promises, and rest our souls on them, and to take up the yoke of his precepts, and proceed to motion, and walking in that rest. Now this method hath a double advantage in it, for the real receiving and carrying of Christ's yoke. It gives vacancy and room for it, and it gives strength and furniture¹⁸ for it. It expels that which would totally disable you to bear it, and brings in that comfortable supply, which will strengthen and enable you to bear it. Consider what posture a soul is put into, that lives under the terror of God, and is filled with the apprehension of the guilt of sin and the greatness of God's wrath. I say, such a soul, till he have some rest from that grievous labour, is fit for no other more pleasant labour, until he be something disburthened of that which is like to press him down to hell. He is not very capable of any new burden, until the yoke of his transgressions that is wreathed about his neck be taken off. Do ye think he can find any vacant room for the yoke of Christ's obedience? When a soul is under the dominion of fear and terror, under the power of grief and anguish, do ye think he is fit for any thing, or can do any thing, but groan in that prison of darkness, under these chains? Such a soul is in bondage, under servitude, and can neither take up this yoke of liberty nor walk in it. The strength and moisture of the spirit is drunk up by the poison of these arrows, and there remains neither attention, affection, nor spirit for any thing else. Therefore here is the incomparable advantage that redounds from this way of coming first to Christ, and exonerating our cares and fears in his bosom, and in disburthening our sins upon him, who hath taken them on, and carried them away, as that scape goat sent unto the wilderness on which they laid the sins of the people. By this means, I say, you shall have a vacancy for the yoke of Christ and liberty to all your faculties, your understanding, will, and affections, (which are no better than slaves and captives, *non sui juris*, while they are under these tyrannous passions of fear and horror,) to attend the obedience of Christ and the drawing of his yoke. This will relieve your souls out of prison, and then you will be fit for employment. Besides this, there is furniture and help brought into the soul, which enables it to this; and without which, though it were not pressed under a burden of sin and wrath, yet it would neither be able nor willing. There is that supply and strength that faith brings from Christ, which arises from our mystical implantation in him, from hence flows that communication of his grace to a believer. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ, John i. 16, 17. Now this efficacy and virtue that is in Christ the head, is transmitted unto the members of his body by believing in him. Indeed the very apprehension of such a Saviour may have some quickening virtue in it, but certainly the great influence of life is annexed to it by his gracious promises, "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. "As the living Father who sent me, lives in himself, and I have life by the Father, so he that believes on me, shall live by me," John vi. 57. "Abide in me, and I in you, and ye shall bring forth much fruit." He hath graciously appointed the derivation of that life to us, to be conjoined with our right apprehensions, and believing meditations of him, making, as it were, faith the opening of his house, to let in his fulness

to us. Now, besides this more mysterious and supernatural furniture and supply, there is even something that is naturally consequent to it, some enabling of the soul for holy obedience, flows naturally from the love of Christ. And when ever a believer apprehends what he has done for him, finds some rest and relaxation in him, it cannot but beget some inward warmth of love to him who so loved us. "Faith worketh by love," says Paul. The way it goes to action is by affection. It at once inflames that, and then there is nothing more active and irresistible. It hath a kind of indefatigable firmness in it, it hath an unwearied strength to move in the yoke all the day long. In a word, nothing almost is impossible or too hard for it, for it is of the nature of fire to break through all, and over all impediments. Nothing is so easy but it becomes uneasy to a soul under fear, and nothing so difficult but it becomes easy to a soul wherein perfect love has cast out fear. For love makes a soul to move supernaturally in divine things, as a natural or co-natural agent, freely, willingly, and constantly. If they be not suitable to our natures as corrupted, and so, grievous to love, then, as much as it possesses the heart, it makes the heart co-natural to them, and supplies the place of that natural instinct that carries other creatures to their own works and ends, strongly and sweetly. 1 John v. 3, Psal. cxix. 165, Neh. vii. 10, Col. iii. 15. Now you may judge whether or not you can possibly expect so much advantage in any other method or way you take. This I leave to your own consideration and experience.

And so I come to the next thing proposed, *secondly*, To consider what this yoke is, and what is the nature of it. And may I not upon this head justly enough distinguish a twofold yoke, of doctrine and discipline, that is, the yoke of Christ's commandments and laws, which both, in his love and wisdom, he hath imposed upon us, for the regulation of our lives? And this we are to take on by an obedience cheerful, willing, and constant. But there is another yoke mentioned in scripture, namely, the yoke of his chastisements and correcting, such a one as Ephraim (Jer. xxxi. 18) was tried with, and was long or he could learn to bear it. It is good for a man to bear this yoke in his youth, Lam. iii. 27. Now whether or not this be meant here, I do not contend. The first is the chief intent, and it is not needful to exclude this altogether, since it is not the smallest point of Christianity to take up the one yoke by submission, as well as to take up the other by obedience. How ever it be, obedience must be taken so largely, as it cannot but comprehend the sweet compliance, and submission of the will to God's will in all cross-dispensations, which is no little probation of the loyal and obedient temper of the heart. Both yokes must be taken up, for so Christ speaks of his cross, "If any man will be my disciple, he must take up his cross and follow me," Matt. xvi. 24, 25. It must be lifted up upon our shoulders, as it were, willingly, and cheerfully, we actually concurring, as it were, to the bearing of it, and the receiving it. But there is this difference between the one yoke and the other, the one cannot be imposed upon us, neither can we bear it, except we actively and with our own consent and delight take it up. Though God may impose laws upon us, and give us righteous and faithful commandments, which indeed lay a strait obligation and tie upon us under pain of disloyalty, and rebellion, to walk in them, yet it never becomes our yoke, and is never carried by us, until there be a subsequent consent of the soul, and a full condescension of the heart, to embrace that yoke with delight. Till we yoke ourselves unto his commandments, by loving and willing obedience, we have not his yoke upon us. "Thy people shall be made willing in the day of thy power." It is not terrors and constraints, but the bands of love will bind us to this yoke. It must be bound upon us by the cords of love, not of fear. He is a true king, not a tyrant, he loves *imperare volentibus*, "to rule every man with his own consent," but a tyrant "rules every man against his will," *nolentibus imperat*. But as to the other yoke of his discipline, his cross, whether it be for his sake, or whether it be the general cross of our pilgrimage here, and the vicissitudes and changes of this life, it is not in our arbitrament to bear a cross, or have a cross or not. Have it we must, bear it we must, whether we choose or refuse it. There is no man can be exempted from some yoke of this kind. No man can promise himself immunity from some cross or other, if not in poverty, yet in abundance, if not in contempt and reproach yet in honour and greatness. There is nothing of that kind that will not become weighty with itself alone, though nothing be superadded to it. So then, since every man must have a yoke, he hath only the advantage who takes it up, and bears it patiently. For if he thus

sweetly comply and yield to God's will, he will not so much bear his cross, as his cross will bear him. If thou take it up, it will take thee up and carry thee. If thou submit and stoop willingly to God's good pleasure, thou wilt make it a more easy yoke, and light burden. *Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt.*¹⁹ If thou be patient, his dispensation will gently and sweetly lead thee to rest, but an impatient soul is dragged and drawn after it against the hair, and yet he must follow it. There is this mighty disadvantage in our impatient unsubjectedness to God's will, that it makes that a yoke which is no yoke, no cross a cross, an easy yoke hard, and a light burden heavy, and yet notwithstanding we must bear it. A yoke, a cross, we cannot escape, whithersoever we go, whithersoever we turn ourselves, because we carry ourselves about with us, and our own crooked perverse apprehensions of things which trouble us more than the things themselves. Now consider the reasonableness of taking on the yoke of Christ's obedience. Should we not with David, offer ourselves willingly, and present ourselves even before we are called? "Lo I come, to do thy will, O God. I delight in thy law, it is in my inward part," Psal. xl. 8. There is no yoke so reasonable, if you consider it as imposed by Christ our King and Lawgiver. Hath he not redeemed us from the house of bondage, from the vilest and basest slavery, under the most cruel tyrants, Satan, and death, and hell? Heb. ii. 15. Hath he not asserted and restored us into the true liberty of men, and of the sons of God? The Son hath made us free, (John viii. 32) when we were under the most grievous yoke of sin and wrath, and the eternal curse of God. He hath put his own neck under it and become a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law, and so he hath carried away these iron chariots, these yokes of brass and iron, whereby Satan kept us in subjection, and now been established our careful King, not only by the title of the justest and most beneficial conquest that ever was made, but by God's solemn appointment upon the hill of Zion, Psal. ii. 6. And being exalted a Prince to give us salvation, were it not most strange if his kingdom should want laws, which are the life and soul of republics and monarchies? Ought not we to submit to them gladly, and obey them cheerfully? Should not we absolutely resign ourselves to his will, and esteem his commandments concerning all things to be right? What command should be grievous to that soul, which is delivered from the curse of all the commandments, and is assured never to enter into condemnation? If there were no more to say, were it not monstrous ingratitude to withdraw ourselves from subjection to him, or yield obedience to any other strange lords, as our lusts are? Would it not be an unexemplified unthankfulness to requite rebellion to him, for so much unparalleled affection? Since we are not our own, but bought with a price, we are not *sui juris*,²⁰ to dispose of ourselves. All reason should say, that he who payed so dear for us should have the use of us. And that is nothing but glory he seeks from us, that we offer and consecrate soul and body to him, to come under his yoke. As for the gain, it redounds all to ourselves, and that as the greater gain too.

Now a word to the last thing proposed, for I can only hint at it. The most excellent and ready way of bearing this yoke, is to learn of him, to present him as our pattern, and to yield ourselves to him, as his disciples and scholars, not only to learn his doctrine, but to imitate his example and practice, "to walk even as he walked." And herein is great moment²¹ of persuasion, Christ puts nothing upon you, but what he did take upon himself. There is so much more reason for you to take it up, that it is his own personal yoke, which he himself carried, for he delighted to do the Father's will. It was his meat and drink to work in that yoke. Now there are two things especially wherein he propones himself the exemplar or pattern of our imitation, viz., his humility and meekness of spirit. He was "meek and lowly in heart." And these graces have the greatest suitableness to capacitate and dispose every man for taking, and keeping the yoke of Christ. Humility and lowliness bows his back to take on the least of his commands. This makes him stoop low, and makes his shoulders fit for it, and then meekness arms him against all difficulties and impediments that may occur in it.

Sermon VIII.

Matt. xi. 29.—“Take my yoke upon you,” &c.

Christianity consists in a blessed exchange of yokes between Christ and a pious soul. He takes our uneasy yoke, and gives his easy yoke. The soul puts upon him that unsupportable yoke of transgressions, and takes from him the portable yoke of his commandments. Our burden was heavy, too heavy for angels, and much more for men. It would crush under it all the strength of the creatures, for who could endure the wrath of the Almighty? Or, “what could a man give in exchange for his soul”? Nay, that debt would drown the whole creation, if they were surety for it. Notwithstanding, Christ hath taken that burden upon him, being able to bear it, having almighty shoulders, and everlasting arms for it. And yet you find how heavy it was for him, when it pressed out that groan from him, “Now is my soul sore amazed, very heavy, and exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and what shall I say?” That which carried it away from us, hath buried it in his grave, whither it pressed him down. It gets him very low under it, but he hath got above it and is risen again, and whereas in vain there was a stone put above him, and sealed, he hath rolled a stone above that yoke and burden, that it cannot be able to weigh down any believing soul to hell; for that weight which depressed his spotless soul, would have depressed the sons of men to eternal darkness. Now for his burden, we observe that it is of another nature, to speak properly, than other burdens. It is not a heavy yoke or burden, but a state of liberty, an ornament, a privilege. It is a chain of gold about a saint's neck, to bind Christ's laws about them, every link of that chain is more precious than rubies or diamonds. If there be any burden in it, it is the burden of honour, the burden of privilege, and incomparable dignity, *honos* not *onus* or *onus honoris*.²² This is that which he puts upon us, or rather that which a believer receives from him. Now I will not have you so to take it, as if Christ did not propose the terms thus, “If you will be willing to take on the yoke of my laws, I will take on the yoke of your sins and curses.” Nay, it is not such an exchange as is thus mutually dependent; for it hath pleased the Father without consulting us, and the Son without our knowledge or consent, to conclude what to do with the heavy and unsupportable burden of sinners. The Father “laid upon him the iniquities of us all, and he” of his own accord “hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,” (Isa. lii. 4-6) and that burden did bruise him; yea, “it pleased the Lord to bruise him,” and it pleased himself to be bruised. O strange and unparalleled love, that could digest so hard things, and make so grievous things pleasant! Now I say, he having thus taken on our burden already, calls upon us afterward, and sends forth proclamations, and affectionate invitations, “Come unto me, all ye poor sinners, that are burdened with sin, and wearied with that burden; you who have tired yourselves in these byways, and laboured elsewhere in vain, to seek rest and peace: you have toiled all night and caught nothing, come hither, cast your net upon this side of the ship, and you shall find what you seek. I have undertaken your yoke and burden, why then do you laden yourselves any more with the apprehension of it? The real and true burden of wrath I have already carried away, why then do ye weary yourselves with the imagination of it? Only come to me, and see what I have done, and you shall find rest and peace.”

Now this being proponed absolutely unto sinners, and they being invited to consent to that which Christ has done in their name, in the next place he comes to impose his easy yoke upon us, not at all for any recompence of what he hath done, but rather for some testimony of gratitude and thankfulness on our part, and for the manifestation of grace and love on his part. I do indeed conceive, that the imposition of the yoke of Christ's laws upon believers, is as much for the declaration of his own love and goodness, as the testification of our thankfulness. If you consider the liberty, the beauty, and the equity of this yoke, it will rather be construed to proceed from the greatest love and favour, than to tend any way to recompence his love. Herein is perfect liberty, Psal. cxix. 32, 45. It is an enlargement of heart, from the base restraint and abominable servitude of the vilest lusts,

that tyrannize over us, and keep our affections in bondage. O how narrow bounds is the liberty of the spirits of men confined unto, that they serve their own lusts! Sin itself and the lusts of the flesh, are a grievous yoke, which the putting on of this yoke looses them from: and when the heart is thus enlarged with love and delight in Christ, then the feet unfettered, may walk at liberty, and run in the way of God's commandments. "I will walk at liberty," when I have a respect to thy ways, Psal. cxix. 45. O how spacious and broad is that way in reality, which to our first apprehension and the common construction is strait and narrow! The truth is, there is no straitness, no bondage, no scantiness, but in sin. That is the most abominable vassalage, and the greatest thralldom of the immortal spirit; to be so basely dragged by the flesh downward, to the vilest drudgery, and to be so pinched and hampered²³ within the narrowness of created and perishing things. To speak properly, there is no slavery but this of the spirit; for it is not so contrary to the nature and state of the body, (which by its first institution was made a servant,) to be under the dominion of men, and further we cannot reach. Yea, it is possible for a man, while his body is imprisoned, to be yet at greater freedom than those who imprisoned him. As his mind is, so he is. But to be a servant of sin and unrighteousness, must totally degrade the soul of man. It quite defaces that primitive glory, and destroys that native liberty, in which he was created. Therefore to have this sin taken off us, and the yoke of Christ's obedience put on us, to be made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness, that is the soul's true liberty, which sets it forth at large to expatiate in the exceeding broad commandments, and in the infinite goodness of God, where there is infinite room for the soul.

When, then, I consider how beautiful this is for a reasonable spirit, to be under the law of him that hath made it and redeemed it, I cannot but think that Christ doth rather beautify and bless, than burden. The beauty of the world consists in that sweet order, and harmonious subordination of all things, to that law God hath imposed upon them, or engraves upon their natures. If we should suppose but one of the parts of the world to swerve from the primitive institution, what a miserable distraction would ensue? How deformed would this beautiful and adorned fabric become? How much more is it the beauty, grace, and comeliness of an intelligent being, to be under the law of him that gave him a being, and to have that written in his heart,—to be in a manner transformed by the shining glory of these laws, to be a living law? What is it, I pray you, deforms these fallen angels, and makes them devils? Why do we paint a good angel in a beautiful and comely image, while the devils are commonly represented in the most horrid, ugly, and monstrous shape and visage? Is it not this that makes the difference, that the one is fallen from a blessed subordination to the will of God, and the other keeps that station? But both are equal in nature, and were alike in the beginning.

Add unto this, the equity of Christ's yoke. There is nothing either so reasonable in itself, or yet so suitable to ourselves. For what is it that he puts upon us? Truly no new commandment; it is but the old command renewed. It is no new law, though he hath conquered us, and hath the right of absolute dominion over us; yet he hath not changed our fundamental laws. He changes only the present tyrannical yoke of sin: but he restores us, as it were, to our fundamental liberty we formerly enjoyed, and that sin forced us from, when it conquered us. Christ's yoke is not a new imposition. It is but the ancient yoke that was bound upon man's nature by God the Creator. The Redeemer doth not invent or contrive one of his own; he only looses off the yoke of iniquity, and binds on that sweet yoke of obedience and love to God. He publishes the same laws, many of which are already written in some obscure characters upon our own minds; and he again writes them down all over in our hearts. There is nothing superadded by Jesus Christ, but a chain of love to bind this yoke about our necks, and a chain of grace and truth to keep his laws. And truly these make the yoke easy, and take away the nature of a burden from it. O what mighty and strong persuasions! O what constraining motives of love and grace doth the gospel furnish, and the rarest cords to bind on Christ's yoke upon a reasonable soul,—cords of the most unparalleled love!

I shall only add unto all this, that as herein Christ hath expressed or completes the expression of his love upon his part; so upon our part it becomes us to take on his yoke, in testimony of our thankfulness. We owe our very selves unto him. What can be more said? We owe ourselves once and again; for we are twice his workmanship, first created by him, and then renewed or created again unto good works. We are bought with a price, we are not our own. Can there be any obligation imagined beyond this? Let us therefore consecrate ourselves to his glory. Let all who believe the gospel dedicate themselves to its obedience, not so much for salvation to themselves, as their obligation to their Saviour. We are not called so much to holiness and virtue that we may be saved, as, because we are saved, to be blameless before God in love. O how gracious and honourable a disposition of this kind would it be, to serve him more out of gratitude for what he hath done, than merely for the reward that he will give!

Sermon IX.

Rom. xv. 13.—“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,” &c.

It is usual for the Lord in his word to turn his precepts unto promises, which shows us, that the commandments of God do not so much import an ability in us, or suppose strength to fulfil them, as declare that obligation which lies upon us, and his purpose and intention to accomplish in some, what he requires of all: and therefore we should accordingly convert all his precepts unto prayers, seeing he hath made them promises. This gives us ground, as it were, to retort his commands by way of requests and supplications. The scripture here gives us a precedent, and often elsewhere hath made his command a promise. It is then in the next disposition, and nearest capacity, to be turned into the form of a supplication. The joy promised in the preceding verse is elsewhere commanded; and this immediately disposes the sinner to receive a new form of prayer, from a believing heart, and that not only for himself, but for others. You see how frequently such holy and hearty wishes are interjected in his writings. And indeed such ejaculations of the soul's desires, whether kept within, or vented, will often interrupt the thoughts and discourses of believers, but yet they break no sentence, they mar no sense, no more than the interposition of a parenthesis. Such desires will follow by a kind of natural resultance upon the lively apprehension of any divine excellent thing, and secret complacency in it, and a stirring of the heart to be possessed with it, will almost prevent deliberation. Such an attractive power the excellency of any object hath in the heart, that it draws it and engages it almost before any consultation be called about it. Now there is something of this in these objects which we are naturally delighted with. All at least that they want the apprehension supplies, and this draws the heart forcibly after them, as it were, with out previous advisement. Yet because of the limitation, emptiness, and scarcity of these things, commonly the desires of men are contracted much within themselves, and run towards a monopoly of those things. They are so poor and narrow, that they cannot be enjoyed of more, without division, and the dividing them cannot be without diminution of each man's contentment, and therefore men's wishes ordinarily are stinted within their own satisfaction and possession, and cannot without some restraint of reason extend further to other men. But this is the vast difference between spiritual things and bodily, eternal things and temporal, that there is no man possessed of spiritual good, but he desires a community. It is as natural upon the apprehension of them to enlarge the soul's wishes to other men, because there is such excellency, abundance, and solidity

discovered in them, as that all may be full, and none envy or prejudice another. They are like the light that can communicate itself to all, and that without diminution of its splendour. All may see it without prejudice one to another. They are such an ocean that every one may fill their vessel, and yet nothing less for them that come after. And therefore the soul that wishes largely for itself, will not find that inward discontent at the great abundance of another, which is the inseparable shadow of earthly and temporal advantages. It is cross to men's interest, that love gain or preferment, or any such thing, that others grow rich, or are advanced high in the world, for it intercepts what they desire. But it is not at all the interest of a godly soul that others be worse than himself, but rather the salvation and happiness of all men is that interest which alone he espouses.

Now for this, my beloved, before we proceed further, you may find how the pulse of your souls beats, and what your temper is, by considering what is the ordinary unrestrained and habitual wishes of your hearts. Certainly as men are inclined so they affect, and so they desire, and these unpremeditated desires that are commonly stirred up in the hearts of men, argue much the inward temper and inclination of the heart, and give the best account of it. I think if men would reflect upon themselves, they will find that earthly things are vain, while they put on another beauty, and have a more magnificent representation in their minds, and so draw after them the choicest of their affections, that they cannot spare much real affection for spiritual things, which are apprehended more slightly and darkly, and make the lighter and more superficial impression. But certainly this will be the most natural beating of a holy heart and the ordinary breathing of it, to desire much of this spiritual treasure for themselves and others. You know what the thoughts and discourses of merchants turn most upon. It is to have good winds, fair weather, good markets, and all things that may facilitate gain, and husbandmen wish for good seasons, timely showers, and dry harvests, that there may be plenty. And generally what men's hearts are set upon, that they go abroad fervently and incessantly in longing desires after. Now truly this is the Christian's inward motion, and this is his salutation, wherewith he congratulateth others. "The God of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing." His gain lies in another airth.²⁴ His plenty is expected from another field, and that is from above, from the God of hope, the sweetest name (if all the rest be answerable) to be dealt withal, either for gain or plenty, for it is hope that makes labour sweet, and if it answer expectation then all is well. Therefore, in the sowing the seed of prayers and supplications, with tears, for this harvest of joy, and in trafficking for this treasure of peace, it is good that we have to do with the God of hope, who cannot make us ashamed; for he that soweth must sow in hope, 1 Cor. ix. 10. And therefore, though we sow in tears, yet let us mingle hope therewith, and the harvest shall be joy, and the plenty, affluence of peace in the Holy Ghost. Now if we believed this, would not our sorrows be deep, and our labours sweet?

In the words you have read, there is the highest wish of a holy heart for himself and them he loves best; that one desire, if he had no occasion ever to present himself to God, but once, that he would certainly fall upon, or some such like, to be filled after this manner with all peace and joy in believing. These are the fruits of the Spirit he desires to be filled with, and feed upon,—peace as an ordinary meal, and joy as an extraordinary desert, or as a powerful cordial; and to supply what here is wanting at present, the hope of what is to come, and that in abundance. This is even an entertainment that a believer would desire for himself, and these who have his best wishes, while he is in this world. He would despise the delicacies of kings, and refuse their dainties, if he might sit at this table that is spread on the mountain of God's church, a full feast which fills the soul with peace, joy, and hope, as much as now it is capable of. Now these precious fruits you see in the words show the root that brings them forth, and the branch that immediately bears them. The root is the God of hope, and the power of the Holy Ghost. And a soul being ingrafted as a living branch by faith into Christ, receives virtue to bring forth such pleasant fruits, so that they grow immediately upon the branch of believing, but the sap and virtue of both come from the Holy Ghost, and the God of hope. Or to take it up in another like notion. This is the river which gladdeneth the city of God with its streams, that waters the garden of the Lord with its threefold stream. For you see it is parted in

three heads, and every one of them is derived from another. The first in the order of nature is peace,—a sweet, calm, and refreshing river, which sometimes overflows like the river Nilus, and then it runs in a stream of joy, which is the high spring tide but ordinarily it sends forth the comfortable stream of hope, and that in abundance. Now this threefold river hath its original high, as high as the God of hope, and the power of the Holy Ghost, but the channel of it is situated low, and it is believing in Christ.

To begin then with the first of these. Truly there is nothing can be spoken that sounds more sweetly in the ears of men than peace and joy. They need nothing to commend them, for they have a sufficient testimonial, and letters of recommendation written upon the affections of all men. For what is it that all men labour and seek after but this? It is not any outward earthly thing that is desired for itself, but rather for the peace and contentment the mind expects in it. And therefore, this must be of itself the proper object or good of the soul, which, if it can be had immediately, without that long and endless compass about the creatures, certainly a man cannot but think himself happy, and will have no missing of other things, as if a man could live healthfully and joyfully without meat, and without all appetite for it, no doubt but he would think himself the happiest man in the world, and would think it no pain to him to want the dainties of princes, but rather that he were delivered from the wearisome necessity others laboured under. Just so is it here, there is nothing would persuade a man to travel, and toil all his lifetime, about the creatures, and not to suffer his soul to take rest, if he did believe to find that immediately without travel, which he endures so much travel for. And therefore the believing Christian is only a wise man, who is instructed where the things themselves, true peace and joy, do lie, and so seeks to be filled with the things themselves, for which only men seek other things, and not as other men who catch at the shadows, that they may at length find the substance itself, for this were far about, and labour in vain.

Peace is so sweet and comprehensive a word, that the Jews made their usual compellation, “Peace be unto you,”²⁵ importing all felicity, and the affluence of all good. And indeed our Saviour found no fitter word to express his matchless good-will to the well-being of his disciples nor this (Luke xxiv. 36.), when he saluted them after his resurrection, “Peace be unto you,” which is as much as if he had wished absolute satisfaction, all contentment and happiness that themselves would desire. Now this peace hath a relation to God, to ourselves, and our brethren. I will exclude none of them from the present wish; for even brotherly concord and peace suits well with the main subject of this chapter, which is the bearing of our neighbours' infirmities, and not pleasing ourselves, and such like mutual duties of charity. But certainly the other two relations are most intrinsic to happiness, because there is nothing nearer to us than the blessed God; and next to him, there is nothing comes so near us as ourselves. The foundation of all our misery, is that enmity between man and God, which is as if heaven and earth should fall out into an irreconcilable discord, and upon that should follow the suspension of the light of the stars, and the withdrawing of the influences of heaven, and the withholding the refreshment of the early and latter rain. If such dissension fell between them, that the heavens should be as brass to the earth, and would refuse the clouds when they cry for rain, or the herbs and minerals when they crave the influences from above, what a desolate and irksome dwelling-place would the earth be? What a dreary habitation would we find it? Even so it is between God and men. All our being, all our well-being, hangs upon the good aspect of his countenance. In his favour is all our life and happiness; yet since the first rebellion, every man is set contrary to God, and in his affections and actions denounces war against heaven, whence hath flowed the sad and woful suspension of all these blessings, and comfortable influences, which only beautify and bless the soul of man. And now there is nothing to be seen but the terrible countenance of an angry God, the revengeful sword of justice shaken in the word; all above us as if the sun were turned into blackness, and the moon into blood, and behold trouble and darkness, and dimness of anguish.

Now whenever a soul begins to apprehend his enmity and division in sad earnest, there follows an intestine war in the conscience. The terrors of God raise up a terrible party

within a man's self, and that is the bitter remembrance of his sins. These are mustered and set in order in battle-array against a man, and every one of these, as they are thought upon, strike a dart into his heart. They shoot an arrow dipped in the wrath of God, the poison whereof drinketh up his spirit, Job vi. 4. Though the most part of souls have now a dead calm, and are asleep like Saul in the field in the midst of his enemies, or as Jonas in the ship in the midst of the tempest, yet when they awake out of that deep stupidity, God will write bitter things against them, and make them to possess their iniquities; and they shall find that he hath numbered their steps, and watched over their sin, and sealed it as in a bag, to be kept in record. Then he will renew his witnesses against them, and put their feet in the stocks, and they shall then apprehend that changes and war are against them, and that they are set as a mark against God, and so they will be a burden to themselves, Job vii. 20. What a storm will it raise in the soul! Now to lay this tempest, and calm this wind, is the business of the gospel, because it reveals these glad tidings of peace and reconciliation with God, which can only be the ground of a perfect calm in the conscience. Herein is the atonement and propitiation set forth, that which by its fragrant and sweet smell hath pacified heaven, and appeased justice; and this only is able to pacify the troubled soul, and lay the tumultuous waves of the conscience, Eph. ii. 13-20; Col. i. 19-22. This gives the answer of a good conscience, which is like the sweet and gentle breathing of a calm day after a tempest, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Now it is not so much God reconcilable to sinners, as God in Christ reconciling sinners to himself, 2 Cor. v. 19. Though some men be always suspicious of God, yet they have more reason to suspect their own willingness. For what is all the gospel but a declaration of his love, and laying down the enmity, or rather, that he had never hostile affections to his elect, and so was all this while providing a ransom for himself, and bringing about the way to kill the enmity? And having done that by the blood of Christ, he will follow us with entreaties of reconcilment, and requests to lay down our hostile affections, and the weapons of our warfare; and for him we have no more ado but to believe his love, while we were yet enemies. This, I say, carried into the heart with power, gives that sweet calm and pleasant rest to the soul, after all its tossings. This commands the winds and waves of the conscience, and they obey it. It is true that many find no trouble within, and some, upon terrible apprehensions of sin and wrath, find ease for the time in some other thing, as a diversion to some other object, and turning aside with Cain to build cities, to worldly pleasures, or employments, or company, that the noise of them may put the clamours of their conscience to silence. Some parleys and cessations men have, some treaties of this kind for peace with God; but alas! the most part make no entire and full peace. They are always upon making the bargain, and cannot close it, because of their engagements to sin, and their own corrupt lusts. And therefore many do nothing else than what men do in war, to seek some advantage, or to gain time by their delays: but O the latter end will be sad, when he shall arm you against yourselves! Were it not better, now while it is to-day, not to harden your hearts? Now, joy is the effect of peace, and it is the very overflowing of it in the soul, upon the lively apprehension of the love of God, and the inestimable benefit of the forgiveness of sins. It is peace in a large measure, pressed down, and running over, breaking without the ordinary channel, and dilating itself to the affecting and refreshing of all that is in man: "My heart and my flesh shall rejoice." This is the very exuberance and high sailing-tide of the sea of peace that is in a believer's heart. It swells sometimes upon the full aspect of God's countenance beyond the ordinary bounds, and cannot be kept within in gloriation and boasting in God. When a soul is so illustrated with the Holy Ghost, as to make a kind of presence and possession of what is hoped for, that makes the soul to enlarge itself in joy. This makes the inward jubilation, the heart as it were to leap for joy. Now, truly this is not the ordinary entertainment of a Christian. It is neither so universal nor constant as peace. These fruits so matured and ripe, like the grapes of Canaan, are not set down always upon the table of every Christian, nor yet at all to some. It is enough that he keep the soul in that healthful temper, that it is neither quite cast down or discouraged through difficulties and infirmities. It is sufficient if God speak peace to the soul, though it be not acquainted with these raptures of Christianity. This hath so much sense in it, that it is not meet to be made ordinary food, lest we should mistake our pilgrimage for heaven, and fall upon the building of tabernacles in this mount. For certainly the soul would conclude it good to be here, and could not so

earnestly long for the city and country of heaven, if they had any more but some tastes of that joy to sharpen their desires after the full measure of it. It is a fixed and unchangeable statute of heaven, that we should here live by faith, and not by sense. And indeed, the following of God fully, in the ways of obedience, upon the dim apprehensions of faith, is more praiseworthy, and hath more of the true nature of obedience in it, than when present sweetness hath such a predominant influence. Besides, our vessel here is weak and crazy, and most unfit for such strong liquor as the joys of the Holy Ghost. Some liquors have such a strong spirit in them that they will burst an ordinary bottle; and as our Saviour says, "No man puts new wine in old bottles, for they will burst," Matt. ix. 17. Truly the joy of heaven is too strong for our old ruinous and earthly vessels to bear, till the body "put on incorruption," and be fashioned like unto Christ's own glorious body; for it cannot be capable of all the fulness of this joy. And yet there is a kind of all fulness of peace and joy in this life, "fill you with all joy and peace." Indeed the fulness of this life is emptiness to the next. But yet there is a fulness in regard of the abundance of the world. Their joys and pleasures, their peace and contentation in the things of this life, are but like "the crackling of thorns under a pot," that makes a great noise, but vanishes quickly in a filthy security, Eccles. vii. 6. It is such, that like the loudest laughter of fools, there is sorrow at the heart, and in the end of it is heaviness, Prov. xiv. 13. It is but at the best a superfluous, an external garb drawn over the countenance, no cordial nor solid thing. It is not heart joy, but a picture and shadow of the gladness of the heart in the outward countenance; and whatever it be, sorrow, grief, and heaviness follow at its heels, by a fatal inevitable necessity. So that there is this difference between the joys and pleasures of the world, and dreams in the night; for the present there is more solidity, but the end is hugely different. When men awake out of a dream, they are not troubled with it, that their imaginary pleasure was not true. But the undivided companion of all earthly joys and contentment is grief and vexation. I wonder if any man would love that pleasure or contentment if he were assured to have an equal measure of torment after it, suppose the pain of the stone, or such like. But when this misery is eternal, O what madness and folly is it to plunge into it! "I said of laughter, It is madness, and of mirth, What doth it?" But the Christian's peace and joy is of another nature. Yet as no man knoweth the "hidden manna," the "new name," and the "white stone," but he that hath it, (Rev. ii. 17) so no man can apprehend what these are, till he taste them and find them. What apprehension, think ye, can a beast form of his own nature? Or what can a man conceive of the angelical nature? Truly this is without our sphere and that without theirs. Now certainly the wisest and most learned men cannot form any lively notion of the life of a Christian, till he find it. It is without his sphere and comprehension, therefore it is called "the peace of God which passes all understanding," (Phil. iv. 7), a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. Suppose men had never seen any other light but the stars of the firmament, or the light of a candle, they could not conceive any thing more glorious than the firmament in a clear night. Yet we that have seen the sun and moon, know that these lights are but darkness unto them. Or, to use that comparison that the Lord made once effectual to convert a nobleman, if a man did see some men and women dancing afar off, and heard not their music, he would judge them mad, or at least foolish, but coming near hand, and hearing their instruments, and perceiving their order, he changes his mind. Even so, whatever is spoken of the joy of the Spirit, or the peace of conscience, and whatsoever is seen by the world of abstaining from the pleasures of the world, the natural mind cannot but judge it foolishness, or melancholy, because they do not hear that pleasant and sweet harmony, and concert of the word and Spirit, in the souls of God's children. Else if they heard the sweet Psalmist of Israel piping, they could not but find an inward stirring and impulse in themselves to dance too.

Now the third stream is hope, "that ye may abound in hope," because this is not the time nor place of possession. Our peace and joy here is often interrupted, and very frequently weakened. It is not so full a table as the Christian's desire requires. Our present enjoyments are not able to mitigate the very pain of a Christian's appetite, or to supply his emptiness. Therefore there must be an accession of hope to complete the feast and to pacify the eagerness of the soul's desire, till the fulness of joy and peace come; and if he have spare diet otherwise, yet he hath allowance of abundance of hope, to take as much

of that as he can hold, and that is both refreshing and strengthening. Truly there is nothing men have, or enjoy, that can please, without the addition of hope unto it. All men's eyes are forward to futurity, and often men prejudice themselves of their present enjoyments, by the gaping expectation of, and looking after things to come. But the Christian's hope being a very sure anchor cast within the vail, upon the sure ground of heaven, it keeps the soul firm and steadfast, though he be not unmoved, yet from tossing or floating; though it may fluctuate a little, yet his hope regulates and restrains it. And it being an helmet, it is a strong preservative against the power and force of temptations. It is that which guards the main part of a Christian, and keeps resolutions after God untouched and unmaimed.

Now, my beloved, would you know the fountain and original of these sweet and pleasant streams? It is the God of hope, and the power of the Holy Ghost. There is no doubt of power in God, to make us happy and give us peace. But power seems most opposite to peace, especially with enemies and it seems whatsoever he can do, yet that his justice will restrain his power from helping us. But there is no doubt but the God of power, as well as hope, both can and will do it. He hath this style from his promises and gracious workings, because he hath given us ground of hope in himself. He is the chief object of hope, and the chief cause of hope in us too. Therefore we would look up to this fountain, for here all is to be found.

But I haste to speak a word of the third thing proposed, viz.: The channel that these streams run into. It is believing, not doing. Indeed this stream once ran in this channel. But since paradise was defaced, and the rivers that watered it turned another way, this hath done so too. It is true, that righteousness and holy walking is a notable mean to preserve this pure, and unmixed, and constant. For indeed the peace of our God will never lodge well with sin, the enemy of God, nor can that joy, which is so pure a fountain, run in abundance in an impure heart. It will not mix with carnal pleasures and toys. But yet the only ground of true peace and joy is found out by believing in another. Whatsoever ye do else to find them, dispute and debate never so long about them, toil all night and all day in your examinations of yourselves, yet you shall not catch this peace, —this solid peace, and this surpassing joy, but by quite overlooking yourselves and fixing your hearts upon another object, that is, Jesus Christ. “Peace and joy in believing,” and what is that believing? Mistake it not. It is not particular application at first. I delight rather to take it in another notion, for the cordial absent and consent of the soul to the promises of the gospel. I say but one word more, viz.: meditation and deep consideration of these truths is certainly believing, and believing brings peace, and peace brings joy.

Sermon X.

Matth. xi. 16.—“But whereunto shall I liken this generation?”

When our Lord Jesus, who had the tongue of the learned, and spoke as never man spake, did now and then find a difficulty to express the matter herein contained. “What shall we do?” The matter indeed is of great importance, a soul matter, and therefore of great moment, a mystery, and therefore not easily expressed. No doubt he knows how to paint out this to the life, that we might rather behold it with our eyes, than hear it with our ears, yet he uses this manner of expression, to stamp our hearts with a deep apprehension of

the weight of the matter, and the depth of it. It concerns us all, as much as we can, to consider and attend unto it.

Two things are contained here. The entertainment Christ gets in the world, of the most part, and, the entertainment he gets from a few children, of whom he is justified. I say, it concerns you greatly to observe this,—for Christ observed it very narrowly,—what success both his forerunner and himself had. Christ begins here to expostulate with the multitudes, and with the scribes and Pharisees about it. But ere all be done he will complain to the Father. He now complains unto you, that he gets not ready acceptance amongst you, if it be possible that you may repent of the great injury done to the Son of God, no not so much to Christ, as your own souls, for “all who hate me love death, and he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul,” Prov. viii. 36. Wo unto your souls, for you have not hurt Christ, by so much despising him. Ye have not prejudiced the gospel, but ye have rewarded evil to yourselves, Isa. iii. 9. I say, Christ now complains of you to yourselves, if so be you will bethink yourselves in earnest, and return to yourselves, but if ye will not, he will at length complain to the Father. When he renders up the kingdom, and gives an account of his administration unto God, he will report what entertainment ye gave his word. For he will say, “I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought with such a man. All threatenings, all entreaties would not prevail with him to forsake his drunkenness, his swearing, his covetousness, his oppressions,” &c. You know Christ's last long prayer, John xvii. He gives an account in it what acceptance he had among men, when he is finishing his ministry. These are the men he now speaks unto in the text, “Whereunto shall I liken this generation?” Thus he speaks of them to his Father. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee.” Well then, this is not so light a matter as ye apprehend. Ye come to hear daily, but know ye not that ye shall give an account of your hearing? Know ye not that there is one who observes and marks all the impressions which the word makes on your consciences? He knows all the blows of the sword of the word, that returns making no impression on your consciences. Christ says to the multitudes here, “And what went ye out for to see?” I pray you what went ye out to see, seeing ye have not believed his report? Why went ye out unto the wilderness? Know ye who spake, or in whose authority? May we not speak in these terms unto you, when we consider the little fruit of the gospel? What do you come to see, and what do ye come to hear every Sabbath, and other solemn days? I pray you ask at your own hearts, what your purpose is. Wherefore do ye come together so often? Men are rational in their business. They do nothing but for some purpose. They labour, and plough, and sow, in order to reap. They buy and sell to get gain. They have many projects and designs they still seek to accomplish. And shall we be only in matters of salvation and damnation so irrational? Shall we in the greatest thing of the greatest moment, because of eternal concernment be as perishing brutish beasts, that know not what we aim at? Christ will in the end ask you, what went ye out of your own houses so often to hear? What went you out to see? I pray you what will ye answer? If ye say, we went to hear the word of the Lord, then he shall answer you, and why did not ye obey it? Then why did ye not hear it as my word, and regard it more? If ye shall say, we went to hear a man speak some good words unto us for an hour or two, then is Christ also engaged against you, because he sent him, and ye despise him, for he says, “He that despises me, despises him that sent me,” so ye shall be caught both the ways. If ye think this to be God's word, I wonder why ye do not receive it, with the stamp of his authority in your hearts. Why do ye not bow your hearts to it, for it shall endure for ever, and judge you? Why do you sit²⁶ so many fair offers, so many sad warnings? Are not the drunkards warned every day by this word, that the curse of the Lord shall come upon them? Is not every one of you, according to your several stations and circumstances, warned to forsake your wicked ways, and your evil thoughts, to flee from the wrath to come, before the decree of the Lord pass forth, and before his fury burn as an oven? And if ye think these to be the true words of the eternal God, and the sayings of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, and the truth itself, if ye believe it as ye profess to do, why do ye not get out of the way of that wrath, which continues upon these sinners daily? Shall ye escape the judgment of God? Shall not his word overtake you though ministers that speak unto you will not live for ever? But these words they speak will surely take hold of

you, as they did your fathers, so that ye shall say, "Like as the Lord of hosts hath said he will do unto us, so hath he done," Zech. i. 6. If ye do not think this is God's word, I beseech you, why do you come hither so oft? What do ye come to hear? Why take ye so much needless pains? Your coming here seems to speak that ye think it to be God's word and yet your conversation declares more plainly that ye believe it not. Yet Christ takes notice of you and O that ye, beloved, would search yourselves that so ye might hear the word as in the sight of the all seeing God, and in his sight, who will judge you according to it; a sermon thus heard, would be more profitable than all that ever ye heard. Now to what purpose speak we of these things unto you, and why do we choose this discourse, when ye expect to hear public things? I will tell you the reason of it. Because I conceive this is the great sin of the times, and the most reprehensive and fountain sin, the root of all our profanity and malignity, even this which Christ points out in this similitude. The great blessing and privilege of Scotland is the gospel. Ye all must grant this. Now, then, the great misery and sin of this nation is, the abuse and contempt of the glorious gospel, and if once we could make you sensible of this, ye would mourn for all other particular sins.

The words are very comprehensive. Ye shall find in them the different manifestations of God in his word, reduced to two heads. The Lord either mourns to us to make us mourn, or joys to us to make us dance. A similitude and likeness is the end of all the manifestations of himself, that we be one with him. Therefore when he would move our affections in us, he puts on the like, and clothes himself, in his word and dispensation, with such a habit as is suitable. So ye have both law and gospel. He laments in the one, he pipes in the other. Both sad and glad dispensations of his providence may be subordinate to these; the one, I mean his judgments, representing that to our eyes which his law did to our ears, making that visible of his justice, which we heard; the other, I mean mercies, represents that to our eyes, which the gospel did to our ears, making his good will, his forbearance, and long suffering, and compassion visible, that men might say, "As we have heard so have we seen in the city of our God." Now these should stir up suitable affections in men. This is their intendment and purpose, to stir up joy and grief, sorrow for sin, on the one hand, and joy in the Lord's salvation on the other hand; hatred of sin by the one, and the love of Christ by the other.

But what is the entertainment²⁷ these get in the world? Ye shall see it different. In some it meets with different affections, or it makes them, and moves them, and these do justify wisdom. The accomplishment and performance of God's purposes, in the salvation of souls, justifies his word. They justify Christ by believing in him; Christ justifies us, by making us to believe in him, and applying his own righteousness to us. He that believes justifies the word, and Christ in the word, because he sets to his seal that God is true; and Christ likewise justifies the believer, by applying his righteousness unto him. The believer justifies wisdom, by acknowledging it as the Father's wisdom; Christ justifies the believer by making him and pronouncing him righteous, and a son of God. But in others, and in these a great many, it generally meets with hard hearts, stupid and insensible, incapable of these impressions. You know music is very apt to work upon men's spirits, and doth stir up several passions in them, as joy or grief. Now Christ and his ministers are the musicians that do apply their songs to catch men's ears and hearts, if so be they may stop their course and not perish. These are blessed Sirens²⁸ that do so, and pipe, day and night, in season and out of season, some sad and woful ditties of men's sin and God's wrath, of the day of judgment, of eternal punishment, that if it be possible, men may fore-apprehend these ills, before they fall into them without recovery. These are the boys in the market places that strive to sadden your hearts, and make you lament in time, before the day of howling, and weeping, and gnashing of teeth. These also have as many joyful and glad ditties, sweetening the sad. It may be, diverse men have diverse parts of this harmony. John had the woful and sad part, Christ took the joyful and glad part; so the one answered the other, and both made a complete harmony. It may be, one man in one spring mixes these two, and makes good music alone. The one part is intended to move men to grief, and mourn once, that they may not mourn for ever; the other to comfort in the meantime these that mourn, to mix their mourning with their hope

of that blessed delivery in Jesus Christ. Now what is the entertainment these get from the most part? They can neither move men to one affection nor another; they will neither mourn nor dance. As the children complain of some rude and rustic spirits, that are incapable of music, and cannot discern one spring²⁹ from another, so does Christ complain of a generation of men, they can neither repent nor believe, they care for none of these things. His threatenings and denunciations of wrath are a small thing to them, and his consolations appear also to be inconsiderable. Then souls are otherwise taken up, that they have no sense to discern the transcendent excellency of eternal things. We would then press upon your consciences these three things. First, That the word of God comprehending the law and gospel, contains both the saddest ditties and the most joyful and sweet songs in the world. Next, We would discover unto you the great sin, and extreme stupidity of this generation, of which ye are a part, that ye may know the controversy God hath with the land. And then at length, we would labour to persuade you to the right use of this gospel, and justifying of wisdom, if ye would be his children.

The law is indeed a sad song and lamentation, it surpasses all the complaints and lamentations among men. Ye know the voice in which it was given at Sinai. It was delivered with great thunders, great terrors accompanied it. The law is a voice of words and thunder, which made these that heard it entreat that it should not be spoken to them any more; for they could not endure the word that was commanded, Heb. xii. 18, 19. Ye would think if they were holy men, they would not be afraid of it, but so terrible was that sight, and that voice, that it even made holy Moses himself exceedingly fear and quake. It made a great host, more numerous than all the inhabitants of Scotland, to tremble exceedingly. And why was it so sad and terrible? Even because it was a law that publishes transgression, for “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” If there were no fear of judgment and wrath, yet I am sure there is none that can reasonably consider that excellent estate in which he was once, that throne of eminency above the creatures, that height of dignity in conformity and likeness to God, that incomparable happiness of communion with the supreme Fountain of life; none I say, none can duly ponder these things, but they will think sin to be the greatest misery of mankind. They must be affected with the sense of that inestimable treasure they lost. And how sad a consideration is it to view that cloud of beastly lusts, of flesh and earth, that was interposed between the Sun of righteousness, and our souls, which hath made this perpetual eclipse, this eternal night and darkness! How sad is it to look upon our ruin, and compare it with that stately edifice of innocent Adam! How are we fallen from the height of our excellency, and made lower than the beasts, when we were once but a little lower than the angels! But then if ye shall consider all that followed upon this the innumerable abominations of men, so contrary to that holy law and God's holiness, that hath flowed from this corrupt fountain, and hath defiled so many generations of men, that they are all bruises and putrified sores, and in nothing sound from the head to the foot,—the soul within becomes the sink of all pollution, the members without the conduits it runs through, and weapons of unrighteousness against our Maker. And what a consideration is this alone, how vile and ugly doth that holy and spiritual law make the most refined and polished civilian? He that hath poorest naturals,³⁰ most extracted from the dregs of the multitude, oh how abominable will he appear in this glass, in this perfect law of liberty! So that men would despise themselves, and repent in dust and ashes, if once they did see their own likeness. Ye would run from yourselves as children that have been taken up with their own beauty, but are spoiled with the small pox. Let them look unto a glass, and it will almost make them mad. But if we shall stay, and hear out the trumpet which sounds louder and louder, there will be yet more reason of trembling. For it becomes a voice publishing judgment and wrath, for therein is the wrath of God “revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,” Rom. i. 18. It speaks much of all men's sins “that every mouth may be stopped,” but the voice waxed louder and louder, the spring grows still sadder, that “all the world may become guilty before God,” Rom. iii. 19. It publishes first the command, and then follows the sad and weighty curse of God. “Cursed is every one that abides not in all things which are written in the law,” (Gal. iii. 10) as many curses as breaches of the law. And what a dreadful song is this! Ye shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the

Lord, and the glory of his power? If he had said, ye shall be eternally banished from God, what an incomparable loss had this been? Men would lead an unpleasant life, who had fallen from the expectation of an earthly kingdom, but what shall it be to fall from the expectation of a heavenly kingdom? But when withal there is an eternal pain with that eternal loss, and an incomparable pain with incomparable loss, everlasting destruction from God's presence, joined with this, always to be destroyed, and never to be made an end of! It is the comfort of bodily torments, and even of death itself, that it shall be quickly gone, and the destruction ends in the destruction of the body, and so there is no more pain. But here is an eternal destruction,—not a dying, and then a death, but an eternal dying without tasting death. Now consider (if ye can indeed think) what it is to have a law of enmity, and a hand writing of ordinances against us, as many curses written up in God's register against us, as there were transgressions of the law multiplied and God himself engaged to be against us, to have no mercy on us, and not to spare us! Could any heart endure, or any hands be strong, if they would duly apprehend this? Would the denunciation of war, the publishing of affliction, the sentence of earthly judges, would they once be remembered beside this? If ye would imagine all the torments and rackings that have been found out by the most cruel tyrants against men, all to be centred in one, and all the grief and pain of these who have died terrible deaths, to be joined in one, what would it be to this! It would be but as a drop of that wrath and vexation that wicked souls find in hell, and are drowned into, and that everlastingly without end.

But we must not dwell always at mount Sinai. We are called to mount Zion, the city of the living God, to hear a sweet and calm voice of peace, to hear the sweet and pleasant songs of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, and of our glorious Peacemaker, Christ Jesus, the desire of all nations, and the blessing of all the families of the earth. His song is a joyful sound, and blessed are they that hear it. I am come, says Christ, “to seek and to save that which was lost.” I am come to save sinners, and the chief of sinners. Let all these who find their spirits saddened by the terrible law, or who find themselves accursed from the Lord, and cannot be justified by the law of Moses, come unto me. Cast your souls upon me, and ye shall find ease to them. Are ye pressed under the heavy burden of sin and wrath? Come unto me, and I will give you ease. Put it over upon me. Do ye think yourselves not wearied nor burdened enough, and yet ye would be quit of sin and misery? Do your souls desire to embrace this salvation? Come unto me, and I will not cast you out. Whoever comes, on whatsoever terms, in whatsoever condition, I will in no case cast you out. Do not suppose cases to exclude yourselves. I know no case. Ye who cannot be justified by the law of Moses, come unto me, and ye shall be justified “from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Ye who have no righteousness of your own, and see the righteousness of God revealed with wrath against you, now come to me, I have a righteousness of God, beside the law, and will reveal it to you. Ye have a band of enmity, and handwriting of ordinances against you, but come unto me, for I have cancelled it in the cross, and slain the enmity, so it shall never do you any harm. In a word, this is the messenger whose feet are beautiful, that publishes glad tidings of peace. This is the Mediator, who reconciles us unto God. The whole gospel and covenant of grace is a bundle of precious promises. It is a set of pleasant melodious songs, that may accompany us through our wearisome pilgrimage, and refresh us till we come unto the city, where we shall all sing the song of the Lamb. What a song is liberty to captives and prisoners, light to them that sit in darkness, opening of the eyes to the blind, gladness of spirit to those who are heavy in spirit! Ye would all think salvation and remission of sins a sweet song. But if ye would discern it, ye would find nothing sweeter in the gospel than this redemption from all iniquity, from sin itself, and from all kind of misery. How lovely and pleasant a thing is that! When Christ hath piped unto you the remission of all sins in his own blood, then he plays the most sweet spring, the renunciation of sin, and dying to this world, by his death and resurrection. Many listen to the song of justification, but they will not abide to hear out all the song. He is our sanctification and redemption, as well as our righteousness. Always to whomsoever he is pleasant, when he puts his yoke upon them, he will be more pleasant in bearing it. Whosoever gladly hears Jesus singing of righteousness and holiness, they shall also hear him sing of glory and happiness. Those who dance at the springs of righteousness and

sanctification, what an eternal triumph and exultation waits on them, when he is singing the song of complete redemption!

Are these things so? Is this the law, and this the gospel? Do they daily sound in our ears, and what entertainment, I pray you, do they get from this generation? Indeed, Christ's complaint hath place here, whereunto shall our generation be likened? For he hath lamented to us and we have not mourned; he hath piped to us, and we have not danced. We will neither be made glad nor sad by these things. How long hath the word of the Lord been preached unto you, and whose heart trembled at it? Shall the lion roar, and the beasts of the field not be afraid? The lion hath roared often to us. God hath spoken often, who will not fear? And yet who doth fear? Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, in congregations every day, that terrible trumpet of Mount Sinai that proclaims war between God and men, and yet will not the people be afraid? Amos iii. 6, 8. Have not every one of you heard your transgressions told you? Are ye not guilty of all the breaches of God's holy law? Hath not the curse been pronounced against you for these, and yet who believes the report? Ye will not do so much as to sit down and examine your own guiltiness, till your mouth be stopped and till ye put it in the dust before God's justice. And when we speak of hell unto you, and of the curses of God passed upon all men, you bless yourselves in your own eyes, saying, peace, peace, even though ye walk in the imagination of your own hearts, add sin to sin, and "drunkenness to thirst," Deut. xxix. 20. Now, when all this is told you, that many shall be condemned and few saved, and that God is righteous to execute judgment and render vengeance on you, ye say within yourselves, For God's sake, is all this true? But where is the mourning at his lamentations, when there is no feeling or believing them to be true? Your minds are not convinced of the law of God, and how shall your hearts be moved? Christ Jesus laments unto you, as he wept over Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldst not!" What means he? Certainly, he would have you to sympathize with your own condition. When he that is in himself blessed, and needs not us, is so affected with our misery, how should we sympathize with our own misery! God seems to be affected with it, though there be no shadow of turning in him. Yet he clothes his words with such affections, "Why will ye die?" "O that my people had hearkened unto me!" He sounds the proclamation before the stroke, if it be possible to move you to some sense of your condition, that concerns you most nearly. Yet who judges himself that he may not be judged? The ministers of the Lord, or Christians, may put to their ear, and hearken to men in their retiring places, but who repents in dust and ashes, and says, "What have I done?" Jer. viii. 6. But every man goes on in his course without stop. The word ye hear on the Sabbath day against your drunkenness, your oppressions, your covetousness, your formality, &c., it doth not lay any bands on you to keep you from these things. Long may we hearken to you in secret, ere we hear many of you mourn for these things, or turn from them. Where is he that is afraid of the wrath of God, though it be often denounced against him? Do not men sleep over their time, and dream of escaping from it? Every man hath a refuge of lies he trusts in, and will not forsake his sins.

Again, on the other hand, whose heart rejoices within them to hear the joyful sound? Because men do not receive the law, and mourn when he laments, they cannot receive the gospel. It cannot be glad news to any but the soul that receives sad tidings, the sentence of death in its bosom. Therefore Christ Jesus is daily offered and as often despised, as a thing of nought, and of no value. Ye hear every day of deliverance from eternal wrath, and a kingdom purchased unto you, and ye are no more affected, than if we came and told you stories of some Spanish conquest, that belonged not unto you. Would not the ears and hearts of some men be more tickled with idle and unprofitable tales, that are for no purpose but driving away the present time, than they are with this everlasting salvation? Some men have more pleasure to read an idle book, than to search the holy scriptures, though in them this inestimable jewel of eternal life be hid. The vain things of this present world have a voice unto you of pleasure, and profit, and credit. They will pipe unto you, and ye will listen unto their sound, but ye know not that the dead are there, and that it is the way to the chambers of hell. These indeed are Sirens³¹ that entice passengers by the way with their sweet songs, and having allured them to follow, lead

them to perishing. Here is the voice that is come down from heaven, the “Word that was with God,” and he is “the way, the truth, and the life.” He is gone before you, and undertakes to guide you. He comes and calls upon simple men. The Father's Wisdom calls the simple ones to understand wisdom, to find life and peace. Will ye then so far wrong your own souls as to refuse it? And yet the most part are so busied with this world and their own lusts, that the sweetest and pleasantest offers in the gospel sound not so sweet unto them as the clink of their money, or the sound of oil and wine in a cup. Any musician would affect them more than the sweet singer of Israel, the anointed of the God of Jacob. Always³² these souls that have mourned and danced according to Christ's motions, and whose hearts have exulted within them at the message and word of reconciliation,—blessed are ye. Ye are of another generation, children of wisdom, ye who desire to hear his voice. “Let me hear thy voice.” O thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hear thy voice, “for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is comely.” If this be the voice of thy heart, blessed art thou. Thou mayest indeed dance, who hath rejoiced in his salvation, or who hath mourned at his lamentation, thy dancing is but yet coming, for his piping is but yet coming. When all the companies of wisdom's children shall be gathered together in that general assembly of the first born, Christ Jesus, the head of all principalities, and in special the head of the body the church, shall lead the ring, and there shall be eternal praises and songs of those that follow the Lamb. They shall echo into him, who shall begin that song of the hallelujah, Salvation, blessing, honour, glory, and power to the Lamb, &c.

Now, whereunto shall this generation be likened, that are not affected with these things? What strange stupidity and senselessness is it, that men are not affected with things of so great and so near concernment? It would require the art of men to express the obstinacy of some Christian professors, or rather a pen steeped in hell. He would be thought unnatural that would not grieve at his friend's death or loss. And what shall they be called that will not sympathize with themselves, that is, their souls? If we speak to you of corporal calamities, and ye could not be moved, it were great stupidity. But what stupidity is it, that men will not consider their own souls? What shall ye profit, if ye lose your precious souls, and be cast away? It is the greatest loss that is told you, and the greatest gain. Your affections are moved with perishing things, every thing puts them up or down, and casts the balance with you. What deep ignorance and inconsideration is it, that ye who can mourn for loss of goods, of children, of health, of friends, that ye cannot be moved to sorrow for the sin of your soul, for the eternal loss of your soul! Other sorrows cannot profit you, but this is the only profitable mourning. If ye were told your sin and misery, to make you despair and mourn eternally, ye had some excuse to delay, and forget it as long as ye can. But when all this is told you, that you may escape from it, will ye not consider it? When ye are desired to mourn, that ye may be comforted for ever, will ye not mourn? We would have you to anticipate the day of judgment, that ye may judge yourselves, and then ye shall not be judged. What folly and madness is this to delay it till endless, irremediless mourning come, a day that hath no light mixed with darkness! Those that now mourn at that law, and for their sin, and dance at the promises of the gospel, may well be called children of wisdom, and O how may this generation be said to be begotten of foolishness, as their father, and wildness, as their mother! For is there any such folly as this, to lose a man's self absolutely and irrecoverably, for that which they cannot have always? Is there any such folly as to refuse this healing medicine, for the little bitterness which is in it, and then to incur eternal death?

Now what should we do then? What doth the word of God call you to do? This is it, to mourn and rejoice, and this is to justify wisdom. These two are the pulse of a Christian. According as he finds his grief and joy, so is he. All of you have these affections, but they are not right placed. They are not pitched upon suitable objects. The worldling hath no other joy but carnal mirth, no other grief but that which is carnal, these are limited within the bounds of time. Some loss, or some gain, some pleasure or pain, some honour or dishonour, these are the poles all his affections turn about on. Now then we exhort and beseech you, as ye would flee from the wrath to come, consider it now and fear it. As ye

would not partake with this untoward generation in their plagues, so be not like them in their stupidity.

Ye are called to consider your sins and God's wrath, that ye may turn unto the Lord, and then you will hear the voice of peace crying unto thee, "Be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee." If ye submit unto the justice of God, or unto the holiness and righteousness of his law in condemning you, you justify wisdom in part, but ye who have justified wisdom thus far, do not condemn wisdom after it. Justify the gospel, in believing upon Jesus Christ. Receive it as a true and faithful saying with your hearts, and this shall justify you. And if ye justify the wisdom of God in prescribing the righteousness of Christ unto you, ye will also justify wisdom in prescribing a rule of holiness and obedience unto you, and count all his paths pleasantness and peace. Ye must dance at the commandments, as well as the promises, because all God's precepts are really promises. Ye have nothing to do but to believe them as the way, and then to dance until ye all sing the song of the Lamb with the saints above.

Now if ye believe his law and gospel, and be suitably affected with these, ye are led also to sympathize with all the dispensations of his providence. Doth God lament to you in his works as well as his word? O then, Christians, we exhort you to mourn. Yet mourning because of his lamentable providence, should be joined with rejoicing in his word. "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice." We are a stupid generation, that can neither see, nor hear, neither can we be affected with what we see, nor hear. Do not his judgments go forth as a lamp that burneth, yet who considers? Doth not the lion roar, but who is afraid? Is there not a voice publishing affliction? Hath not God's rod a loud voice, and yet who hears it? Who fears? We do not receive agreeable impressions of the Lord's dealing with us, but every man puts the day of evil far from him. He will not apprehend public rods, till they become personal, and therefore they must become personal. If ye were mourning in a penitent manner, as a repenting soul laments, would not our fast days have more soul affliction attending them? If ye did dance as God pipes in his providence, would not our solemn feasts have more soul rejoicing, and heavenly mirth? Alas for that deep sleep that has fallen upon so many Christians! How few stir up themselves to take hold upon God, though he hides his face, and threateneth to depart from us? For the Lord is with you while ye are with him; if ye seek him, and feareth for him with all your heart, you will find him, but if ye forsake him he will forsake you.

Sermon XI.

[It is extremely probable that this was one of the probationary discourses which the author delivered before the Presbytery of Glasgow, previous to his ordination. The following is an extract from the Record of that Presbytery: "Dec. 5, 1649. The qlk daye Mr. Hew Binnen made his popular sermon 1 Tim. i. ver. 5 'The end of ye commandment is charity.'—Ordaines Mr. Hew Binnen to handle his controversie this day fifteen dayes, De satisfactione Christi."—*Ed.*]

1 Tim. ii. 5.—"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned."

In this chapter the apostle, after the inscription of this epistle, repeats a former commandment that he had given to Timothy, how he should both teach himself, and by authority, committed unto him by an extraordinary commission, see that other ministers teach so also. Paul almost in all his epistles, sets himself against legal preachers, and false teachers. It was a common error in the primitive times, to confound the law and grace, in the point of righteousness, or to make free justification inconsistent with the moral law. Therefore our apostle makes it his chief study to vindicate the doctrine of the gospel. He preaches the gospel, and yet is not Antinomian. He preaches the law, and yet is no legal preacher. He exalts Christ more than the Antinomian can do, and yet he presses holiness more than the mere legalist can do. He excludes the law in the point of justification and pardon, and then brings it in again to the justified man's hand. If these words were rightly understood, and made use of, it would put an end to the many useless controversies of the present time, and reform many of our practices.

There are as many practical abuses among Christians concerning the law and the gospel, as there are speculative errors among other sects. In the former verse, he more particularly directs him what to take a care of, that men may neither spend their own, or their neighbour's time, in foolish, unnecessary, or impertinent questions, that tend nothing to the edification of the body of Christ, or in building them up in our most holy faith, the doctrine of Christ Jesus, and faith in it. And in this verse, he shows the true meaning and purpose of the law, and commandment, when he meets these doctors, and draws an argument against them from their own doctrine. They boasted of the law, and were counted very zealous of it, but as it is said of the Jews, they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, because they did not submit unto the righteousness of God. They were also zealous for the commandment, but neither God nor the commandment would give them thanks. Why? Because they wholly mistake and pervert the meaning and purpose of the law. As long as they make the law inconsistent with the gospel, or would mix it with it, in the point of justification, they do it not unto edification in faith (as it is read), and as they ought to do, verses 4, 5, 6. We think this evangelic sentence, but rawly,³³ yea, legally expounded by many, when they look upon the words as they lie here, "the end of the commandment is love," for love worketh no evil, and is the fulfilling of the whole law, and this love is described to be pure and sincere, by the following properties. But we conceive the main business is not to describe love, or to oppose this unto their contentions about trifling questions. We choose rather to understand the text another way, according to the order of nature, which also the words themselves give ground for, "The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart," out "of faith unfeigned." So then, according to the phraseology and meaning of the words, love is not first, but faith must be first, and primarily intended, so that the sense of the words is this, The end of the commandment is unfeigned faith, from whence flows a good conscience, a pure heart, and love, or the end of the commandment is faith, which is proved unfeigned by these effects, that it gives the answer of a good conscience, it purifies the heart, worketh by love, the effect of faith which is love, being to our knowledge more sensible than faith itself. We think it then more native³⁴ to make a pure heart, and love, marks of unfeigned faith, than faith and a good conscience the marks of love. This exposition is yet more confirmed by parallel places, Rom. x. 4, "The end of the law is Christ for righteousness, unto them that believe." This is most principally intended, and even before love. Now it is all one to speak of faith as to speak of Christ. For faith and Christ are inseparably joined, and faith comes not as a consideration in the gospel, abstracted from Christ the object of it, as some enemies of Christ affirm. It justifies us not as an act or work, but as an instrument, whereby we apprehend Christ and his righteousness. For faith abstracted from Christ is but an empty notion, and among the dung and loss that Paul would quit to be found in Christ, Phil. iii. 7-9. Now this sense only fits the scope and purpose, and leads on strongly against the false teachers. When Paul brings his argument from the law, which they defended against the gospel, they made the commandment to contradict the gospel. Paul makes the commandment to contradict them, and agree with the gospel, and to be so far from disagreeing with it, that it hath a great affinity with it as the mean to the end as that which is unperfect, without its own complement and perfection. Faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, quieting a

man's conscience, is the very intent of the law, and the command was never given since Adam, to justify men by obedience to it, but to pursue men after Christ. And to satisfy you more fully, and clear it up he says, though the end of the command be not to justify, but to pursue a man from it to Christ, yet the command suffers no prejudice by this means, but rather is established by faith, the end of it, because this faith persuades the heart, and makes a man obey out of love to God, whereas before it should never have gotten any obedience, while men sought salvation by it.

You see then, there is an admirable harmony and consent between these things that are set at variance, both in the opinion and practice of the times. For what seems more contrary than the cursing commanding law, and the absolving promising gospel? Yet here they are agreed. Doth not justice go cross to mercy in the ordinary notion? Yet here there is a friendly subordination of justice to mercy, of the law to the gospel. Behold how faith is environed with the law, commanding and cursing on the one hand, and obedience to the command on the other hand, how faith is the middle party. A good conscience could never meet with the command since Adam's fall. A pure heart, and the obedience of love, had casten out³⁵ with the command, but here is the union, the meeting of old friends. Faith is the mediator, as it were, and the gospel comes between them, and so they dare meet again. Christ Jesus, who is our peace to make two one, comes in the middle, and takes away the difference. The law never meets with an obedient servant, or friend, till it meet first with Christ. It can find none righteous in all the world, none upright. Here you have the law's command and curse reconciled with the gospel's promise, and absolution reconciled with new obedience unto the command, the command leading to Christ, and Christ leading the man just back again to the command, the command serving Christ's design, and Christ serving the command. And this is the round that the believer shall go about in, until sin shall be no more. He shall be put over from one hand to another, till Christ shall be all in all. The command shall put him to Jesus, and Christ shall lead him back again, under a new notion, to his old master.

We may consider in the text a twofold relation that faith stands in, the relation of an end, and of a cause. Faith hath the relation of an end unto the commandment, of a cause unto a good conscience and a pure heart, and love, for these are said to be out of faith, which notes this dependence of a cause and fountain. The command is for faith, and a pure heart and love are from faith. We shall use no other division but consider the method of these effects that flow from faith. There is an order of emanation and dependence. There is a chain here. The first link nearest faith is a good conscience. The second link is a pure heart. The third is love, the hand follows the heart, and the heart follows the conscience.

We need not be subtle in seeking our purpose on these words, we think there is more in the plain words than we can speak of. We shall only resolve the verse in these propositions, without more observations. *First*, Faith in Jesus Christ is the end of the commandment, or law. *Secondly*, There is a faith feigned, and a faith unfeigned, a true and a false faith. *Thirdly*, Unfeigned faith gives the answer of a good conscience. *Fourthly*, Faith purging the conscience, purifies the heart. *Fifthly*, Faith purifying the heart, works by love. Here then is the substance of all the gospel, and all this makes up an entire complete end. Faith purifying the heart, purging the conscience, and working by love, is the end of the commandment.

First, The end of the commandment or law (for a part is put for the whole) is faith in Christ or Jesus Christ apprehended by faith, which is all one. For ye cannot abstract faith from Christ, for the whole gospel is a shadow without him. Grace and glory is but a beam of the Sun of righteousness, that if ye come between it and Christ, it evanishes presently, Rom. x. 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes." And if Christ be the end of the law, then faith is the end of it, because faith is the profession of Christ, and union with him. But consider, I. That the end is not taken here for the consumption or destruction of a thing. Christ is not the end of the law in that sense, though indeed, if the Antinomian speak ingenuously, his sense would be this, Christ makes an end of the law, contrary to Christ's own express meaning, "I came not to

destroy the law but to fulfil it," Matt. v. 17. II. The end is either the intention or scope of a thing, the original word imports both. III. There is an end principally and directly intended in the thing, or work itself, and an end adventitious, and of the work. We may speak either of the end the law, of its own nature, is ordained unto, or the end of the Lawgiver in promulgating the law. These may be different. Next, concerning the law, consider, I. That the law may be taken strictly in a limited sense, as it comprehends only the command, and the promise of life, and the curse on the breach of it, and in this sense, it is frequently taken in Paul's epistles to the Romans, and Galatians, and opposed to faith and the gospel, as the gospel contains promises of salvation to penitent sinners. Or, II. It may, or useth to be so extended, as to comprehend all the administrations made under Moses, or all God's mind revealed under the Old Testament; now, in this sense, it comprehends the gospel, and covenant of grace in it, as we shall hear. Faith in Christ is the intention and scope of the law. Indeed, faith in Jesus is not the intention of the law itself, as it is only made up of commandments, promises, and curses. For the law as it commands, hath nothing to do, but to be a rule and obligation to men, and as it curses, it condemns men, and speaks nothing of Jesus Christ, or a way to make up the breach of the law. The gospel is not contained in the law, but rather accidental to it. For Jesus Christ comes with the gospel, as if some unexpected cautioner would come in, when the Judge is, as the angel that held Abraham's hand,—when he was to slay his son, and offer him up a burnt offering,—giving sentence to deliver him. It is an exception from the curse.

But Christ is directly intended and pointed out by the law. If ye consider the whole administration of Moses, that is, the law and covenant of works, though it was preached after the fall, yet it was never preached alone without the gospel, and so if ye consider the whole administration of God's mind and ordinances, Christ is principally aimed at. For, 1. The doctrine Moses delivered in mount Sinai contained a covenant of grace. If you look to the preface of the ten commandments, it is even the chief gospel promise, and article of the covenant. For how could God come to terms with men after sin, but in terms of grace? and on no other terms can man stand before God, nor God be his God. And likewise, seeing the gospel was preached in paradise, and afterwards to Abraham, God could not be false in his promise made to Abraham, neither could the promulgation of the law that followed make that null which went before, Gal. iii. 17. What meant all the ceremonial law? It shadowed out Jesus Christ, the only sacrifice and propitiation. And this is the sum of the gospel salvation to penitents believing in Christ, and looking through the sacrifices unto him, and thus David's righteousness was the imputation of righteousness, and not inherent holiness, Psal. xxxii. 1, 2; Rom. iv. 5. But 2. It used to be a question, whether the law delivered upon mount Sinai was a covenant of works or not. Some say, that the law which was delivered upon mount Sinai was indeed a covenant of works, though they confess it was preached with the covenant of grace, and not delivered to them to stand by it or of intention to get righteousness by it, but to be subservient to the covenant of grace. Others speak absolutely that the law upon mount Sinai was a covenant of grace. We conceive this is but a contention about words. The matter is clear in itself, (1) That neither is now the gospel preached without the law, as ye may see in Christ's sermon upon the mount, and his sermon to the young man, (Matt. chapters v., vi., vii., Mark x. 17,) nor yet was then the law preached without the gospel, as ye may see in Exod. chap. xx. The preface to the commandments, and the second command contains much of the gospel in them. Deut. xxx. 6, 7, &c., compared with Rom. x. 6, &c., where Paul notes both the righteousness of faith and of the works of the law. (2) Those who say the law on mount Sinai was a covenant of works, do not assert that God gave it to be a covenant of works, out of intention that men should seek salvation thereby, but they make it only a schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ, and to discover our sinful condition; and those who say it was a covenant of grace, consider it in relation to God's end of sending it, and as it takes in all the administration and doctrine of Moses. So there needs be no difficulty here. The matter seems clear, that the covenant of works was preached by Moses, and so it was by Paul, (Rom. x., Gal. iii.) and that neither Paul nor Moses preached the covenant of works, but as a broken covenant; not as such that men could stand unto, or be saved by. No man can preach the gospel, unless he preach the covenant

of works; not because both concur to the justification of a sinner, but because the knowledge of a man's own lost condition under the one, presses him to flee to the other.

Now I say, Christ Jesus, or faith in him, is the scope and intention of the law. It is the scope and intention of the lawgiver, in giving out the law. God hath never given a command or curse since Adam's fall, but for this end, to bring sinners unto Christ. This is the end revealed, and appointed by him in his word. This we shall clear from some texts of scripture, because it is very material, Rom. v. 20, 21. It might be questioned from the former words, since death hath reigned before Moses, for sins against nature's light, what means the new entry of the written law? What was the end of the promulgation of it on mount Sinai? He answers, "the law entered that sin might abound;" that is, the world knew not sin, the letters of nature's light were worn out and rusty; men thought not of their miserable condition by nature, and did not charge themselves before God; therefore a new edition and publication of the law must be given, that all men may know how much they owe, and how they were guilty in a thousand things they never dreamed of. But wherefore serves this? That grace might superabound where sin had abounded. The Lord would have sin abounding in men's knowledge, and their charge to be great and weighty, that God's pardoning grace might be more conspicuous, and the discharge more sweet. We also learn, (Gal. iii. 19.) that the same question was moved, "Wherefore then serves the law? Seeing the covenant of grace was preached to Abraham, what meant the publishing of a covenant of works upon mount Sinai?" He answers, "It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made;" and as it is said, Rom. v. 13, "For until the law sin was in the world." It abounded in all places of the world before the law came; but men did not impute it unto themselves, nor condemn themselves as guilty. Therefore the law was added to discover many hidden transgressions, and to show them the curse they deserved. Now this law is not against the promise or covenant of grace, (ver. 21.) which it behoved to be if it were not given of intention to drive men to Christ. But the 22d verse speaks out clearly the end of it, "the scripture hath concluded all men under sin," and under the curse both. To what end? That the promise by faith in Christ might come, or be given to believers. And ver. 24, "The law" was a "schoolmaster" and teacher, to lead us unto Christ. The very doctrine of a command impossible for man to keep, was, as it were, a proclamation of Christ Jesus to him, a complete teaching of the necessity of some other way of salvation. The law exacted obedience rigorously, even such as we could not perform, and cursed every degree of disobedience. This, if there were no more, speaks that a man cannot stand to such terms, and therefore he must flee to Jesus Christ, who mends the broken covenant.

Again, the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 13, 14, while he speaks of the excellency of the ministry of the gospel beyond the ministry of Moses, notwithstanding all the material glory that accompanied that ministration, as the shining of Moses' face, &c., now opens up a great mystery here,—Moses' face shining while he was with God upon the mount. This holds forth the glory of the law as in respect of God. By counsels and inventions they saw no more but temporal mercies in it, and were not able to fix their eyes on that glory; the carnal Israelites did not break through the ministry of the law and death, to see Jesus there, because a vail was upon their hearts. They thought God had been dealing with them in the terms of a covenant of works, and they would stand to all God had said, and undertook indeed very fairly, "All which God hath commanded, we will do, and be obedient." But though³⁶ they perverted God's meaning of the law, and did not see Jesus intended; for they did not look steadfastly to the end of that mystery. Now what was it the vail hid them from? For the same vail is yet on them to this day, while they read Moses and the prophets, and when they shall be converted it shall be done away in Christ, they shall then see him in Moses' law. So then, the end of this ministry of the law was Jesus Christ, and this they could not behold.

Now from all this it is very clear, that Jesus Christ, or faith in him, was the great purpose and end of the law, and covenant of works. The world was lying in sin, and none sought God, no not one; neither knew they well what sin was. Therefore God sends his gospel from mount Sinai, and publishes his law in a terrible manner, that they might know the

way and manner of the God they served, and see that their obligation was infinitely beyond their ability or performance. But, poor souls! they clearly mistake the matter, and stand to the terms of the covenant of works, as if they were able to perform them. But God did not leave them so. For he adds a ceremonial law, and sacrifices, to shadow out Christ Jesus. Now, says God, though ye have undertaken so well, yet I know you better than ye do yourselves. Ye will never keep one word of what you say. Therefore, when ye sin bring a sacrifice, and look to my Son, the Lamb that is to be slain and offered up, and ye shall have pardon in him.

II. Christ Jesus apprehended by faith, is the accomplishment and perfection of the law. 1. Because Christ Jesus, or faith laying hold upon him, accomplishes the same end that the law was ordained for of itself. The law was appointed to justify men, that it might be a rule of righteousness according to which men might stand before God and live. Now when the law was weak through the flesh, and could not give life, (Rom. viii. 3; Gal. iv. 21.) and the law ordained to life, wrought more death, and made sin exceeding sinful, (Rom. vii. 10-13.) therefore Jesus Christ came in the flesh, to do what the law was unable to do, and to bring many sons unto glory, that the just might live by faith, Gal. iii. 11. The law should never have gotten its end, no man should have stood before God, but the curse only would have taken place, and the promise would have been of no effect. Therefore, Jesus comes, and gives obedience to the law, and delivers men from the curse of it, and by faith puts men in as good, and even in a better condition, than they would have been by the promise; so that the justified sinner may come before God, as well as innocent Adam, and have as great confidence and assurance, and peace by faith, as he could have had by inherent holiness. Imputed righteousness comes in as a covering over the man's nakedness, and doth the turn³⁷ of perfect inherent holiness.

2. Christ, or faith laying hold on him, is the end or accomplishment of the law, because faith in Christ fulfils the righteousness of the law, in respect of a believer's personal obedience. Although the believer gave not perfect obedience, and so cannot stand in terms of justice, yet he gives sincere and upright obedience, which the law should never have got. The command wrought sin and death, by occasion of corruption, and never would any point of it be fulfilled by men. For as long as the curse was standing, no obedience could be acceptable till justice was satisfied, and though that might have been dispensed with, yet there is none that are righteous, none seek after God. No good principles of obedience were in us, but all are corrupt, and have done abominable works, and all our righteousness is as a menstruous cloth; and though upright obedience could have been yielded, yet the law exacted perfect obedience. But now faith in our Redeemer absolves a man from the curse of the law, so that now he is not looked upon as an enemy, but a friend; and then it puts a man upon obedience to the command from new motives and principles: and thus the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk after the Spirit, Rom. viii. 4. And that imperfect obedience is accepted of God, and received off his hand, by virtue of the sacrifice and atonement of Christ. The law would accept of no less, no not of nine commandments, if the tenth was broken. But now God in Christ accepts of endeavours and minting,³⁸ and so is the law in some way or other accomplished. And faith leads a man on till he be perfected. He walks by faith from strength to strength, till he appear before God, and be made holy as he is holy. Faith in Christ is the end of the law.

3. Because whatever faith wants of perfect and personal obedience, it makes up in Christ's obedience, and thus is the law thoroughly accomplished, for what it wants in the believer it gets in Christ. Paul would have the Romans take this way, Rom. vi. 11: "Likewise reckon ye yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." Ye may gather by good consequence, that since Christ hath died to sin as a public person so ye should die with him unto sin, and mortify sin with him. And thus may ye have consolation against your imperfect personal mortification. Ye were thoroughly mortified in Christ. So the believer may look unto Jesus, as one who hath given obedience even unto the death, and that, not in his own name but for us, that the imperfect holiness and obedience of every sound believer, may have his complete

righteousness to cover it, and come next the Father's eye. And thus is the law fulfilled, and this way doth faith not make void, but establish the law, Rom. iii. 31. And as the law got better satisfaction in the sufferings of Christ, who became a curse for us, than in all the punishment we could endure, so it gets more satisfaction to the command by his obedience than if our personal had been perfect. Christ was "made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," (Gal. iv. 4) and the Son's being made under the law is of more worth than all our being under it. Now faith puts that obedience of God Man in the law's hand. When we do God's will, he brings out Christ Jesus, "Lo, (says he) I come, I delight to do thy will," Psal. xl. 7-9. In a word, faith in Jesus accomplishes the law, in the commands, in the promise, in the curse, as might be easily shown, if your time would allow.

(1) In the curse, because it lays hold upon Christ, who was "made a curse for us," (Gal. iii. 13) and so gives complete satisfaction to the Lord's justice in that point. It holds up the sacrifice and propitiation of our Saviour, and justice says, I am satisfied. It holds up the ransom, (Job xxxiii. 24) and therefore Christ says, "Deliver them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." Again we also observe, (2) That faith in Christ also fulfils the commandments of the law, because it is the fountain of new obedience unto the law. It hath a respect unto all God's righteous judgments. It purifies the heart into the obedience of them, and it works by love, and so it is the end of the law for righteousness. It not only gives the answer of a good conscience unto all challenges and curses from Christ's blood, but daily derives virtue out of Jesus Christ, to bring forth fruit unto God. What it cannot reach by doing, it supplies by believing, and laying hold upon Christ's obedience. And this is the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us. Let us also,

(3) Look upon the promise of life, and it is accomplished also by faith in Christ. For the law could not have given life, and so the promise would now be in vain; but Christ by faith justifies the sinner, and he lives, yea, hath eternal life in him, and so all the three are strengthened and established. Faith is the most comprehensive commandment, 1 John iii. 22, 23. It is put for all the commandments, (1) By acknowledgment of the breach of all, and so it magnifies the law, and makes it honourable, and subscribes to the sentence of justice and the authority of the command; (2) By satisfaction, because it gives a price for the breach of it, and puts the Cautioner³⁹ in the craver's hand; (3) By obedience, because after this, it hath a respect to all God's laws, and endeavours after new obedience to every one of them.

The improvement of all this is extremely plain. It may serve to discover unto us how we disappoint God of his end in giving unto us the command. And the law was given for the best purposes. But, the most part of men have no end, no use of the law. God hath given it for some end, but they know it not. They live without God, and without rule in the world. Men walk as if there was no law, nor command, nor curse. There are but two ends the command was ordained for, the first instituted end which it naturally tends unto is life, (Rom. vii. 10) and the second end for which God hath appointed it since the first is missed, is to pursue men to Jesus Christ, and convince them of sin, to make them once die that they may live, Rom. vii. 9. But the most part know neither of these ends. A carnal profane generation will not seek life by the righteousness of the law; their iniquities testify against them even to their face, and their sin is found hateful. There is not so much as an endeavour among too many Christian professors, either to approve themselves unto men, or their own consciences in their outward walking. They walk without any regard of a command, or rule, as it were by guess. Their own rule is what pleases them best. What suits their humours, and crosses God's word, that they will do, as if they knew not the curse, or were afraid of the sentence of condemnation. They walk in peace, and have no changes, they walk in the imagination of their vain hearts. They cannot say, and none will say for them, they seek life by the law, their contempt of it is so palpable, and yet no other end of it they know so it is to them as if God had never appointed it. Again,

2. There are many wrong and false ends, or uses of the law, when we make it the immediate mean to life and righteousness, and seek justification by it. And this was the end that these false teachers would have made of it. This is the end that the Israelites looked to. "All that the Lord hath commanded, will we do." O that was a great undertaking! Poor men, they knew not what they said. They thought upon no other thing but obedience to the command, and so made it a covenant of works. Thus did the people that followed Christ, John vi. 28. And the young man that came to Christ said, "What good thing shall I do, to inherit eternal life?" Here doing was preferred to living by faith, Rom. x. 1-23. The Jews did so, and missed the right way. And few of you will take⁴⁰ with this, that ye seek to be justified by your own works; and yet, it is natural to men, they will not submit to God's righteousness. There is need of submission to take Christ. O would not any think all the world would be glad of him, and come out and meet him bringing salvation? Would not dyvours⁴¹ and prisoners be content of a deliverance? Were it any point of self denial for a lost man, to grip a cord cast unto him? Yet here must there be submission to quit your own righteousness. It were of great moment to convince you of this, that ye are all naturally standing to the terms of a covenant of works, ye who are yet alive, and the commandment hath not slain you, with Paul, Rom. vii. 9, 11. Ye are yet seeking life by the law, if ye have not applied the curse unto yourselves. After application of yourselves to the command, ye are yet seeking life by it. Ye adorn yourselves with some external privileges, in some external duties of religion, some branches of the second table duties, and come to God with these. Some think to satisfy God for their faults, with an amendment in time to come. Some think God cannot punish some faults in them, because they have some good things in them. Ask many men the ground of their confidence, and in all the world they know not how to be saved, unless their prayers do it, or their keeping the kirk.⁴² But this is not the end that God hath sent out the law for. Ye cannot now stand to such a bargain. The law is now weak through the flesh, and it is now impossible for it to give life. Though you would pray never so much, all is but abomination. And would not many of you think ye were in a fair venture for heaven, if no man living could lay any thing to your charge, but were you unblameable in all the duties of the first and second table? [Could you say,] though you know nothing as by yourselves, that you were frequent and fervent in prayer, reading, and meditation; and as far advanced as Paul, or David, or Moses, or Job, sure ye would think yourselves out of doubt of heaven? Nay, but in this, ye may see ye are seeking righteousness by the law. Though ye were so far advanced, yet God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, would look to your sins, and pass by your righteousness, and all that would be as menstruous rags before him; and therefore Paul was much wiser, who said, "though I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified." 3. Many make the law an end, when God hath only made it a mean. God hath appointed the law for some other use, namely, to be subservient to Christ and the gospel. But oftentimes we make the law the end of all God's speaking to us, and so conclude desperate resolutions from it, (Rom vii. 9). "When the law came, sin revived, and I died." Here the man is slain by the commandment, and not yet come to the healing Physician at Gilead. We use to gather desperation of the command, when it presses so perfect and exact obedience, such as we cannot yield. When it craves the whole sum, without the abatement of a farthing, we sit down under the sense of an impossibility to obey, and will not so much as mint⁴³ at obedience. Because we cannot do as we ought, we will not do as we can. Because we cannot do in ourselves we conclude nothing can be done at all. This is to make the command the last word, and the end of God's speaking. Doth not the child of God frequently sit down and droop over his duty, while he looks upon the Egyptian taskmaster, the command, charging the whole work and portion of brick, and giving no straw to work upon? So are many in duties. While the aim and eye is upon some measure according to the perfect rule, the hands fall down feeble, and none is wrought at all, and they do not look if there be another word from God posterior to the command, a word of promise. We use also to gather desperate conclusions of the curse, and make the law according to which we examine ourselves, the end of God's manifesting his mind unto us, and do not look upon it as a way leading to some other thing. When ye have tried yourselves, and applied your own ways and state unto the perfect rule, God's verdict of

all men's condition is true in you, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," "there is none righteous, no, not one," and so if necessitated to apply the dreadful sentence of the judgment to yourselves, ye stay there, and sit down to lodge with the sentence of condemnation, as if that were God's last word to sinners. Is not this to make the law the end, which is but appointed for another end? The curse is not irrevocable. Why then do ye pass peremptory conclusions, as if there was no more hope, but it were perished from the Lord?

II. To discover unto us the right end and use of the law, the great design and purpose of God in making such a glorious promulgation of the law on mount Sinai, and delivering it by the ministry of angels, in the hands of a mediator. The end which God hath been driving at these six thousand years, is this only, that men may come to Jesus Christ and believe in him. The end wherefore the covenant of works hath been preached since Adam's fall, is only this, to make way for a better covenant of grace, that men may hearken to the offer of it. Now faith in Jesus Christ hath two special actings, either upon Christ for justification of the person, and eternal life and salvation, or for sanctification of the person and actions, in the fruits of new obedience. And in the text, unfeigned faith is described from both these, and gives the answer of a good conscience, that is, of absolution from the curse, by the blood of Jesus, and makes him as quiet as he had never sinned. And then it purifies the heart, and worketh by love.

Now the law is a mean appointed of God, and instituted to lead to both these, and Christ in these. The law is appointed to lead a man to faith in Christ, for salvation and righteousness, and the suitableness of it to that end, we comprehend thus: 1. It convinces of sin; "The law entered that the offence might abound," and "was added because of transgressions," Rom. v. 20, Gal. iii. 19. This is the end of God's sounding the trumpet, and declaring our duty, "that every mouth may be stopped" before God, and that none may plead innocence before his tribunal. While men are without the law, they are alive, and think well of themselves, but the entering of the commandment in a man's conscience, in the length, breadth, and spirituality of it, makes sin to appear exceeding sinful. Sin was in the house before, but was not seen before, and now when the bright beam of a clear, spiritual, holy law, carrying God's authority upon it, is darted into the dark soul, O what ugly sights appear! The house is full of motes. Ye cannot turn the command where it will not discover innumerable iniquities, an universal leprosy. For all the actions that were called honest, civil and religious before, get a new name, and they being seen in God's light, are called rottenness, and living without the law, Rom. vii. 9 &c. Think ye, but the woman of Samaria knew her adultery, before Christ spake to her? Nay, but Christ speaks according to the law and makes it a mean of faith. He tells her all that ever she did. He tells her indeed what she knew before, but in another manner. Men know their actions, but the Lord discovers the sinfulness of them, as offensive to God's holy majesty, and pure eyes. It will force a man to give his sin the right name, it will take away all excuses and shifts, and aggravate sin, that it may become exceeding sinful. But further, 2. This is not the last end of it. Not only is it ordained to stop all mouths, but to make all flesh guilty before God, "For by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified," Rom. iii. 18, 19. It convinces of an impossibility to stand before God, and so it kills a man. And now the man asks, "What shall I do to be saved?" He cannot stand before God in terms of justice, where none can stand, and so either must some other delivery come, or he is gone. Now here he is put from making satisfaction, "Who can abide with everlasting burnings?" He sees himself standing under the stroke of justice; and where can he go from God's presence? If he go to heaven, he is there, if to hell, he will find him out, the light and darkness are alike to him, Psal. cxxxix. 7-11. Not only the cries of sinful man, but of wretched and miserable man, are heard from him! Now these are the steps the law proceeds by. But it must not stay there, or else it is not come to the end of it. It must put a man within the doors of the covenant of grace. The law is a messenger sent to pursue a man out of his own house of self confidence and security, he was like to perish in, and not to know it. Now by discovering his sinful and cursed condition, it brings him out of himself, and out of all created things. But the end is not yet attained, till it put him in Christ's hand, and enter him in the border of the city of refuge and this is

the end of the abounding of sin by the law, that grace may superabound, Rom. v. 20. And this is the end of the concluding him under sin, and making him guilty before God, that the promise of faith may be given him, and another righteousness revealed by faith, Rom. iii. 20, 21, Gal. iii. 23. And now he is at peace, being justified by faith, and rests as a stone in its own place (Rom. v. 1, 2), and the law hath nothing to do with him; he is out of its jurisdiction. 3. Now when it hath pursued him unto Christ for salvation, yet the command is still useful, and appointed yet for faith in Jesus, in performing new obedience. The Christian's daily walking is but the turning of the old round, as the sun doth this day go about the compass it did the first day, so his life is but a new conversion still. When he is now settled on Jesus for salvation, he must yet be put by⁴⁴ the command. It discovers his daily sins, and so he is put to Jesus, the open Fountain for all sin and uncleanness. And the command comes out in perfection, and discovers his shortcoming and inability, and therefore he is put to Jesus for strength. And this is the end of the perfect rule upon believers, that they, comparing duty with their ability, may be forced to make up their inability for duty by faith in Christ.

III. We may know from this what great encouragement we have to believe, and how great warrant, since not only God commands faith itself (1 John iii. 23.), but he hath appointed faith to be the end of all other commands, and hath given the whole law for this end. For "without faith it is impossible to see God." Faith is that which God loves best in all obedience. What is it that makes faith so precious? Certainly not the act itself, but the precious object of it, Jesus Christ, in whom the Father is well pleased. Faith glorifies God in his justice and mercy most, and abases the creature. Now what an obligation lies on us to believe? It is usual to question a right and warrant of faith, when we have no doubt of other commands. But, in all reason, any command might be questioned before faith. There is no duty admits of less disputing. Hath not God put it out of all controversy? What warrant have ye to pray, or to sanctify the Sabbath? Is it not because God commands these duties? And do ye not go about them in obedience to God, notwithstanding of the sense of your own inability? How comes it then that ye make any more scruple of this? Hath not the same authority that gave the ten commands, given also this new command? And shall not disobedience be rebellion, and worse than witchcraft?

⁴⁵ But when besides all this, it is the appointed end of all the commands, so that ye may say, it is commanded in all the commands and the whole law,—command and curse is a virtual kind of commanding faith,—then what shall disobedience be? When ye break one command, ye are guilty of all. Much more here, not only because of God's authority stamped upon all, but because it is the common end of all. If ye could once come to believe that ye had as good warrant to believe in Christ as to abstain from cursing God's name, and as great obligation, what could ye answer for disobedience?

IV: This is a point of great consolation also. What more terrible than the law? Nothing in all the world. Nothing in all the word so dreadful as the trumpet on Sinai, sounding louder and louder. The judge and law gives voice. Yet if ye could look to the end of it and if the vail that was on the Jews' heart be not upon yours, O how comfortable shall it be! Doth not a command and curse form a dead sound in an awakened man's ears, and strike unto his heart like a knife? But if he knew this, it would be a healing medicine. Would not many sinners wish there would be no such thing in the Bible as a condemning law, when they cannot get it escaped? But look to the end of it, and see gospel saving doctrine in the very promulgation of it. When it was published, it made the Jews all to tremble and cry out, and even holy Moses himself was afraid. But there is more consolation than terror here. This condemning law is delivered in a Mediator's hand, even Jesus Christ, Gal. iii. 19, 20. Who was he that spake out of the cloud, and fire, and came and set down his throne on Sinai, accompanied with innumerable angels? Deut. xxxiii. 2, Acts vii. 53. It was Jesus Christ that spoke to Moses in the mount, and in the bush also, Acts vii. 35, 38. Is it then the Mediator's law, whose office it is to preach glad tidings, and the day of salvation? Sure then it needs be dreadful to no man. For if he wound, he shall heal, and he comes to bind up the broken hearted. Ye may look on the command and curse as messengers sent by mercy, to prepare you, and make his way straight before his face. The end of the law is not to condemn you, to stop your mouth,

and make you guilty. That is not the last work it is appointed for, but the Mediator hath another end, to bring you to the righteousness of faith, to save you without yourselves. Therefore ye may more willingly accept the challenge, since it comes in so peaceable terms. What should be terrible to you in all God's word and dispensation, since the ministry of condemnation and death is become the port⁴⁶ of heaven and life? What must all his other dealings be? Surely there is nothing in the world, but it must lead to this end also. Prosperity and adversity, the end of them is faith, conviction and challenges. Be not then as men without hope, when you are challenged, for the challenge comes from a Mediator who would have you saved.

V: You may see hence how injurious they are to grace who cry down the law. The Antinomian cannot be a right defender and pleader for faith (the end of the command), when he opposes the command that leads to that end. He can not exalt Christ aright, or lead men to him, when he will not come under the pedagogue's hand to be led to Christ. The law, even as a covenant of works, is of perpetual use to a believer, because it lays a blessed necessity upon him to abide with Christ. It is a guard put before the door, to keep him, as it was a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ, and makes a man subordinate to the gospel as a mean to the end, and so it ought to be used. So then it is against the truth [to say] that the Israelites were under the law, and not Christians. The law came not to be a mean of life and righteousness unto them, but that the offence might abound, that so grace might superabound. The law was not intended, but Christ was intended, and this end they could not fix their eyes upon, by reason of the hardness of their hearts. It is also false, that Christian believers are wholly exeemed⁴⁷ from the command and law. No, he hath use of all that leads to Jesus Christ, and the law itself becomes gospel under that notion. The command stands in its integrity, that he may be convinced of shortcoming and inability, and so may believe in Christ. The curse also stands, and condemns him for new sins, that he may believe in Christ, who justifies the ungodly. Again, it is not truth, that the law is no mean of conversion, though not in its own virtue and power, but as it is delivered in a Mediator's hand, and applied by the Spirit of grace and the gospel.

Use VI: We exhort you not to disappoint God of his end, and if he hath given the law for this end, never rest till ye be at the end. Let the law enter into you once, or enter ye into it. Ye cannot come to Jesus unless it lead you. Let it enter into your consciences, with God's power and authority as his law, and examine yourselves by it, else ye shall never believe in Christ. 2. Accept all the challenges of the law, let it enter till your mouth be stopped. Read your obligation well, that ye may see how much ye owe. 3. Let faith be the issue and result of all the applications of the law to yourselves. Ye go in the law's hand to Christ, but sit not down with it, or else you will not go free till ye have paid the last farthing. Make faith in Christ the end of the curse condemning you, that he may absolve you, the end of the command, commanding, that he may give strength and fulfil in you the righteousness of the law. God never sent a condition to you, but that you may believe, and be established. 4. Let it be your exercise to travel between an impossible command, and Christ Jesus by faith, through whom all things are possible. Write always down how much ye owe, that ye may see grace superabounding. Sit not down to examine the duty, or go not about it in your own strength. Be not discouraged though ye find no strength. Ye are called in such a case to believe. Nay, in a word, what is all the Christian's employment? Faith exhausts it all. Look on the command, and it calls for believing. Look upon the curse and it calls also for believing.

We come now, as was proposed, to observe, *Thirdly*,⁴⁸ That faith unfeigned is the only thing which gives the answer of a good conscience towards God. Conscience, in general, is nothing else but a practical knowledge of the rule a man should walk by, and of himself in reference to that rule. It is the laying down a man's state, and condition, and actions beside the rule of God's word, or the principles of nature's light. It is the chief piece of a man. The man is as his conscience is. It is a man's lord. As a wing to a bird, or as a rudder to a ship, so is conscience to a man in all his ways. The office of conscience is ordinarily comprehended in three styles it gets. It is a law or rule, a witness, and a judge, or a light, a register, and a recorder, and an executioner. For the conscience its first act is some principle of nature's light, obliging it as a rule to walk by, or some revealed truth of God, whereof the conscience is informed. Now the conscience, in the second place, comes to examine itself according to the rule, and there it bears witness of a man's actions or state, and faithfully records and depones.⁴⁹ And at length the conscience pronounces the sentence upon the man, according as it has found him, either accusing or excusing, condemning or absolving. Now a good conscience is diversely taken in scripture, I. A good conscience is an honest clean conscience, bearing testimony of integrity and uprightness in walking, such as Paul had, 2 Cor. i. 12, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.” Heb. xiii. 18, “We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.” Acts xxiv. 16, “Herein do I exercise myself in having a conscience void of offence, towards God and man.” 1 Pet. iii. 16, “Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.” II. A good conscience is a conscience calmed and quieted, that hath gotten an answer to all challenges, the blood and resurrection of Jesus, 1 Pet. iii. 21. And this we take to be meant here. The good conscience is the conscience that is sprinkled with Christ's blood, from dead works, to serve the living God, Heb. ix. 14. For the guilty man that comes to Christ, and washes in the fountain opened for sin, hath no more conscience of sins, Heb. x. 2. And therefore it is called a pure and clean conscience, 2 Tim. i. 3, “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers, with a pure conscience,” &c.; the stain of guilt is taken away. Now I say, faith only gives the answer of a good conscience. The man that comes to Christ hath an ill conscience, when he hath examined himself according to the law, and given out faithful witness of his own state and condition, and accordingly pronounced sentence,—a sentence condemnatory. He finds himself lying under God's curse, and so the conscience from a judge turns a tormentor, and begins to anticipate hell, and prevent⁵⁰ the execution of wrath. All the world cannot answer this challenge, or absolve from this sentence, until faith come and give a solid answer, that may be a ground of peace. And its answer is good and sure, because it dips the conscience in the blood of the Son of God. For the blood of bulls and of goats could not do it, the redemption of the soul was precious. Faith puts the soul over head and ears in the fountain opened, and it comes out like snow, or wool, though it were like scarlet or crimson. The law condemned, and the conscience subscribed itself sinful, and concluded itself lost in sin; but faith in Christ pleads before mercy's throne, where judgment and justice also sit. It pleads its cause over again, and gets the former sentence repealed. The conscience gave in the charge against the man, but faith sits down and writes the discharge; and so he is as free as if all his debt was paid, or never contracted. Faith puts the Cautioner in the creditor's hand, and goes free. As the law writes down a charge of sin and curses, faith sets against it as many sufferings in Christ, as many blessings in the Blessing of all nations. And when the conscience that condemned itself by faith again absolves itself, O what a calm, what a perfect peace is it then kept in! What a continual feast doth it enjoy! Prov. xv. 15. Make him never such a great man in the world, he would utterly despise it, and count himself more blessed in the pardon of sin, and the friendship of God, than all the enjoyments of this world. He is better in some respect than if he had never sinned, for his sin is, as it were, not before God. And withal he hath got not only acquittance from guilt, but acquaintance with Jesus Christ, the Blessing of the nations, and the Desire of all the families of the earth. Now

may he triumph and boast in Christ Jesus. Who shall condemn? It is God that justifies, it is Christ that died, and is risen again. He may say with David, "I will not fear, though my iniquities compass me about;" and with Job, "If he cause quietness, who can give trouble?" We observe then that,

I. Before a man come to Christ, he has an ill conscience; for either he is at peace with himself, and absolves himself, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the abominations of my heart, Deut. xxix. 19; or he also says, "Because I am innocent," therefore God will turn away his wrath, Jer. ii. 35. He cries peace, peace, when there is no peace, (Ezek. xiii. 10.) and that is but a desperate condition, and a bad conscience, if any can be so called. This is the secure and seared conscience, that either doth not judge itself, because a man hath beaten it flint hard, or is constantly absolving itself upon false grounds. That is the conscience that in all the creation is nearest the desperate conscience, that shall never have a good answer. His sin is but lying at the door like Cain's, and shall enter in when judgment comes. He is but flattering himself in his own eyes, till his iniquity be found hateful, and till sudden destruction comes as an armed man. Look upon Deut. xxix. 20, and see such a man's case. There is no peace for him, the Lord will not pity nor spare him, but pour upon him all the curses of the law, even when he blesses himself in his own eyes. In short, he is such as is awakened to see where he is, and condemns himself according to the word; and that is a better and a more hopeful conscience than the former, yet it is but an ill conscience. Conscience doth act its part aright, and in so far it is good, but the man is but in a miserable condition. Withal it gives such a wound to the soul, as none can bear it. All the sad affections which take up men's spirits come in, and this is the worm which never dies in hell, and the fire which shall never be quenched. Anger, grief, hatred, despair, always dwell with an ill conscience. This is both the resemblance of hell, and the sparks which come from that devouring fire. But, II. When the troubled conscience, tossed up and down, and looking upon all hands for help, and all refuge failing them, and no person caring for their soul, when it gets once a look of Jesus, and roweth unto his shore, O what a change! He commands the winds to calm, and the waves to cease, and says unto him, Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven. Faith finds in Jesus ample grounds of answering all challenges, of silencing all temptations, of overcoming all enemies, and commands the soul to go into its place of refuge. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee," &c. Psal. cxvi. 7-9.

We shall now shut up all with the application in some uses. Use I. We may learn hence how few have a good conscience. Faith is a rare thing, but a good conscience is much rarer. And here we may notice, 1. That the conscience which is dead and sleeping, is not a good conscience: every quiet and calm conscience is not a good one. Ye may dream over your days with the foolish virgins, and take rest in a pleasing delusion, and cry peace, peace, and yet the end of it will be worse than the beginning. A conscience that acts not at all, nor judges itself, is, as it were, no conscience; either ignorance hath blinded it, and keeps it in the dark, or wickedness hath stopped its mouth. You think your conscience good because it tells you few of your faults, it troubles you not; but that conscience must once speak, and do its office, it may be in a worse time for you. 2. It is not a good conscience that always speaks good, and absolves the man. God may condemn when it absolves. When ye walk according to false principles and grounds, and either take a wrong rule, or know not how to apply the rule to yourselves, shall God approve of false judgment? Your conscience is erring and deludes you. But, 1. The good conscience is not only a quiet conscience, but a quieted conscience. It not only hath peace, but peace after trouble. Ye then that have no peace, but what ye had all your days, it is but a mere fancy. The answer of a good conscience quiets the distempered mind, it comes by the sprinkling and washing of Christ's blood. He that hath peace on solid grounds with God, hath once taken up his enmity against him. 2. The good conscience hath been once an evil conscience, when it met with the command. The man has once been under the law, before he came to faith, and examined himself, and his conscience condemned him as not righteous, and out of Christ. Ye then that never examined your state, according to the perfect and holy law, and never judged yourselves, ye cannot

believe in Jesus, and so can have no good conscience. 3. The good conscience flows nearest from faith answering the challenges of the law. Some have had sore distempers of conscience, and puddling exercises of terror. But how they were eased or quieted they cannot tell, but their spring-tide ebbed, and they bubbled no more. It went away at will, and did wear out with time. This is not a good conscience, that knows not distinctly the grounds of faith to oppose to the law's condemnation. Some turn to build cities with Cain, and pass the time pleasantly, or in some business, that they may beguile their challenges. But this is not the conscience that faith makes good. Now, set apart all these who do not examine themselves at all, nor judge themselves, but live in a golden dream, who have never been arraigned before God's tribunal, or summoned by his deputy to appear before his judgment-seat; and join unto these all persons who, judging themselves, take other rules of absolution than the word gives, who after trial absolve themselves, and withal those, who, condemning themselves, yet flee not unto this city of refuge, this blood of sprinkling, to get a solid answer in the word to all their challenges, and O how few are behind! It is but as the gleaning after the vintage. Nay, many believers have not a good conscience, though they have a right to it, because they settle not themselves on the grounds of faith, and go not on from faith to faith. There must be some sense of faith, before faith answer rightly, and give peace to the mind.

Use II. Ye see the way to get a good conscience. Believe much, and maintain your faith. It is as simple and poor a mistake as can befall a soul. Ye think because ye have not peace after your believing, therefore it was not unfeigned and true faith: and therefore ye will not believe, because ye cannot get peace. But believe that ye may have a good conscience. Would ye know your sins are pardoned before ye believe? How precious should faith be unto you, when by faith ye may not only overcome the world, but, as it were, overcome God in judging, that the soul may be justified when it is judged? Ye will not get challenges⁵¹ answered by your own integrity and uprightness, or by your performing of duties. No, no, these cannot be sufficient grounds of your peace. Lay down the solid and satisfying grounds of faith, of imputed righteousness, and of salvation by Jesus Christ, and this shall be a foundation of lasting peace. Sense makes not a good conscience, there is much lightness and vanity in it, and the rule it proceeds by is changeable, but faith establishes the soul, and makes it not ashamed.

Sermon XIII.

1 Tim. i. 5.—“Now the end of the commandment,” &c.

Fourthly, Faith purging the conscience purifies the heart (Acts xv. 9.), and hope also purifies the heart (1 John iii. 3.), which is nothing else but faith in the perfection and vigour of it. This includes, I. That the heart was unclean before faith. II. That faith cleanses it, and makes it pure. But “who can say, I have made my heart pure (Prov. xx. 9.), I am clean from my sin?” Is there any man's heart on this side of time, which lodges not many strange guests? In answer to this we may observe, that there is a legal purity, and a gospel purity. A legal purity is a sincere and full conformity to God's holy will and command, in thought, affections, inclinations, and actions, and, in this sense, who can say, I have made my hands clean? The old corruption sticks to the heart and cannot be thoroughly scraped out, there are many lurking holes for uncleanness to be hid in. Corruption is engrained in him, and it will not be the work of one day to change it. The whole head is sick, and the whole body full of sores. All the corners of the heart are full

of filthiness and idols, and though the house be now swept and garnished, and all things look better in it, yet there are many hidden places of rottenness undiscovered, and it is the soul's continual exercise to purify itself as he is pure. But evangelical purity and cleanness is that which God reconciled in Christ takes to be so, and that which in Christ is accepted, and is a fount of his clean Spirit dwelling in the heart. The heart formerly was a troubled fountain, that sent out filthy streams, as a puddle. Corruption was the mud among the affections and thoughts, but now a pure heart is like a clear running water, clean and bright like crystal. Now this purity consists in the washing of regeneration, and sanctification by the Spirit of holiness. Jesus Christ came both by water and blood, 1 John v. 6. He came by blood, to sprinkle and purge the conscience, that it might have no more conscience of sins, Heb. x. 2, ix. 14. And he also came by water, that is, the washing and cleansing virtue of the Spirit of grace, to purge and cleanse us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. There are two things in sin that Jesus came to destroy, the guilt and offence of sin, whereby the sinner is bound over to condemnation, and lies under the Judge's curse, and the spot of sin, which also Christ came to destroy. He did both in his own person, and he is to perfect this in us personally, who were judicially reckoned one with him, Rom. vi. 3-12, 1 John iii. 5. Now Jesus Christ hath come with blood to sprinkle the conscience from dead works, and give it a good answer to the challenges of the law, and an ill conscience. And he hath come likewise with water, to wash and cleanse us from the spots, and filth, and power of sin. The first removes the guilt, the latter removes the filth of sin, and both are done by faith, which is our victory over the world, and this is the way how faith overcomes the world by the water and blood. 1 John v. 4-6. The blood of Jesus Christ is holden by faith with a twofold virtue of cleansing, from the guilt, and from the filth of sin, and thus cleanses us from all unrighteousness, 1 John i. 7. According to the promise of the covenant (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.), the application of the blood of sprinkling hath two effects. One is for justification, "ye shall be clean," another is, "from all your filthiness and idols will I cleanse you," that is sanctification. I. Now this purity consists in this, that the pure heart regards not iniquity in the inward man, nor delights in sin, Psal. lxvi. 18. He sets not up his idols in God's place, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. The cleansing of the heart is from idols. Although he cannot get himself purified as Christ is pure, and though iniquity be in his heart, yet he regards it not. He looks not upon it as a guest approved and accepted. Sin may be an intruding guest, but sin is not welcomed with all his heart. He dare not take that pleasure in sin that another man would do. He hath a worm that eats up his pleasure when he departs from God, or his thoughts go a-whoring from him. The unbelieving man's heart is a house full of idols, but the entry of faith by God's Spirit makes their Dagon to fall. But, II. The pure heart hath much of the filthiness taken away that filled it before, and so it is denominated from the best part. It is washed and cleansed from a sea of corruption, and the body of sin that did reign within the heart was formerly like an impure fountain, that sent out nothing but rotten stinking waters. Unto him were all things unclean, for his heart and conscience was defiled, Tit. i. 15. Nothing was pure to him, it ran continually in a stream of unclean thoughts and affections. But now he is purified, and to the believer "all things are pure:" the ordinary strain and current of his thoughts and affections run more clearly free of the earthly quality they had, more sublimated, more spiritualized, and he is named by that. Though, it may be, temptation may trouble the fountain, and make it run unclean and earthly, yet it will settle again, and come into its own posture, and the dreg fall to the bottom, and the clean water of the Spirit be the predominant. But a standing puddle will run foul as long as it runs, corruption goes through all. It is not a corner of the heart, but the whole heart.

III. A pure heart is like a running fountain, if it be defiled, it is always casting out the filth, and is about returning to a right state. But an impure heart is like a standing puddle that keeps all it gets. If by temptation the pure heart and affections be stirred, and the filth that is in the bottom come up to the brim, it hath no rest nor peace in that condition, but works it out again, and it hath this advantage, that it is purer and clearer after troubling nor⁵² it was before. For much of the filth would run out that had been lying quiet before. But an impure heart keeps all, and vents none. If ye trouble it, ye will raise an ill smell, and when it settles, it falls but to the bottom again, and there is as much to work upon the

next time. In a word, the believer when he sins, and his heart goes wrong, he weeps over his heart, and has no peace till it be cleansed. He washes in the fountain of Christ's blood. When a natural transgression gets up, he sets himself against it and the root of it both, and bears down the original corruption, which is the fountain of all sin (Psal. li. 5), and at every descent he brings away something of that puddle. He is upon the growing hand by the exercise of faith and repentance. Look upon him after he has seen and been sensible of his sins, and ye would say it is not the man ye saw. He hates sin more than he did formerly. We also notice,

IV. That purity is sincerity and uprightness (James iv. 8), "Purify your hearts, ye double minded." Hypocrisy is filthiness and abominable to God. He then is a sincere man, that hath any honesty of heart toward God. When his actions are not right, his heart doth not approve them, Rom. vii. When he cannot come up to his duty, his desire comes before performance. A sincere man hath a respect to all God's commandments.

V. The pure man is still purifying himself "even as God is pure." As he who hath called him is holy, so he is holy in all manner of conversation. He never thinks he is clean enough, and so he aspires after greater purity, and is named a saint, rather from his aim and endeavour, than from his attainment. He cries, unclean, unclean, am I, and holy, holy, Lord God, art thou. He hath taken up his lodging near the opened fountain, and dwells there, never to remove thence, till he have his robes clean and white in the blood of the Lamb. No unclean thing can enter into heaven, and he is trimming himself against that day, and setting apart all superfluity of naughtiness, and filthiness, and still all his righteousness is as menstruous rags. He is cleansing his house, every day casting out something, searching out all the corners of it, lest the unclean thing, and the Babylonish garment be hid. His pattern is to walk even as Christ walked, 1 John ii. 6.

Now faith and a good conscience have influence on this purifying the heart. I. Because faith lays hold upon the cleansing virtue of Christ's blood. It applies Jesus Christ who came by water and blood, and his blood purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. The blood that was offered up by the eternal Spirit, of how great virtue must it be when applied to the heart and conscience, Heb. ix. 14. No wonder it makes that like wool which was formerly like scarlet. Now faith in Jesus Christ applies that blood. It is the very hand that sprinkles it. Faith takes up house beside the opened fountain, and dwells there. Faith takes Jesus for sanctification as well as justification, 1 Cor. i. 30. Faith looks upon a judicial union with Christ crucified, and sees his perfect offering once offered to sanctify all, and therefore makes continual applications with David, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow." II. Faith purifies the heart, because it lays hold on the promises, and makes use of the word, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Faith having such promises, cleanses the man from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. The proper order of faith is the word, and the word is the truth by which we are sanctified and made clean, John xvii. 17. There are many precious promises of sanctification and holiness, and faith draws the virtue of purifying the heart out of the promises, and applies the promise to his impure heart, and it is purged. III. Faith purifies the heart also by provocation and upstirring, in as far as it gives the answer of a good conscience. For the man who hath gotten a solid answer to all his objections in Christ's blood, and hath the continual feast of joy and peace in believing, O how will he abhor himself, and repent in dust and in ashes! Faith takes up God's holiness and purity, and loathes itself with Job, and cries, unclean. The believer will thus reason and conclude,—shall I any more delight and live in sin, since I am dead unto it by Jesus Christ? Rom. vi. 1, 2. He falls in with the beauties of holiness, and so cannot abide his own. Faith begets hope, and hope purifies the heart. Shall then the man who expects to see God, and be a citizen of the new Jerusalem, where no unclean thing can enter, shall he walk in his former lusts, like the wicked world, and not make himself ready for the continuing city he goes to, and adorn himself for the company of the blessed God and angels?

Let us now conclude, by applying all which hath been said in some uses. Use I. We may see from what hath been hinted, how little faith is among you. Faith purifies the heart, but if ye examine yourselves, your hearts will be found unclean, and such as the Holy Ghost cannot dwell in. The temple in which God's Holy Spirit resides must touch no unclean thing, 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17. Are not many men's corruptions rank and lively? Unclean hands are an infallible demonstration of an unclean heart, James iv. 8. These things which proceed out of the heart may teach you what is within the heart. The streams may let you know what is in the fountain Mark vii. 15-22, James iii. 11, 12. What need ye any more proof of yourselves? Sinners, look to your hands, and your outward man, and learn from them to know your hearts. These things proceed out of the heart and defile the whole man. The profanity of the most part of men's practices, cursing and swearing &c., is a bitter stream that cannot proceed from a good fountain. It is a wonder how the world satisfy themselves with a dream of faith. What influence hath your faith had upon your heart and conversation? Are ye not as earthly and worldly as ever, as unclean as ever? Ye think your hearts good, but if your conversation be not good, your hearts are not good. Will any person think his sins are pardoned, when he wallows in them? Do they believe they shall obtain the remission of these sins they are not purging themselves from? No, no, the blood and water must go together and the Spirit's sanctifying with Christ's justifying.

Use II. The children of God may hence gather the ground and reason of their little progress in sanctification. Why are your hearts so unclean, and why is there so much corruption yet living in your thoughts and affections, that it cannot keep within the heart, but, as a full fountain, must run out in streams of external actions? It is even this, ye do not believe much, and though this be told you, yet ye will not believe it; ye take ways of your own to purge out your corruptions, and it will not do. All your resolutions, prayers, sad experiences, &c., are of no more virtue than the blood of bulls and goats. Ye must then apply the blood of the Son of God, which was offered up by the eternal Spirit. It is but a poor fancy to suspend believing till ye see a pure heart. How shall ye get a pure heart? Is it not folly to forbear planting till ye see fruits, or to pluck up your tree because it bears not the first day? Abide in Christ, and ye shall bring forth much fruit. Believe, and believe, and believe again, till faith be answered by a good conscience, till that sweet echo be given unto the Lord's comforting voice, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." Be much in laying hold upon the precious promises, and then your heart shall fall out of love with this present evil world, and shall relish spiritual things. But who will believe this report? Ye go away convinced that this is the only way to purify yourselves, and yet ye continue puddling in your old way. May God persuade your hearts to do better.

Sermon XIV.

1 Tim. i. 5.—"Now the end of the commandment," &c.

Fifthly, Faith purging the conscience, and purifying the heart, works by love. Love is the fruit of faith. Love is the stream that flows out of a pure heart and a good conscience. By love, we mean principally love to God, or Jesus Christ, and then love to the saints next to our Saviour. This is often mentioned in scripture, "Hope maketh not ashamed, (Rom. v. 5) because the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost." This love is the consequence of the peace which a justified man obtains by faith, Rom. v. 1, 2; 2 Cor.

v. 14. The constraining love of Christ flows from this ground, that a man judges Christ to have died for him, from faith's taking up of Christ in that noble expression of his love, (John v. 40, 42.) "And ye will not come unto me that ye may have life. I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." Faith works by love. Love is faith's hand put out in action for Christ, and as the mind commands the outward man, whether it will or not, so doth faith command love, Eph. iii. 17. The rooting and building up in love is a fruit of Christ's dwelling in the heart by faith. Love is the branch that grows in faith's root. These are often joined together, and comprehend the substance of the law and gospel, 1 Tim. i. 14, 2 Tim. i. 13. Faith fulfils the obedience to the gospel, and love is the fulfilling of the whole law, (Rom. xiii. 10) so that faith leads a man back again to the command, that he fled to faith from. Faith hath reconciled them and taken up the difference. We shall then show how faith and a good conscience and a pure heart contribute to love.

First, Faith is the eye and sense of the soul to take up Jesus Christ. Nothing is loved but as it is known and apprehended to be good. The affections of themselves are blind, and cannot go forth but as led by the direction of faith. Faith is the mind to present love's object. The world sees no beauty nor form in the commands, that they should desire them. Even Jesus Christ himself is but foolishness to a natural mind, he neither knows his need of him, nor Christ's suitableness to his need. But faith is the first opening of the eyes, when we are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. Christ becomes the believer's wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. The day spring from on high visits them who sit in darkness, to guide their feet in the way of peace, Luke i. 78, 79. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of the Sun of righteousness, doth arise and shine into their hearts. The man sees himself in a dangerous condition, and says, Oh I where am I? And faith discovers, on the other hand, all things in Christ Jesus suitable to such a case. He sees nothing but vanity, emptiness, and misery, sin, and condemnation in the creature, he sees grace, mercy, holiness, righteousness and free salvation in Christ. Set these beside one another, and judge ye if the soul cannot choose to run out in affection and longing desire. Oh! says he, to be one with him. Faith presents all the motives and attractives of the heart, and then there needs no more to make it love. Faith discovers a man's self unto himself, and lets him see all misery within, complete woe within doors, and it holds forth bread without the ports⁵³ for the saint, and salvation for the lost. It brings in an amiable person, who is fairer than the children of men, who is all love, and hath no spot in him. Is it not a sweet word, a Redeemer to captives, a Saviour to sinners? And will not the soul rise up, and go forth out of itself? And will it not choose to flit⁵⁴ unto him who is the desire of all nations? Will it not go unto him for food and clothing? Love then is the soul's journey and motion towards Jesus, whom faith hath brought in such a good report of. But,

Secondly. When faith hath given the answer of a good conscience, and brought Jesus nearer hand to the soul, or the soul nearer unto him, then love is stronger, and grows like a fire that many waters cannot quench. It is like jealousy, that is cruel as the grave, many floods cannot drown it. Union is the ground of love, union in nature, or sympathy, or likeness, is the ground of affection. According as faith brings Christ nearer to the heart, the flame increases. All things are desired and loved as good, but more desired, as not only good in themselves, but good unto us. Gold in the Indies will not much move the heart, but bring it hither, and ye shall see who loves it. The first act of faith puts a man in great need of a Saviour, and discovers a possibility of redemption through Jesus, and in so far he is loved. But when once faith has gone that length as to make a good conscience, and to calm and silence the woes of a troubled mind, by the actual application of that desired possible redemption, and when it can particularly apply the common salvation, O then what burning affection! "Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of his heritage, because he delights in mercy?" "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." "I will love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, I will call upon him so long as I live," as if it had never loved before. They will love much to whom much is forgiven. Love, without such a faith, is full of jealousies and suspicions, but when faith

hath brought in Christ to dwell in the heart, then it is rooted and built up in love, (Eph. iii. 17) and then perfect love casts out fear, 1 John iv. 18. Love before such an assurance, is but a tormenting love, and hath much fear in it, saying, "Oh I may want him, and then I will be more miserable than if I had not known him." But faith, giving the answer of a good conscience, casts out horror and fear, and then perfects love, and the soul then closes with Christ as a Mediator and friend, and closes with God as a merciful Father, now reconciled unto him through Christ, and not any more as a stern or severe Judge. But,

Thirdly. When faith hath purified the heart, and cleansed the affections, then the soul burns with a purer flame of affection and zeal to God, and is, as it were, delivered from the earthly weight put upon it. When the heart is purified, love is like the flame, whereas, if he be not so purged, there may be some heat and fire latent in the ashes, covered with corruption. But a pure heart is a spiritual heart, and minds spiritual things, (Col. iii. 1) and it is a heart going back unto its own place, Christ hath touched it with his own heart, and with his salvation, and it looks aye⁵⁵ sure to him in the heavens. The love of the world is inconsistent with the love of the Father, 1 John ii. 15. The love of the world plucks the heart downward, and the lusts of the flesh are so many weights upon the believer, that he can not mount up in a spiritual cloud of divine affection to Jesus Christ. But the pure and spiritual heart is now more refined, and delivered from these impediments, and it is like a pure lamp of oil burning upward. When a man's heart is engaged to any thing of this world, love cannot be perfect. For love is a man's master, and no man can serve two masters.

Sermon XV.

Matt. vi. 33.—"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,"
&c.

This is a part of Christ's long sermon. He is dissuading his disciples and the people from carnal carefulness and worldly mindedness. The sermon holds out the Christian's diverse aspects towards spiritual and external things. What is the Christian's disposition in regard to the world, how should he look upon food, raiment, and all things necessary in this life? "Be careful for nothing." "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or drink," &c. "Seek them not as your chief good." But what is his disposition towards spiritual and eternal things, and how ought ye to look upon them? "Seek them, set your heart upon them, look upon them as your treasure, and where your treasure is, let your heart be there also." So then you see here two callings and employments of a man in the world,—two universal callings that comprehend all men, one natural to us, and unlawful, the other divine, and lawful, the one paganish, the other Christian. What is the employment of all men out of Christ? There are many different callings and employments among men. One spends his time and thoughts one way, and another another way, but all of them agree in one general, whatever they are: Their heart is here. The thoughts they have are bounded and circumscribed in this present world. They are careful for nothing else but what concerns their back and belly,⁵⁶ or their name and credit. Take the best of them, whose employment seems most abstracted from the common affairs and distractions among men, yet their affections run no higher than this present world. On the other hand, what should be the exercise and employment of a Christian? It is even this, whatever he be, or whatever his occupation be among men, he

drives a higher trade with heaven, that should take him up. The world gets but his spare hours. He is upon a more noble and high project. He aspires after a kingdom. His heart is above where Christ is, and where his treasure is. And these things exhaust his affections and pains. Christ Jesus once takes the man's heart off these baser things, that are not worthy of an immortal spirit, let be⁵⁷ a spirit who is a partaker of a divine nature. But because the creature cannot be satisfied within itself, its happiness depends upon something without itself, (and this speaks out the vanity of the creature, and something of God, that is peculiar to him, to be self sufficient,) therefore Christ changes the object of the heart, and fixes the spirit upon a nobler and divine exercise. Since the spirit of a man cannot abide within doors without starving, it must run out upon something, therefore Jesus Christ hath described its bounds and way, its end and period. Before, a man sought many things, because not one was satisfying, that the want of one might be supplied by another; and therefore he was never near the borders of contentment and happiness, because still a thousand things are wanting. But now, Christ puts the soul upon a satisfying and self sufficient object. And here the streams of affection may run in one current, and need not divide or go contrary ways.

First: We have here then the Christian's calling and employment in this world, opposed to the carefulness and worldly mindedness of the men of this world, "Seek ye the kingdom of God." *Secondly:* His encouragement and success in two things, one is expressed, the other implied. That which is expressed, is seeking the kingdom of God, of grace and glory. If ye seek this kingdom, all temporal things shall be laid to your hand, all these things that ye need "shall be added unto you." The other imported is, ye shall get the kingdom who seek it. For the words, "added unto you," suppose the first and principal intent to be gotten. Then the Christian's success and encouragement is this, ye shall have the thing ye seek and more also. It was said to Solomon, "Because thou hast sought wisdom, therefore thou shalt get all other things." Because, O Christian, thou sought the kingdom of God, and not this present world which Satan is prince of, therefore thou shalt get according to thy word, and thou shalt also get what thou asked not, 1 Kings iii. 11-13. He hath success in the main business, and there is a superplus besides, some accession to his portion, that comes of will, so to speak. The kingdom of God in the New Testament is sometimes restricted to the elect, the word of the gospel, and the administration of it, by the Spirit of grace in the hearts of his people. This is frequently called "the kingdom of heaven," and "of God," Matth. xiii. 33. Sometimes the kingdom of God is taken for the state of grace, a new principle of spiritual life, that grows up to the perfect day, and this kingdom is within us, Luke xvii. 21. It is taken also for heaven, the kingdom of glory, Luke xxii. 16. Both these must be sought after, (Luke xii. 31.) and received, (Luke xviii. 17.) and must suffer violence, Matth. xi. 12. The righteousness thereof may be taken for the righteousness of God by faith, Rom. x. 3, chap. iii. 21, 22, 2 Cor. v. 21, Rom. iv. 11, 13, Rom. ix. 30, chap. x. 6, Heb. xi. 7, Phil. iii. 9.

We would observe here: I. That the Christian his name and occupation is to be a wanter and a seeker. II. The great exercise and employment he should have in this world, that which should swallow up his affections, thoughts, and endeavours, should be the kingdom of God and his righteousness, which is clearly expressed in three things: 1. His first and chief care should be to be at peace with God, and to be adorned with Christ's righteousness; 2. To have the kingdom of God within him, a throne of judgment erected for Christ to rule the whole man, by his Spirit according to the word; 3. To be made an heir here, and a possessor hereafter, of the everlasting kingdom of glory; 4. No man can either be a subject of God's gracious kingdom here, or his glorious kingdom hereafter, without the imputed righteousness of the Son of God, and whoever seeks righteousness must also seek the kingdom of God. These are joined together, and there is a great opposition between seeking of the world, and seeking grace and glory. Whoever is careful in these things cannot be diligent here. But rather seek the kingdom of God (Luke xii. 31) also implies, 5. That whatever a man be, or his profession be, except he seek this way of righteousness, and yield himself unto God's kingdom of grace, and unless Christ

rule in him, he is but a pagan, or infidel Gentile, in God's account. We return to the first of these, namely:

1st. That the Christian is a seeker. This is the ordinary description of a child of God, Psal. xxiv. 6, Psal. xxvii. 8. Many, at this time, call themselves Seekers.⁵⁸ They profess they seek a true church, and seek ordinances purely dispensed, but find none. But the child of God, the good Christian that seeks according to Christ's appointment, seeks not these things as if they were not, but he seeks God in ordinances, he seeks Christ in the church, he seeks grace and glory, honour and immortality, and eternal life. He is in the church, he hath the ordinances rightly administered, yet he wants the most part, till he find Jesus Christ in all these. Many seek corn, wine, or any worldly good thing, saying, "Who will show us any good?" Fie upon such a lax and indifferent spirit, that hath no discretion or sense of things that are good, that sees not one thing needful, and no more good than is necessary. But the child of God is a seeker different from these also, he seeks the favour and countenance of God, Psal. iv. 6, 7. He seeks wisdom above all things, Prov. ii. 4. He seeks but one good thing, because there is but one good thing necessary. The seeking Christian is a wanter, one that hath nothing, and finds it so. He wants, and knows he wants, else he would never seek. What wants he? Nay, rather ask, what hath he? It may soon be told what he hath, but it is hard to tell what he wants. Look what he hath, and ye find little or nothing, and therefore ye may conclude he wants all things. The text tells what he wants: (1) He wants righteousness; (2) He wants grace; (3) He wants glory, and hath no right to it. Men seek not what they carry from the womb. Therefore all men have come into the world with three great wants. (1.) Ye want righteousness. Ye cannot stand before God in the terms of strict justice. There is nothing ye have, or can do, but it is a menstruous cloth, Isa. lxiv. 6. All your religion and prayers will never commend you to God's holy justice. The scripture hath passed this sentence upon you all, "There is none righteous, no not one," Rom. iii. 10. The righteousness that the law of God requires is perfect, and complete, and exact. Either lay down the whole sum, or if it want a farthing it is no payment. Keep all the nine commands, but if ye break the tenth the nine will not suffice. Now all of you have sinned and corrupted your ways, and it is impossible to make up the want. As the redemption of the soul is precious and ceases for ever, so the broken and dyvour⁵⁹ man having become a bankrupt, shall never make up or pay his debt to all eternity. He hath once broken the command, and all your keeping afterwards will not stand for the obedience ye should always have given to it. Therefore sinners of the posterity of Adam, and wretched men by nature, see this great want and impossibility to recover it in yourselves. (2.) Ye likewise want all grace by nature. There is no delusion more ordinary than this, that the world thinks grace is very common. But believe it, Sirs, that all men came from the womb without grace, get it as ye will. Look what the scripture speaks of the whole race of Adam, "There is no fear of God before their eyes," Rom. iii. 18. They are without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world, aliens from the covenants of promise, Eph. ii. 1-3, 12. Let grace be as common as can be, yet all of you once wanted it. Ye have it not by birth, nor by education, nor by baptism. Ye think perhaps a baptized soul cannot be graceless, but know it for a truth that ye have neither legal righteousness nor evangelical holiness. All of you have woefully fallen from righteousness, and therefore ye lie, with Adam's posterity, without hope in the world. Grace and truth must come from above by Jesus Christ. Grace and glory are the gifts of God. (3.) The sinner also comes short of the glory of God, Rom. iii. 23. All sinners are born heirs of hell and wrath, without the hope of happiness. There is none born with a title to the kingdom of heaven, or any right to it. Man in his fall lost his right to eternal life and immortality, and hath purchased a doleful right to the Lord's wrath and to hell fire. Ye think it strange that any christened or baptized person should be damned, but the scripture knows no difference. "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature, and faith which worketh by love." Neither to be a member of the visible church nor a pagan avails any thing, "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Now what have ye since ye want righteousness? Ye want grace and ye want glory, and in the place of these ye have unrighteousness, all sin, all God's curses and wrath, and this makes up complete misery. In a word, ye want God and Christ, and this is all, and enough for all, Eph. ii. 12. Ye have, by nature, more sibness⁶⁰ with Satan,

and nearer relation to him, than to God, and if ye want God, what can ye have beside? Your abundance is want. As all things are theirs who are Christ's, so nothing is theirs who are not God's. In short, there is not in all the creation such a miserable creature as man, whom God hath magnified and exalted above the angels, and the rest of the works of his hands. Now all men want these, but no man knows this but the Christian, whose eyes Christ hath opened, and to whom he hath given eye salve. Laodicea was blind and saw not, but she thought she was rich enough, when she had nothing, Rev. iii. 17, 18. The man, who will discourse well on all the miseries of this life, and human infirmities, may be ignorant of these things. There is no man but knows some want. But what is it he misses? Nothing but what concerns his present being and well being in this world, and so the world may supply it. But the Christian wants something this vain world will not make up. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon the earth I desire beside thee," says the soul that hath found God. And whom want I in heaven but thee? (Psal. lxxiii. 25, 26) says the soul that seeks God. He wants God's favour, and the light of his reconciled countenance, Psal. iv. 6. If ye ask him, what seek ye, what want ye in all the world? He answers, "And now. Lord, what wait I for?" My heart and "my hope is in thee," Psal. xxxix. 7. None needed ask at Mary, "Whom seekest thou?" Any body that knows her, knows her want. It is he, the Christ Jesus, and she thinks all the world should want him, and seek him with her, and thinks no body should be ignorant of him; for she speaks to the gardener, as if there had been no other in the world, John xx. 15. But,

2dly. His wants put him to seeking, to diligence. He misses something, and O it is a great something, infinitely more than he is worth in the world! He wants being and well being. He thinks himself as good as lost, and he comes at length to some point of resolution, with the lepers of Samaria, (2 Kings vii. 3, 4.) "Why sit we here till we die? If we enter into the city there is famine, if we sit still we perish, if we go out we may find bread." And so the poor soul, with Mordecai and Esther, comes to this conclusion, "If I perish, I perish;" nothing but perishing as I am, I will go and seek salvation in Jesus Christ, and it may be I will find it. Who knows but he may turn again? Resolution is born a man at first, a giant. It goes out to the utmost border of want the first day. Wanting makes desire, and desire, attended with some hope, makes up resolution and purpose, and when the soul is thus principled, then in the third room,⁶¹ it comes forth to action. Desire and hope give legs to the soul for the journey, and now the wanting Christian ye shall find with his hand in every good turn, his feet in every ordinance. Ye shall find him praying, reading, and hearing. It is true, resolution is born a man, and practice is born but a child, and scarcely will come up in many years to the stature of resolution. Always⁶² diligence and violence is the qualification of his practice, (Heb. xi. 6, Matth. xi. 12) and this is written upon his using of means, "How love I the Lord! I am sick of love." The Christian's diligence in the use of means proclaims his earnest desire to obtain, whereas many a man's practice speaks but a coldrife and indifferent spirit. That is a neutral who cares not whether he obtain or miss. Some Christians have some missings of God, and spiritual things, but alas! their want, and sight of want, makes them twice miserable, because it puts not their hand to action. The slothful and sluggard's desire slays him, because his hands refuse to labour, Prov. xxi. 25. O! but he finds many difficulties in the way. Though he have half a wish, or a raw⁶³ desire after Christ, yet it never comes farther than a conditional wish. A beggar may wish to be a king. He comes to no purpose in it and therefore his way is called a hedge of thorns. Whereas a seeking Christian finds a plain path where he goes, Prov. xv. 19. The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the way, and a lion in the streets." He concludes upon the means and duties of religion before ever he try them, Prov. xxii. 13, Prov. xix. 24. How lazy is he! He will not bring his hand out of his bosom, when he hath put it in. Thus the lazy and secure Christian is a brother to a great waster, his desire consumes him. He hath no more religion than a spunk⁶⁴ of desire; and he sits down with this spark of his own kindling, and the life of religion thrives not upon his hand, Prov. xviii. 9, 12. His seeking must have violence with it, Matth. xi. 12. But we may also observe concerning the Christian, that he is,

3dly. Defined on this side of time as a seeker. In heaven he is an enjoyer, and he seeks no more; for how can the ox low over his fodder? He sits down to eat the fruit and sweat of

his labour, and well may he triumphantly say, as the ancient philosopher said, "I have found, I have found."⁶⁵ But here he is a seeker still. Whatever he miss, he is still a seeker, and whatever he find, he is yet a seeker. He is named not from his finding, but his seeking, not from his enjoyment or attainment, but from his endeavour and aim. Though he find righteousness in Jesus, and remission of sins, yet he is a seeker of grace; though he be justified, yet he seeks holiness. There are many who would seek no more of God than pardon of sin. Let him deliver them from hell, and they will trouble God with no more requests. Doth not some of your own consciences speak, that ye would seek no more from Christ than to be saved from an ill hour, and to be found in him; whereas Paul was not content with this, but made an holy gradation, as we read, Philip iii. 8, &c. He desired to know the power of Christ's resurrection, and to be made conformable to him by any means; and now, when he is found in Christ, and justified, he counts not himself well, or perfect and complete, or to have attained that which he struggled earnestly for. Would not many be content with a Saviour, but they love not to hear of a king to rule over them, nor of his laws to regulate their lives by? They love an imputed holiness, as well as righteousness. But the true seeker seeks grace within him. Though he be justified, or freed from guilt and condemnation, and have the righteousness of Christ to cover him, and though he should never come into condemnation for sin, yet he seeks the death and destruction of it in his soul, and the life of holiness implanted and perfected in his inward man. Though he is sure of heaven, yet he would have God's image upon his spirit, and whole man.

4thly. Whatever degree of grace he have or attain, yet he is still a wanter, and still a seeker. He counts not himself to have attained, or to be already perfect, but presses forward to gain the mark and prize of God's high calling, Phil. iii. 13, 14. He stands at no pitch, but forgets what is behind, and overlooks it, he thinks it not worthy to come in reckoning. There is still so much before his hand, that he apprehends it to be lost time to reckon what is passed. His aim is to perfect holiness in the fear of God. He endeavours to be holy as God is holy, who is the completest pattern of unspotted purity and uprightness, and to be holy in all manner of conversation. He goes from strength to strength, till he appear blameless before God; he seeks grace for grace, Psal. lxxxiv. 5-8. And truly the man who seeks the exact copy or pattern, Jesus Christ, who is gone before his people into heaven, and he who knows the spiritual command in all its dimensions, he will not say "I have found," but will still want more than he hath, and seek what he wants. There are some professors who have attained some pitch and degree, as it were, the first day, and never advance further. They have gotten a gift of prayer, some way of discharging duties, some degree in profession, and they want no more. Look on them some years after, and ye would say, they have sought no more. And truly he who seeks no more shall never be able to keep what he hath already, as a fire must soon die away if ye add not new fuel to it. Christians are not green in old age, because they have come to a pitch in their religion, and stand there. No, religion should not come to its stature hereaway.⁶⁶ This is but the time of its minority. Grace should be still on the growing hand. The grace of God is but a child here. Heaven and eternity make up the man. Glory is the man, who was once the child grace.

5thly. The good Christian is still a seeker till Christ be all in all, till he apprehend that for which he is apprehended. As long as he is in this world he is a seeker. Whereof, ye will say? Not only of more grace here, but of glory hereafter. Here he hath no continuing city, but he seeks one to come, Heb. xiii. 14. He is a pilgrim on earth, embracing the promises afar off, and seeking his country, even heaven itself, Heb. xi. 13, &c. All your present enjoyments in this world, your own houses and lands, would not make you think yourselves at home, if ye were Christians at the heart. Ye would miss consolation, ye would want happiness in the affluence of all created things. And therefore, Christians, do ye want nothing when all things go according to your mind? Is there no hole in your heart that a world cannot fill up? This is not well. Ye ought to seek a city, while ye are in your own country, and ye should never think yourselves at home till ye be in heaven. The Christian gets some taste of the fruits of the land, some clusters in the wilderness and house of his pilgrimage, and this makes him long to be there. This inflames the soul's

desire, and turns it all in motion to seek that which was so sweet. If hope be so sweet, what shall the thing possessed be? If a grape brought a savour and taste so refreshful, what must the grapes plucked from the tree of life be, and the rivers of pleasures, which are at God's right hand, for evermore be? Sit not down then, Christians, upon your enjoyments, whether they be worldly or spiritual, but aspire to high things.

Sermon XVI.

Matth. vi. 33.—“But seek ye first the kingdom of God,” &c.

II. The Christian's chief employment should be to seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof. “Seek first,” &c. Upon this he should first and chiefly spend his thoughts, and affections, and pains. We comprehend it in three things. *First*, He should seek to be clothed upon with Christ's righteousness, and this ought to take up all his spirit. This is the first care and the chief concern. Did not this righteousness weigh much with Paul, when he counted all things but loss and dung, that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ? Phil. iii. 8, 9. Now this righteousness is of more concernment than all the world beside. For it is God's righteousness, (Rom. x. 3, 4; 2 Cor. v. 21.) and this holds out a threefold excellence in it. (1.) It is God's righteousness, because he alone devised it, and found it out. All the world could not have imagined a way possible to save lost mankind, or ever one sinner of that wretched number. Satisfaction to justice was needful, and there was none righteous among Adam's posterity. But here God himself in his everlasting counsel hath found it out, and all hath flowed from his love. The mission of Jesus Christ to be the propitiation for our sins, comes from this blessed fountain, 1 John iv. 9, 10; Rom. iii. 24, 25. God hath been framing this righteousness from all eternity, and even this world seems to be made for this end. All God's dispensation with Adam, his making a covenant of works with him, his mutability and liableness to fall, and so governing all things in his holy providence that he should fall from his own righteousness, and involve all his posterity in the same condemnation with himself,—all this seems to be in respect of God's intention and purpose, even ordained for this end, that the righteousness of Jesus Christ might be commended to you, far more than all the dispensation of the law upon Sinai, more than the curse and the command, the thunder and the lightning. The very condemnation of the scripture was all in God's own mind and revealed will also, as the means appointed to lead sinners to this righteousness, Rom. x. 4. Therefore, how precious should that be to us, that God keeps and preserves the world for?

(2.) By this righteousness alone, we can stand before God, and therefore it is termed God's righteousness; and is not this enough to make it lovely in the eyes of all men? This is the righteousness without the law, though it was witnessed both by the law and the prophets. This is the only righteousness that justifies, when all men are found guilty before God, Rom. iii. 19, &c. Now, what is it in this world can profit you, if ye want this? Condescend⁶⁷ upon all your pleasures and heart-wishes, let you have them all, and now, poor soul, pray what hast thou? Though thou hast gained the world, thou lovest thy soul, that thou should use the world with? Let you then get what you so eagerly pursue in the world, what will ye do when your soul is required by the hand of justice? “Then whose shall these things be?” Luke xii. 20, 21. By all these things, a man neither knows love nor hatred, as Solomon speaks of external enjoyments, Eccles. ix. 1. But hear the way, O men! how ye may stand before God; here it is only. Will it profit you to enjoy the

world, and bless God? And when all these things leave you, and ye leave them, what will ye do,—for riches will not go to the grave with you? All that is here cannot help you in that day, when ye must stand before the Judge of all flesh. If a man be not found in Christ he is gone, and if he be found in him, then the destroying angel passes by, death hath a commission to do him good, God is become his friend in Jesus. If ye could walk never so blamelessly in this world, all this will not come as righteousness in God's sight, nor stand before him. It is only the righteousness of Christ that can be a covering to sinners. But,

(3.) This is God's righteousness, because it is the righteousness of Christ who is truly God, and so it is divine. This is the most excellent piece in all the creation, that comes from Jesus Christ his life, death, and resurrection. And let all men's inherent holiness blush here and be ashamed. Let all your prayers, good wishes, your religious obedience be ashamed, let them vanish as the stars before the sun. The righteousness of Christ is the bright sun that makes all the dim sparkles of nature, civil honesty, and even religious education, disappear. Let even angels blush before him, for they are not clean in his sight, but may be charged with folly. Innocent Adam was also a glorious creature, but the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit and the Lord from heaven, hath an infinitely transcendent and supereminent excellency and prerogative beyond him, and all the creation of God. Look then upon this Jesus how he is described, as the “brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person,” (Heb. i. 1-3; Col. i. 15, &c.) and wonder that such a glorious one should become our righteousness, that he should take our sins upon him, (2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 24) and make over his righteousness to us. This is the righteousness of the saints in heaven, Rev. xix. 8. This is the glory of the spirits of just men made perfect. Think ye, my friends, that the glorious saints shall wear their own holiness upon their outside in heaven? No, no, the righteousness of Christ shall cover them, and that shall be the upper-garment that all the host of heaven must glory in. Now this is the thing that the child newborn, if he had the use of reason, should first cry for, before he ever get the breast, to be reconciled to God in Christ. Would ye then spend your time and thoughts upon other things, if ye knew what need ye have of his righteousness, and how suitable it were to your need? Should not the beggar seek food and clothing? Should not the sick man seek health, and the poor man riches? Here they are all in Christ's righteousness. Ye are under the curse of God. This righteousness redeems from the curse. Ye are sinners, and none of you righteous, no not one. But Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. O sinners, wonder at the change! Hath Christ taken on your sins, that his righteousness might become yours, and will ye not do so much as seek it? But many a man beguiles his own soul, and thinks he seeks this righteousness in the gospel. Therefore ye would know what it is to seek his righteousness. If ye seek it, ye want your own righteousness. And who of you have come this length, to judge yourselves that ye be not judged? It is a great difficulty to convince the multitude of sin. That general notion, that we are all sinners, is but the delusion that many souls perish in. Never any will deny themselves to seek another righteousness, till they be beaten and driven out of their own. There is need of submission to take and receive this righteousness, let be to seek it, And now tell me, can ye say that ye have seen all in yourselves as dung and dross, that ye count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, (Phil. iii. 8, 9.) that ye have seen all your own privileges and duties loss, and are ye even sensible that prayer will no more help you than the cutting off a dog's neck? Ye that lay so much weight upon your being baptized, and upon outward privileges, are ye void of righteousness? No, ye seek to establish your own, and do not submit to the righteousness of God. In a word, all who are ignorant of this righteousness of God in Christ, ye all seek to establish your own. There needs more. But not one of twenty of you can tell what this is, it is a mystery. Ask at any of you, how ye shall be saved, ye will say, by prayer to God, and the mercy of God. Ye cannot tell the necessity of Christ's coming into the world.

Secondly, Ye must see an impossibility to attain a righteousness, or to stand before God another way. When ye miss this righteousness and are convinced of sin, it is not the running to prayer will help or mend it. When ye see the broken covenant, ye fall upon doing something, to mend your faults, with some good turns, and some will make a few

good works answer all the challenges of sin. Alas! this is a seeking of your own righteousness. Many a poor broken man seeks to make up his fortune. Poor wretched sinners are building up the breach of the old covenant, putting up props under an old ruinous house, seeking to establish it, and rear it up again. But ye will never seek Christ till ye cannot do better, till ye be desperate of helping yourselves without him. Now I appeal to your consciences. Who among you was ever serious in this matter, to examine your own condition, whether you were enemies or friends? Ye took it for granted all your days. But never a man will betake himself to an imputed righteousness, but only he that flies, taking with⁶⁸ his enmity, and is pursued by the avenger of blood, and flies in to this righteousness as a city of refuge.

Thirdly, Ye must seek this righteousness, and what is it to seek it? It is even to take it and to receive it. It is brought to your door. It is offered. And the convinced sinner hath no more to do but hearken, and this righteousness is brought near unto him. Prayer to God, and much dealing with him, is one of the ways of obtaining this righteousness. But coming to Jesus Christ is the comprehensive short gate,⁶⁹ and therefore it is called “the righteousness of faith,” and “the righteousness of God by faith.” Now shall ye be called seekers of Christ's righteousness, who will not receive it when it is offered? Ye who have so many objections and scruples against the gospel and the application of it, ye in so far are not seekers, but refusers of the gospel, and disobedient. Christ's righteousness should meet with a seeker not a disputer. Any thing God allows you to seek, certainly he allows you to take and receive it, when it is brought unto you. And therefore, whoever have need of Jesus Christ, not only refuse him not, but stay not till they find him come to them. This is a noble resolution, I will give myself no rest till I be at a point in this. Seek him as a hid treasure, as that which your happiness depends upon.

(1) The kingdom of grace is worthy of all your affections and pains. That despised thing in the world called grace is the rarest piece of the creation, and if we could look on it aright, we would seek grace, and follow after it. Grace extracts a man out of the multitude of men that are all of one mass. Grace separates him from the rest of the world, and to this purpose are these usual phrases in scripture, “Such were some of you,” “Once ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord,” “Among whom ye had your conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh.” All men are alike by nature and birth, there is no difference. Grace brought to light by the gospel makes the difference, and separates the few chosen vessels of glory and mercy from the world, and now “they are not of the world, as I am not of the world.” All the rest of men's aims and endeavours cannot do this. Learning makes not a man a Christian. Honour makes not a man differ from a Gentile or Pagan. Riches make you no better than infidels. Speak of what ye will, you shall never draw a man entirely out of the cursed race of Adam, never distinguish him from Gentiles before God, till the Spirit of regeneration blow where he listeth. And this is grace's prerogative, beyond all other things. All other excellent gifts, even the gift of preaching, praying, all these are common, so to speak, and in a manner befall to all alike. Your external calling is but common, but he gives grace to all his chosen ones. But (2) Grace puts a man in a new kingdom. It draws a man out of Satan's kingdom, and makes him a king, who before was a subject. The man was led captive by sin and Satan at their pleasure. He served his own corrupt lusts and the prince of this world. Sin reigneth in his mortal body, whatever his passion and corruption did put him to, he could have no bridle, but as a horse went on to the battle. And ye may see daily that there is scarce one of an hundred that is master of himself. He is a servant of sin, but grace makes him a priest and a king, Rev. i. 6, chap. v. 8, 10. He can now command himself. Sin reigned before unto death, but now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, Rom. v. 20, 21. And O! but this victory over a man's self is more than a man's conquering a strong city. This victory is more than all the triumphs and trophies of the world's conquerors. For they could not conquer themselves, the little world, but were slaves to their own lusts. Some men talk of great spirits that can bear no injury. Nay, but such a spirit is the basest spirit. The noble spirit is that spirit which can despise these things, and be above them. Grace puts men upon a throne of eminence above the world. The Spirit of God makes a man of a noble spirit. (3) Grace translates a man from Satan's

kingdom to God, and makes him a subject, a free born subject, of God or Christ's kingdom, and therefore Christ is the "King of saints," Rev. xv. 3. Our Lord and Saviour hath an "everlasting kingdom," 2 Pet. i. 11. We were subjects of the powers of darkness, but grace makes the translation into the kingdom of God's own dear Son, Col. i. 13. Now what an unspeakable privilege is this, to be one of Christ's subjects, who is our dear Saviour and King! Surely we must all be great courtiers. David, the great king of Israel, had this for his chief dignity, his style of honour, "the servant of the Lord," as kings use to write down themselves; and this was his title, "servant of God." Paul gloried much in this, "Paul, an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ." And surely all the families of heaven and earth may think it their highest honour to get liberty to bow their knees to Jesus, the "King of kings, and Lord of lords," the first-born of God's creation. The converted man is turned from the power of Satan to God. Mark but the emphasis of these two terms. Mark the whence or from,—that it is from Satan, the great destroyer of mankind, the first transgressor and deceiver. And how great is his power, tyranny, and dominion! He had us all in chains reserved for the day of judgment. But to what a happy change grace turns us, *from* him! But the term *to*, which is more admirable, it is to God, to Christ, to true religion, to God himself most High. And O! but this must be a more wonderful and excellent change than our conversion from darkness to light, from hell to heaven. These are but shadows of this glorious conversion. (4) Grace makes a man likewise a "partaker of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. This is the image and glory of God. This is the imitation and resemblance of God's spotless holiness and purity, "Be ye holy, as I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. Every creature hath some dark characters of God. Some things speak his power, some things his wisdom, but this he hath called his own image. And so the Christian is more like unto God than all the world beside. This is the magnifying of a man, and making him but "a little lower than the angels," Psal. viii. 3, 4. Therefore God loves grace better than all the creation. Holiness is a great beauty, and God requires to be worshipped in the beauties of it. Albeit grace be often clouded with infirmities, and sometimes is reckoned despicable, because of the vessel it is in, yet it is precious as the finest gold, and more precious than any rubies. It is like gold in ashes, not the less excellent in itself, though it appear not so. But sin is the devil's image and likeness, and therefore Satan is called the father of sinners. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." O but sin hath an ugly shape! It is the only spot in the face of the creation which God's soul abhors. For he loves righteousness, and hates iniquity, Psal. xlv. 6, 7. But there is one thing more, (5) That may commend grace to all your hearts. Grace is the way to glory. It gives title and right to, or at least declares it. It is inseparably joined with it. Grace is glory in the bud, and glory is the flower of grace, grace is young glory, and glory is old grace. Without holiness it is impossible to see God's face in peace. No man can come unto heaven without grace. Glorification is the first link of the chain, Rom. viii. 30. But sanctification must intervene first. No unclean thing can enter into heaven, but he that gives grace, gives glory, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. Heaven cannot receive many of you, because ye have not holiness. But it may commend holiness unto you, that it ministers an abundant entrance "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." As much as eternity is beyond the poor span of your time, so much is grace and holiness, whereon depends your everlasting condition, preferable to all things of this present vain world. O! but the children of men have many vain pursuits of the creature, that when it is had is nothing and vanity. Ye labour to secure an inch of your being, and to have contentment here in this half day, and never look beyond it to many millions of ages, when ye are to continue. Your honour, your pleasure, your gain, your credit, many such things like these can have no influence on the next world. These cannot go through death with you. Only grace and holiness, begun here, are consummated in glory, and make the poor man, that was miserable for a moment, eternally happy.

Sermon XVII.

Matth. vi. 33.—“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

The perfection even of the most upright creature, speaks always some imperfection in comparison of God, who is most perfect. The heavens, the sun and moon, in respect of lower things here, how glorious do they appear, and without spot! But behold, they are not clean in God's sight! How far are the angels above us who dwell in clay! They appear to be a pure mass of light and holiness, yet even these glorious beings cannot behold this light without covering their faces. These God may charge with folly. “God is light,” saith the apostle, 1 John i. 5. This is his peculiar glory, for “in him there is no darkness at all.” Is there any thing more excellent and divine than to seek God, and find him, and enjoy him? Yet even that holds forth the emptiness of the creature in its own bosom, that cannot be satiated within, but must come forth to seek happiness. Nay, even the greatest perfection of the creature speaks out the creature's own self indigence most, because its happiness is the removal from itself unto another, even unto God the fountain of life.

Now the enjoyment of this “kingdom of God” mentioned in the text, holds forth man's own insufficiency for well being within himself. But seeking this kingdom declares a double want, a want of it altogether. Not only hath he it not in himself, but not at all, and so must go out and seek it. God is blessed in himself, and self sufficient, and all sufficient to others. Without is nothing but what has flowed from his inexhausted fulness within, so that, though he should stop the conduit, by withdrawing his influence, and make all the creatures to vanish as a brook, or a shadow, he should be equally in himself blessed. “Darkness and light are both alike to thee,” says David in another sense, Psal. cxxxix. 11, 12. And indeed they are all one in this sense, that he is no more perfected and bettered, when all the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, follow him with an eternal song, nor⁷⁰ before the mountains and hills were, when nothing was brought forth. Many thousand more worlds would add nothing to him, nor diminish anything from him. It is not so with man, he is bounded and limited, he cannot have well being in his own breast. He was indeed created with it in the enjoyment of God, which was his happiness, so that he had it not to seek, but to keep, he had it not to follow after, but to hold it still fast. But now, alas! he hath lost that, and become miserable. Once all Adam's posterity were void of happiness. By catching at a present shadow of pleasure, and satisfaction to his senses, he lost this excellent substance of blessedness in communion with God. Now, how shall this be recovered again? How shall this pearl of great price be found?

Certainly we must agree upon two principles, and according to them walk, ere we come within reach of this. It is a great question that is of more moment than all the debates among men,—how shall man's ruin be made up, and the treasure be found? If ye think it concerns you, I pray you hearken to this, and condescend⁷¹ upon these two grounds, that the question may be right stated. One is, we have all lost happiness, fallen from the top of our excellency into the lowest dungeon of misery. We are cast down from heaven to hell. There needs not much to persuade you of the truth of this in general. But alas! who ponders it in their hearts? And until ye think more seriously upon it, ye will never be serious in the search for reparation of it. All of you by your daily experience find that ye are miserable creatures. Ye have no satisfaction nor contentment. Ye are compassed about with many infirmities and griefs. But this is but an appendix of your misery. All the calamities of this life are but a consequent, a little stream of that boundless ocean of misery that is yet insensible to you. Therefore enter into your own hearts, and consider what Adam once was, and what ye now are, nay, what ye will all quickly be, if God prevent it not. We are born heirs of wrath and hell. It is not only the infinite loss of that blessed sight of his face for evermore, which an eternal enjoyment of creature pleasures

could not compensate the want of, one hour; but it is the kingdom of darkness, and the devil that we are all born to inherit. Let this then once take root in your heart, that ye are in extreme misery, and that a remedy must be provided, else ye must perish. Now when this principle is established, ye must agree upon this also. "But out of myself I must go. Blessedness I must have. It is not in me. While I look in, there is nothing but all kind of emptiness, and, which is worse, all kind of misery. Not only the common lot of creatures (that none is sufficient to its own well being) is incident to me, but I have lost that being which I had in another, which was my well being, and do now possess, or shall shortly possess, all misery." Now, are ye settled upon these two? I am not happy, I must go out of myself to find it. It is not in me, in my flesh dwells no good thing, in my spirit and flesh both, is nothing good. Ask then this great question, Whither shall I go? What shall I do to find it? All men know they must seek it. But Christ tells where they shall seek it, and whither they shall go. The word of the gospel is for this very purpose to answer this question. If we were sensible that we had lost happiness, certainly we would be earnest in this question, where shall it be recovered? What shall I seek after? And no answer would satisfy but the gospel itself, that directs unto the very fountain of life, and holds "forth the kingdom of God" as the true happiness of men to be sought. "Seek ye first," says Christ, "the kingdom of God," and the righteousness thereof. Here only is a solid answer. Seek me, for I am eternal life, I am the life and the light of men. Oh! that your souls answered, with David, "Thy face, Lord, I will seek." Peter had sought and found, and thought himself well, so that he answers Christ with great vehemency, when he said unto his disciples, "Will ye also leave me?" Peter saith, Leave thee, Lord, "to whom should we go but unto thee, for thou hast the words of eternal life? And we believe and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," John vi. 66, &c. It were all the absurdity in the world to leave thee, or to go to any other thing for life itself. Shall not death be found, if I leave life? It were madness not to seek thee, but what shall it be called to leave thee, when I have found and tasted thee to be so good? Every man misses happiness and justification within himself, and so is upon the search after it. But is it not strange, that all the experiences of nations and generations conjoined in one, cannot hold forth even a probable way of attaining it? Gather them all in one, the sum and result is, "We have heard the fame thereof with our ears," but "it is hid from the eyes of all living," as we read more fully, and should apply, what Job said of wisdom, to the true happiness of man, Job xxviii. 12, to the end of that chapter. Certainly there is some fundamental and common mistake among men. They know not what was once man's happiness, and so it is impossible they can seek the right remedy. Look upon us all, what do we seek after? It is some present thing, some bodily and temporal thing, that men apprehend their happiness lies in, and so whether they attain it or not, or being attained, it doth not answer our expectation, and thus still are we disappointed, and our base scent becomes a vain pursuit, whether we overtake it or not. Every man proposes this within himself as the principle of his life and conversation, what shall I seek after? What shall I spend most of my time and affections upon, to drive at? And alas! all men, save those whose eyes the Spirit openeth, err in the very foundation. One man propones honour to himself, another pleasure, and a third riches, and the most part seek all of them, some accommodation and satisfaction in a present world. And almost every man conceives he would be blessed, if he had that which he wants, and sees another have.

Now while men's designs are thus established, all must be wrong. The ship is gone forth, but it will never land on the coast of happiness. And thus we see men seek many things. They are divided among many thoughts and cares, because no one thing is found that can satisfy, and so we have put ourselves upon an endless journey to go through all the creatures. Neither one nor all together have what we want, and neither one nor all can be had or possessed with assurance, though we had it. But the gospel comes to lay a right foundation, and frame a right principle within us. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Here is the principal design that should be driven at and if men would make it, and follow it, O how should they be satisfied with the fulness of that kingdom, the vast dimensions of it, the incorruptibleness of it!

Now there is one of two you must fall upon, either many things, or one thing. All that a man can seek after is here ranked. On the one side is many things, "all these things," that is, food, raiment, honour, pleasure, and such like, that concern the body, or men's condition here in this world, and these things a man hath need of, verses 31 and 32, "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." Nay, there is but one thing that is set up against all these many things, namely, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Now without all controversy the more unity be, there will be the more satisfaction. If all other things be equal, it is a kind of torment to have so many doors to go to for help. If a man could have all in one, he would think many things a great vexation and burden. If any one thing had in it as much as to answer all our necessities, that one thing would be of great price, beyond many things, having but so much virtue among them all. I shall suppose then, that there were real satisfaction and happiness to be found in the affluence and conjunction of all created things here, that there was some creature that could answer every necessity of men, yet, I say, would ye not exchange all that variety and multitude, if ye could find one thing that did all that to the full, that so many did but no more? Then certainly ye would choose a variety in one thing beyond the scattered satisfaction in many things. But when it is not to be found in all these things, and though it were, yet all these are not consistent together, then of necessity we must make another search. I say then, in the name of Jesus Christ, that if ye seek satisfaction in this present world, ye shall be disappointed. Ye may be all your days sowing and ploughing, but ye shall not see the harvest. Ye shall never reap the fruit of your labour, but in the end of your days shall be fools, and see yourselves to have been so, when ye thought yourselves wise. I shall also suppose that ye have attained what ye have with so much vexation toiled for, that ye had your barns and coffers full, that all the varieties of human delights were still attending you, that ye were set upon a throne of eminency above others, and in a word, that ye had all that your soul desired, so that no room was left empty for more desire, and no more grief entered into your hearts. Are ye blessed for all that? No certainly, if ye do but consider that with all ye may lose your own souls, and that quickly, and that your spirits must remove out of that palace of pleasure and delight into eternal torment, and then count, are ye blessed or not? What gained ye? It is madness to reckon upon this life, it is so inconsiderable when compared with eternity. A kingdom, what is it, when a man shall be deprived for evermore of the kingdom of God, and inhabit the kingdom of darkness under the king of terrors? Do ye think a stageplayer a happy man that for an hour hath so much mirth and attendance, and for all his lifetime is kept in prison without the least drop of these comforts? Will not such a man's momentary satisfaction make hell more unsatisfying, and add grounds of bitterness to his cup? For it is misery to have been happy.

Nay, but this is a fancied supposal. All this, how small soever it be, was never, and never shall be, within the reach of any living. Ye may reckon beforehand, and lay down two things as demonstrated by scripture and all men's experience. One is,—all is vanity and vexation of spirit under the sun. All that ye can attain by your endeavours for an age, and by sweating and toiling, will not give you one hour's satisfaction, without some want, some vexation, either in wanting or possessing. Nay, though you had all, it could not give you satisfaction. The soul could not feed upon these things. They would be like silver and gold, which could not save a starving man, or nourish him as meat and drink doth. A man cannot be happy in a marble palace, for the soul is created with an infinite capacity to receive God, and all the world will not fill his room. Another is,—that it is impossible for you to attain all these things. One thing is inconsistent with another, and your necessity requires both. Now then, how shall ye be satisfied when they cannot meet? I think, then, the spirits of the most part of us do not rise very high to seek great things in this world, we are in such a lot among men. I mean that we have not great expectation of wealth, pleasures, honours, or such like. Oh then so much the more take heed to this, and see what ye resolve to seek after! Ye do not expect much satisfaction here. Then I pray you hearken to this one thing, seek the kingdom of God.

This kingdom of heaven and righteousness are equivalent unto, nay they exceedingly surpass, all the scattered perfections and goodness among these many things, or all things that God hath promised to add to them in the text. Why should I say equivalent? Alas, there is no comparison. "For I reckon (says Paul, Rom. viii. 18, 19) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." What this kingdom is in itself, is beyond our conception, but all these things which God will add thereunto, are to be considered only as an appendix to it. Is not heaven an excellent kingdom? All that ye are now toiling about, and taking thought for, these, "all these things" (as a consequent to itself), food and raiment, and such like, "shall be given you" as your heavenly Father judges fit. "For godliness (says the apostle, 1 Tim. iv. 8), is profitable unto all things having the promise of this life," as well as of "the life to come." I think then, if all men would but rationally examine this business, they would be forced to cry out against the folly and madness of too many men, who have their portion only in this life, Psal. xvii. 14. What is it ye seek? Ye flee from godliness as your great enemy. Ye think religion an adversary to this life, and the pleasures of it. Nay, but it is a huge mistake, for it hath the promise of this life, and that which is to come. Ye cannot abide to have Christ's kingdom within you. Ye will not have him to rule over you. Ye will not renounce self, and your own righteousness. But consider, O men, that here is that which ye should seek after. Here is wealth, and honour, and long life, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. Ye seek many things first, and ye will not seek this one thing needful, Luke x. 41, 42. But here is the way to get what ye seek more certainly and solidly, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and all these other things will come of will. Ye need not seek them, for your heavenly Father knows best what ye need. Behold what a satisfying portion this kingdom is. When the pitch and height of men's attainments in this world is but a consecratory, an appendicle of it, what must this kingdom be in itself, when all these things follow as attendants? Here then is one thing, worth all, and more than all, even Jesus Christ, who is all in all, Col. iii. 10, 11. Ye speak of many kingdoms, nay, but here is one kingdom, the kingdom of grace and glory, that hath in it eminently all that is scattered among all things. It unites us to Jesus Christ, "in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells, and ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power," Col. ii. 9, 10. In his house is fatness, and ye shall be satisfied with this, and drink of these rivers of everlasting pleasures that are at his right hand, Psal. xxxvi. 8, 9, xvi. 11. When the pious Psalmist was over-charged with the very forethought and apprehension of this, he says, "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings," Psal. xxxvi. 7. "O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee," Psal. xxxi. 19, 20. When the sight of it afar off, and the taste of it in this wilderness, is of so much virtue, what shall the drinking of that wellhead be, when the soul shall be drowned in it?

As these things are divided,—on the one side, many things, and on the other, one kingdom more worth than all, so are men divided accordingly. On the one hand are the nations and Gentiles, on the other a poor handful. Ye my disciples, "Seek ye," says Christ, "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things," what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed, "shall be added." For after all these things the Gentiles seek, and your Father knoweth that ye have need of them. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 29, 31. Now this division hath been always in the world. "For many say, (Psal. iv. 6, 7), Who will show us any good?" But they who have their affections gathered in one channel toward one thing, are as it were but one man. But, Lord, "lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." Here then is even the course of the world, the way of the multitude. They have their way scattered, their gain lies in many arts. Many things they must seek, because they forsake the one thing necessary. When they forsake the one fountain of living water, they must dig up, and hew out to themselves many broken cisterns, that can hold no water, no one to help another. This is even proclaimed by the conversation of a great part of the world. Do ye not declare this,

by your eager pursuit of this world, and the things of it, and your careful thoughts of it, that ye have no mind⁷² of eternity, or the kingdom to come? Ye seek nothing but things here, and these do not descend after you. Be persuaded, I beseech you, be persuaded of this, that when ye have your hearts below, that ye are no better, the most part of you, than pagans. Ye have this pretence, that it is necessary to live and follow some calling. It is true indeed. But is it not more necessary to live for ever after death than for a moment? Godliness will not prejudice this life or thy calling, but ye seek after these things, as if ye were to live eternally in this vain world. Ye could toil no more, take no more thought for a million of ages, than ye do now for the morrow. This prejudices and shuts out all thoughts of heaven or hell. Ye are called to a kingdom. This is offered unto you. Will ye be so mad as to refuse it, and embrace the dunghill, and scrape it still together? We declare unto you in his name, who is truth itself, that if ye will be persuaded to be Christians indeed, ye shall have these outward things ye have need of, without care and anxiety, which now ye are tormented for. And for superfluities, what need ye care for them? A reasonable man should despise them, and much more a Christian. If ye would not be as pagans without the church, ye must be sober in these things, mortified and dead unto them. There shall be no real difference between thee and a heathen, in the day of appearing before Christ's tribunal, O Christian, except thou hast denied and despised this world, and sought principally the things that are above. Is Christianity no more, I pray you, but a name? Ye would all be called Christians. Why will ye not be so indeed? For the name will never advantage you, but in the day of judgment it shall be the greatest accession and weight unto your guiltiness, and also to your judgment. Ye would all now be accounted Christians, but if ye be not so in truth, and in deed, the day will come that ye shall wish from your soul ye had wanted the name also, and had lived among these Gentiles and pagans whose conversation ye did follow. For it shall be more tolerable for the covetous worldly pagan in that day, than the covetous Christian.

Oh that ye were once persuaded that there is an inconsistency in them, who seek these many things, and this one kingdom. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," in opposition to the Gentiles seeking of many things. Ye may seek the world, but if ye seek it, seek it as if ye sought it not, if ye use it use it as if ye used it not, or use the world as those who do not abuse it, knowing that the fashion thereof passes away. Certainly ye cannot with all seek grace and glory, 1 Cor. ii. 29, 32. Therefore Christ says to enforce his exhortation, (Matth. vi. 24) "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon." I fear many of you conceive that this belongs not to you. Those who are not naturally covetous and greedy, who are not still in anxiety and perplexity about the things of the world, will possibly conceive themselves free. Nay, but look upon the division that Christ makes. Was there not many a heathen man among the nations, as free of that covetousness noted among men? Were there not as gallant spirits among them, that cared as little for riches as any of us,—nay, men every way of a more smooth and blameless carriage than the most part of us are? Yet behold the construction that Christ puts on them, "after all these things do the nations seek." I think many of them have declaimed more against the baseness of covetous spirits,⁷³ than many Christian preachers, and in the very practice of it have outstripped the most part of the Christian world. Yet in the scripture sense, even all these who have cried down the world, are but lovers of it, and of themselves too. How can this be? It is certain every man is composed of desires and breathings after some thing without himself. Some men's desires are more shallow and low than others. One man hath honour in admiration, and may despise riches. Another follows his pleasures and may neglect both these. Nay, possibly a man may be moderate in all these things, so that none can challenge him, and yet he is but a lover of the world. It is the master he serves, and the idol he worshippeth, because no man wants one, or many idols, something to take up his affection and desires. Now though such a man seems moderate in these, in comparison of others whose hearts run more after them, yet, because there is no other thing, that does take up his heart so much as these, he is but in Christ's account among the heathen nations. Some of you are not in great expectations, ye have but mean projects, ye seem content with few things, ye are not vexing yourselves as others do, but let the world come and go as it pleases,

without much disquiet. This, I say, may be the temper of some natural spirits, yet I ask such of you, is there any thing else ye seek more after, or spend more time and thought upon, and what is that? Is there any other thing ye are more taken up with, than your present ease and accommodation in this life? No certainly, ye cannot say so, however your projects be mean and low, yet they are confined within time and things present, and the kingdom of grace and glory comes not much in your mind. Then, I say, thou art but a lover of the world. Mammon is thy god. Thou seekest not the kingdom of heaven, and shalt not obtain it. For that which the nations seek after is thy predominant.

Will ye then, I beseech you, gather in your hearts to consider this. Is it a light matter we speak of, life or death? Doth it not concern you as much as you are worth? Therefore consider it as seriously as if you were going hence to be no more. Many of you will not grant worldly mindedness a sin. When ye make it a god, and sacrifice unto it, ye fancy that ye are seeking heaven. I pray you do not deceive your souls. Give them as good measure as ye would do your bodies in any thing. Would ye say ye were seeking after any thing, I suppose to find such a friend to speak to, would ye, I say, think that ye earnestly desired to see that friend, and sought him, if ye did all the day take up your time with other petty business that might be done at any time? How can ye imagine ye seek not the world but heaven, when, if ye would look back upon the current and stream, both of your affections and endeavours, ye would find they have run this way toward your present ease and satisfaction? Ye do not give one entire hour to the thought of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, it may be, in a whole week.

Are ye then seekers of the kingdom? If ye did but examine one day how it is spent, ye might pass a judgment upon your whole life. Do ye seek that first which is fewest times in your thoughts, and least in your affections, and hath least of your time bestowed on it? Alas, do not flatter yourselves. That ye seek first which is often in your mind, which uses to stir up your joy or grief, or desire most. It is this present world only, and this present world is your portion. Ye shall lose the kingdom of heaven by seeking to make the world sure. As for the children of God, ye who will be his disciples, (to such he speaks here,) it becomes not you to be like the heathens. Ye ought, most of all, to adorn your holy profession, your high calling to a kingdom above. If then ye seek these things below, as if ye sought them not, ye ought to make religion your main business, else ye are not indeed religious. If Christianity take not up a man, he hath not the thing, but the name. "Seek first," that is, chiefly, principally, and above all, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Nay, this is more strange, it is a first that hath no second. Seek this first, so as if ye sought nothing else, and all things necessary here shall be superadded to the seeking and finding of this kingdom.

This is that which I would have engraven on all our hearts, that there is a necessity of making Christianity our calling and trade, our business and employment, else we must renounce it. It will take our whole man, our whole time, not spare hours, and by thoughts. Ye have a great task to accomplish, a great journey to make. If ye give not all diligence to add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, ye are certainly blind, and see not afar off, and have not been purged from your old sins, 2 Pet. i. 5-11. This imports that those who make not religion their great comprehensive study, do neither know eternity, nor see into it. Oh, how may this word strike into the hearts of many Christians, and pierce as a sword! Is our lazy, indifferent, and cold service at some appointed hours, "all diligence"? Or, is it diligence at all? Is there not more diligence and fervour in other things than this, to add grace to grace? Who is covetous of such a game? Are not many more desirous of adding lands and houses to their lands and houses, and money to their stock, than to add to their faith virtue? &c. Who among you is enlarging his desires, as the grave, after conformity to Jesus Christ, and the righteousness of his kingdom, that this treasure of grace may abound? Alas, we are poor mean Christians, because we are negligent! For "the hand of the diligent maketh rich," Prov. x. 4. But we become poor in grace, because we deal with a slack hand. Is there any great thing that is attainable without much pains and sweating?
*Difficilia quæ pulchra.*⁷⁴

Think ye to come to a kingdom by sleeping through some custom of godliness? “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? that man shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men,” Prov. xxii. 29. This advances him to be a courtier. And is not this business of Christianity more considerable to be diligent about when it advances a man into the court of heaven, into his presence in whose favour is life, and whose loving kindness is better than life? And not only so, but if ye be diligent here ye shall obtain a kingdom. “Seek first the kingdom of God.” “The hand of the diligent shall bear rule but the slothful shall be under tribute,” Prov. xii. 24. If ye make this your business, and spend your spirits in it, ye shall be kings and priests with God in the kingdom above, that may suffer many partakers without division or emulation. It is he that overcomes, that shall have the new name, the white raiment, the crown of life, and all the glorious things which are promised to them that overcome in the second and third chapters of the Revelation. O what glad tidings are these! This is the gospel of peace. This is the joyful sound that proclaims unto us so great, so excellent things as a kingdom, the kingdom of God, an everlasting kingdom like God, a kingdom glorious as he is, a kingdom suitable to his royal Majesty, and the magnificence of his palace above. Are we called into this by the gospel, and would ye know what is the sum thereof? It is this. Ho! every one that will have great things, ho! every one that will be a king to God, and to bear rule over kings in the great day, come, here it is, overcome yourselves here in the Lamb that hath overcome, follow Jesus the captain of your salvation, who for the joy and glory which was set before him, despised all the glory of this world, and the pains and shame of the cross, Heb. xii. 1, 2. “Why do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. All ye toil about, what is it? Children's fancies. Such houses and kingdoms as they build in the sand. Why spend ye your time and labour upon earthly things that are at an end? Here is a kingdom worthy of all men's thoughts, and affections, and time. The diligent shall have it. Gird up the loins of your mind, and seek it as the one thing needful. Many of you desire this kingdom, but alas! these are sluggard's wishes, ye have fainting desires after it. Your desires consume and waste you. But ye put not forth your hand, and so ye have nothing. “The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat,” Prov. xiii. 4. Do ye see any growing Christian, but he that is much in the exercise of godliness, and very honest in it? See ye any fat souls, but diligent souls? Our barrenness and leanness hath negligence written upon it. Do ye not wonder that we are not fat and flourishing, as palms and cedars in the courts of our God? Certainly it is no wonder. Is it not a wonder that our sleeping away secure, keeps so much as the leaves of a profession upon us? Therefore Christians, let this be your name, Seekers, but seekers of what? Not of any new religion, but of the good old kingdom of God, proponed to us in the gospel. And remember that the seeker must seek diligently, if he think that which he seeks worthy of finding. “He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” Heb. xi. 6. Your seeking will proclaim your estimation of what ye seek. It will be written on it, what your desires are. Many men's unfrequent and lazy prayers have this written upon them in legible characters, I care not whether God grant or not. Diligence speaks affection, and affection principles⁷⁵ diligence. And if ye be seekers, ye must be so still, till ye find, and have no more want. When ye have done all, ye must stand, Eph. vi. 10, 16. When ye have found all, ye must seek. Ye do but find in part, because the kingdom of God is but coming in the glory and perfection of it. Nay, I believe the more ye find, the more ye will seek, because tasting what this kingdom is, can best engage the affection and resolution after it. Seeking is an exercise suitable to a Christian in this state of pilgrimage. Enjoyment is for his own country, heaven. And shall not the bitterness and pains of seeking, sweeten the enjoyment of this kingdom when it is found? This will endear it and make it precious. Yet it needs no supereminent and accessory sweetness, it is so satisfactory in itself. Christians, remember your name. When you have attained all, still seek more. For there is more to be found here than ye have yet found. It is sitting down on our attainments that makes us barren and lean Christians. Desires and diligence are the vital sap of a Christian. Enlarge once your desires as the grave, that never says I have enough. And ye have good warrant so to do, because that which ye are allowed to desire is without bounds and measure. It is inexhaustible, and when once desires have emptied the soul,

and made it capable of such a great kingdom, then let your study be henceforth to fill up that void with this kingdom. Let your diligence come up to desires, and at length ye shall be what ye would be, ye shall find what ye sought.

Sermon XVIII.

Matt. vi. 33.—“But seek ye first the kingdom of God,” &c.

O “seekest thou great things for thyself,” says God to Baruch, (Jer. xlv. 5) “seek them not.” How then doth he command us in the text to seek a kingdom? Is not this a great thing? Certainly it is greater than those great things he would not have Baruch to seek after, and yet he charges us to seek after it. In every kind of creatures there is some difference, some greater, some lesser, some higher, some lower; so there are some men far above others in knowledge, understanding, strength, and such like. Yet such is the order God hath made, that the lowest angel is above the highest man, so that in comparison of these, the greatest man is but a mean worm, a despicable nothing. Among things created, some are greater, some lesser. “When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers,” says David, “the moon and stars which thou hast ordained: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?” Psal. viii. 3, 4. But when all these are compared with God, then the difference of greater and lesser disappears. In the night there are different lights, the moon and stars, “and one star,” says Paul, “differeth from another in glory.” Some are of the first, some of the second, and most of them the third magnitude. Nay, but let the sun arise—and all these are alike, they are all darkness when compared with the sun's brightness. What then are angels and men to God, who is a light inaccessible and full of glory, whom no eye hath seen or can see? “All nations before him are as nothing, yea, they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity,” Isa. xl. 12-19; 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. The sun himself shines not before him, and the moon gives not her light. Now is it not so proportionably here? If we stay within the sphere of temporal and worldly things, some are great, some small, some things of greater, some things of less consequence, greater or smaller in their appearance to us, and in men's fancies. But if we go further and look into eternity, then certainly all these will appear small and inconsiderable. This earth seems very spacious, and huge in quantity unto us who dwell upon it. We discern mountains and valleys, sea and land, and do make many divisions of it. But if one man were above where the sun is, and looked down upon the earth, he would consider it but as one point almost invisible, that had no proportion to the vast dimensions of heaven. Even so it is here, while men abide within their own orb, their natural understanding, and do compare time only with time, and temporal things with temporal, riches with poverty, honour with disgrace, pleasure with pain, learning with ignorance, strength with weakness, pleasant lands and goodly houses with wildernesses and wild deserts where none do well. It is no wonder, I think, that those who compare themselves with some that commend themselves, are not wise, 2 Cor. x. 12, 13. There is but one perfect pattern they should look to, if they would not be deceived. While ye stay your thoughts within these bounds, ye apprehend in yourselves great odds between one thing and another. But if once the Spirit of God enlightened your eyes, and made you to see far off, if ye were elevated above your own station, to the watch-tower of the holy scriptures, to behold off⁷⁶ these, by the prospect of saving faith, things that are afar off, such as heaven and hell, eternity, salvation and condemnation, O how would all these differences in a present world vanish out of sight, in the presence of these vast and infinite things! Food and raiment are great things to the most part of men,

therefore do they toil so much about them, and take so much thought for them, how to feed, and how to be clothed, how to have a full and delicate table, and fine clothes! Again, many others apprehend some greatness and eminency in honour and respect among men; others in pleasure and satisfaction to their senses, even as a beast would judge. Others apprehend some worth and excellence in great possessions, in silver and gold beside them, and have a kind of complacency in these. But if once this kingdom of God entered into your heart, if ye saw the worth of it, the vast dimensions of it, the pleasure, honour, and profit of it, then certainly all other things would appear to be mean and low, not worth a thought beforehand. Advantage and disadvantage would be all one to you. Honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, pleasure and pain, would have no distance from one another; this gain, this honour, this pleasure of the kingdom of God, would so overmaster them, so outshine them.

Nay, I may say, if ye but knew your immortal souls, or your own worth beyond the rest of the creatures, such as silver, gold, lands, houses, &c., I am confident ye would fall in your esteem of them. They would appear but low, base things in regard of the soul. Suppose even this world came in competition, (the gain of it now seems great gain,) but I pray you, if ye laid all that world in the balance with your soul, what would weigh most? Christ holds it forth to a rational man, to judge of it; "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or be cast away?" Would ye account yourselves gainers, when ye have lost yourselves? Matt. xvi. 26; Luke ix. 25. Is not a man better than meat? Are not your souls more precious than the finest gold? When you lose your souls, whose shall these be? "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And if there be no one more to possess or use, what profit is it? This then that we have in hand is one thing of greatest moment and concernment in the world. Let me then beseech you to weigh these things in the balance of the sanctuary,—your souls, and this world, the kingdom of God, and many temporal things, such as food and raiment. Ye never enter into the comparison of these things in your mind. If ye did, would ye not see to which side the balance would turn? Therefore we would have you look upon these words of our Saviour, which are the just balance of the sanctuary. Behold how the question is stated, how the comparison goeth. It is not whether I shall want food and raiment, and other necessary things here, or the kingdom of God hereafter? It is not thus cast—in the one balance, the present life and its accommodations, in the other, the life to come and God's kingdom. Indeed if it were so, without all controversy this kingdom would carry it. I say, if there were an inconsistency supposed between a life here, and a life hereafter, suppose no man can be godly, except he be miserable, poor, naked, afflicted, extremely indigent, yet I say the balance thus casten, would be clear to all men that judged aright. Would not eternity weigh down time? Would not an immortal soul weigh down a mortal body? What proportion would the raiment of wool, or gold, or silk have to the white and clean linen, the robes of righteousness, the robes of saints, and to the crown of glory that fadeth not away? What proportion would our perishing pleasures have to the rivers of pleasures, pure, unmixed, undefiled pleasures at God's right hand for evermore? Would ye thus rate this present span, inch, and shadow of time, if ye considered the endless endurance of eternity? I am sure reason itself might be appealed unto, though faith were not to judge.

Though it would hold well enough so, yet our Lord Jesus Christ states the controversy otherwise, and holds out another balance, that it may be the more convincing and clear, if it were possible even, to overcome natural consciences with the light of it. And it is this, in the one hand you may see food and raiment, things that belong to this life; and, on the other hand, you may behold the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, grace, and glory; and, besides that, even all these other things that ye did see in the other hand, food, raiment, &c., "all these things shall be added."

Wisdom, in the Proverbs, uses such a device to catch poor, foolish, and simple men: "Happy," says Solomon, "is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." Here is the weight of wisdom in itself. See

how ponderous it is of itself; so heavy that it may weigh down all that come within the compass of desire, and certainly its compass is infinite. But, he adds, "Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her." She is a tree of life in herself, though she had no accession of other things, "and happy is every one who retaineth her," Prov. iii. 13-19.

Now, O men, if ye will not be allured with the beauty and excellency of the princess, wisdom herself, then, I pray you, look what follows her. That which now ye are pursuing after with much labour and pains, and all in vain too, is here in her train. Look how the comparison is stated. Christ Jesus would catch us with a holy guile, and, if it had success, O! it would be a blessed guile to us. Ye have large and airy apprehensions of temporal things, which ye call needful, and ye cannot behold eternal things. Ye know not the worth of this kingdom. Ye conceive that godliness is prejudicial unto you in this life, that the kingdom of grace will make you miserable here; and that ye cannot endure. Ah, be not mistaken, come and look again. If godliness itself will not allure you, if the kingdom itself will not weigh with you, then, I pray you, consider what an appendix, what a consecratory these have. Consider that the sum is added to the principal, which ye so much seek after. But ye refuse the principal, the kingdom. Ye have not right thoughts of godliness, "for godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8. Now, is not this "a faithful saying?" If ye believe it so to be, is it not "worthy of all acceptance?"

Ye may have things necessary here, food and raiment. And if ye seek more, if ye will be rich, and will have superfluities, then ye shall fall into many temptations, snares, and hurtful lusts, which shall drown you in perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 8-11. Nature and reason might check such exorbitances, for nature is content with few things. Therefore believe that "godliness with contentment is great gain." Ye are now only seeking temporal gain, but that is neither great gain, nor gain at all, when ye lose your soul. For that is an irrecoverable and incomparable loss. Ye may have these outward things, God's blessing, and peace with them, and heaven too if ye choose this kingdom before all things, and above all things. But if ye give these other things the pre-eminence, it is uncertain if ye will get what ye seek, and ye shall certainly be eternal losers beside. If there were no more but this kingdom alone, it might weigh all down. If heaven and earth were laid in a balance, would not heaven, if it were ponderous according to its magnitude, weigh down the earth exceedingly out of sight? Would it not vanish as a point? Even so, though this kingdom of grace and glory were alone, in opposition to all these things that ye take thought for, it would weigh them down eternally. Look what the weight of glory was to Paul, when he says, 2 Cor. iv. 17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The weight of glory is eternal, and far exceeds any thing temporal. The one scale of the balance goes up, as it were, eternally out of sight, out of thought, the one goes up for lightness and vanity, and the other goeth down, for weight and solidity, out of sight, and out of the thought and imagination. If ye looked upon these things which are invisible and eternal, as Paul did, it would be so with you also.

But when withal the earth and its fulness is in the scale with God's kingdom and righteousness, will not these, with that accession, weigh down the earth alone? Is it food and raiment that ye seek? Then I say, food and raiment is on this kingdom's side also. And ye shall be more sure of these things, because ye have God's promise for them. The wicked have not his word and promise for prosperity, even not so much as to answer their necessities, but only they may sometimes prosper in the world, in his providence. But God's people shall have him engaged in their need for their temporal being here in this world. "O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," Psal. xxxiv. 9, 10. Godliness hath the promise of this life. Now, then, ye are

more assured of temporal things by these means than any monarch can be. The world's stability depends only upon a command. But your food and raiment here is grounded upon a promise, and though heaven and earth should fail and pass away, yet not one jot of truth shall fail. God indeed may change his command if he pleases, but not his promises. Now, then, let all the world judge, come and see this balance, how on the one hand are food, raiment, and all things needful for this present life, on the other hand, these same thing necessary for our bodies, and well being here, and that more solidly and sweetly flowing from God's love, grounded on a promise,—I think this weighs down already, if we should say no more. But then behold what more is on his right hand. There is a kingdom of God beside, an eternal kingdom, and this weighs down eternally. All this world is but an accession and addition to it. The promises of this life are not your portion and inheritance, they are but superadded to your portion, so then we have as much beside, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, as the world have for their inheritance, yea, and more sure and more sweet beside. We might with reverence change that verse which Paul has on this consideration, “If we had hope only in this life, we were of all men most miserable,” 1 Cor. xv. 19. He speaks thus because of afflictions and persecutions. But on this consideration we might say, If we have hope in Christ only in this life, we were *not* of all men most miserable, but most blessed, because we have all these things added to us, without toil and vexation, without care and anxiety, by divine promise and providence, with God's blessing and favour, what the world takes thought for, rendeth their hearts for, toils their bodies for, and yet are not sure of success, or if they get them, they get a curse with them.

Now when the balance is thus presented, what is your choice? What will ye seek after? Will ye seek this present world, and lose the kingdom of heaven? Or will ye choose to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” and then ye shall have in this world what is good for you? The choice is soon made in men's judgments. Ye dare not any of you deny, but it ought thus to be. But who seriously ponders these things till their minds affect their hearts? Who will sit down to meditate upon them, and pass a resolute and well grounded choice upon deliberation? Remember what Christ says, “No man can serve two masters.” Ye may indeed have both these things, and the kingdom. But ye cannot seek them both, they are not so consistent. “But seek first the kingdom of God,” and then all these things shall be given you.

Now there is no more need of any second seeking. For “all these things shall be added” as an accessory to the first. O see then, ye whose projects and thoughts are towards present things,—ye spend the prime and flower of your affections, and time upon them,—ye cannot also seek the kingdom of heaven. Unless ye seek them as if ye sought them not, ye cannot seek this blessed kingdom. If ye seek not this kingdom as the one thing necessary, and your seeking proclaim that ye account it so, ye do not seek it aright. If ye be careful and troubled about many things, ye proclaim that ye do not think there is but one thing needful, ye do not, like Mary, choose the good part which shall not be taken from you, Luke x. 41, 42. If ye would abandon the distracting care of the world, and let all your anxiety and care vent itself here upon the kingdom of God, all these things would be added besides the kingdom itself. “Seek the kingdom of God *and his righteousness.*” I conceive this is added to make us understand the better what it is, and what is the way to it. The kingdom of God is the kingdom of grace, in which he rules in us by his Spirit. For Jesus Christ is come for this end, and made grace to superabound over the abounding of sin, that as sin reigned unto death, so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. v. 21), that as sin had a throne in us, so grace might have a throne, and subject the whole man, rendered obedient to that rule of righteousness that he here holds forth in his word. But this kingdom of God also includes the kingdom of glory, wherein these who overcome this world by faith in the Son of God, reign as kings set upon thrones with God the Father of all. Now because the most part, when they heard of the kingdom of God, dreamed of nothing but a state of happiness in heaven, and passed over the way to it, which is holiness, and they thought not upon the kingdom of grace, which is preparatory unto, and disposes us for the kingdom of glory, therefore Christ exhorts us also to seek his righteousness, opposite

to the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, who satisfied themselves with a mere walk before men. This was man's righteousness but not God's. This righteousness may be also opposed to the rags of our own righteousness, that we seek to cover ourselves with, Isa. lxiv. 6. The apostle says of the Jews, Rom. x. 3, 4, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Now here is the business, and I would have you to conceive it right. The gospel calls you to a kingdom. This is certainly more than all earthly kingdoms. But how shall ye come to it? Not at the nearest hand, not *per saltum*.⁷⁷ No, believe it, ye must come and enter this way, before ye compass the end, and the way to this kingdom is by another kingdom, namely righteousness. It is the kingdom of grace within us, and the fruit of it is this. Deny thyself, and follow me, Matt. xvi. 24-26. Overcome yourselves, and your corrupt lusts, and ye shall be more than conquerors. Kingdoms are gotten by conquest. But here is the greatest conquest and triumph in the world, for a man to overcome himself. He that rules himself and his own spirit, is greater than he that taketh a city, Prov. xvi. 32. Other conquerors but overcome men like themselves, and yet are overcome by themselves, and their own passions, and so are but slaves indeed. But if ye deny yourselves, and resign yourselves to Jesus Christ, ye shall be more than conquerors, Rom. viii. 37. This then is the kingdom ye must seek first, and it is the first step to the throne of glory. If ye would have a throne after this life, you must have a throne of grace in your hearts. "If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed." They truly are kings who are most subject to God above themselves, and free from the bonds of creatures. This is the glorious liberty of the children of God, to have liberty from him to make sin a captive. It is a righteous kingdom, a kingdom of righteousness. Therefore ye must here study righteousness and holiness, "for the grace of God that hath appeared to all men, and bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," &c. Tit. ii. 11, &c. All men love the salvation it brings. But do ye love the lessons it teaches you? Ye would all be glad to have that blessed hope, and obtain the salvation which the saints look for, when Christ shall appear again in glory. But how few learn and practise what the gospel teacheth, to mortify and deny your corrupt lusts, and live daily in the practice of sobriety, equity, and piety! O if this were engraven upon your hearts, that ye might study to do that in this present world, which this precious grace and gospel teaches us to do in it! Know ye not, brethren, that all your pains in seeking heaven, are not about heaven itself immediately, but the way to it, which is holiness? Without this, no man shall see the Lord, ye need not seek the kingdom of glory, hope for it, and look for it. But seek grace and righteousness in this world, and if ye obtain them, ye have not much to do, but to look for the blessed hope and Christ's glorious appearance to judgment. For if ye have sought and got grace here, Christ will come with grace and glory at the day of his revelation. Will ye consider that ye are redeemed by Christ? But from what is it? From hell only, and eternal death only? No, no, for we are redeemed from all iniquity, as well as the curse of the law and the wrath to come, Matt. i. 21, Tit. ii. 14. This deliverance from sin is the greater and best half of our redemption. Consider also to what ye are redeemed. Is it to happiness and glory only? No certainly, but unto grace also. For Christ "gave himself for us, that he might purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." These things should ministers teach and exhort, and above all things press them upon men's consciences. We are redeemed from all our enemies to serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life, Luke i. 74, 75. Yea, glory is not glory, except it be complete grace, so we must call the kingdom of glory. If ye believed that it was nigh you, ye would look then for the perfection of grace. And will ye not love the beginning of it here?

But this is not all. There is yet more here to comfort us. Seek the righteousness of God. There is a righteousness of God by faith, manifested in the gospel for lost sinners, who have nothing to cover them. Now I say ye must so seek inherent grace, as ye may not

make it your covering, and the only foundation of your confidence. Sinners, the thing which ye first seek and find, is to be clothed with God's righteousness, that he may see no iniquity within you, and then let it be your daily study henceforth to be adorned and made all glorious within, with grace and holiness. Ye must first renounce all your own righteousness, and then be clothed with the robes of God's righteousness, ye must still renounce it, that grace may appear as the gift of God, and not yours; as his beauty, not your ornament. If ye be imperfect in your own righteousness, comfort yourselves in the righteousness of God made yours by faith, that worketh by love and purifies your hearts, for, says the apostle, Gal. ii. 16, 17, Though we are not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ, yet we must keep ourselves from every wicked thing, and perfect holiness in the fear of God, for if while we seek to be justified by Christ, and we ourselves be found sinners, impenitent and impure, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

Sermon XIX.

Matt. vi. 33.—“Seek first the kingdom of God,” &c.

It may seem strange, that when so great things are allowed, and so small things are denied, that we do not seek them. The kingdom of God and his righteousness are great things indeed, great not only in themselves, but greater in comparison of us. The things of this world, even great events, are but poor, petty, and inconsiderable matters, when compared with these. Yet he graciously allows a larger measure of these great things relating to his kingdom and righteousness, than of those lesser things he hath promised to give his people, and he commands us to seek after these greatest things. “Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

This indeed is most suitable to his Majesty, and to us also. It is most becoming his loyal Majesty when he is to declare his magnificence, and to vent his love, to give such high and eminent expressions of it. A kingdom is a fit expression of a king's love and good will. Kings cannot give empires, unless they unking themselves. But Christ is the “King of kings,” and hath prepared a kingdom for them that love him. It is a glorious declaration of God's excellent name, that he is good to all, kind even to the evil and unthankful. His tender mercies are over all his works. The whole earth is full of his riches, and the wretched posterity of Adam have the largest share of his goodness, even since the first defection from him. Nay, but there are other things prepared and laid up for them that seek him, O how great is that goodness! How excellent is that loving kindness! Psal. xxxi. 19, 20, Psal. xxxvi. 5, 10. These things have not yet entered into the heart of men to consider. If ye could speak the mind of it, then the tongue could express it. If ye could apprehend the wonders of it, then the heart could conceive it, but this the scripture denies, Isa. lxiv. 4. “For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him,” or as Paul writes, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God,” &c., 1 Cor. ii. 7-14. Is not a kingdom a gift suitable to such a Giver? And is not this kingdom of God every way like himself? These things are prepared by Christ, and there is no more to do, but to give to him that asks, and he that seeks shall find. This righteousness, divine and human, is it not wholly of God's

finding out? Is it so glorious, so excellent, as to hide the greatest spots of the creation from his spotless eyes? For even hell itself is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering, even the heavens are not pure in his sight, he chargeth his angels with folly, Job xxvi. 6, chap. iv. 17, 18, 19, chap. xv. 14-17. When all the creatures could not procure the salvation of sinful men, when the depth said, it is not in me, and the sea said, it is not with me, and the heavens and heights said so too,—even angels could not redeem us,—the redemption of the soul was so precious, it would have ceased for ever, if divine wisdom had not found it out, and almighty power brought it to pass. “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared for me. Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart,” Psal. xl. 6, 7, 8, Heb. x. 5-11. All this was with God, and he knew the way thereof. Christ framed this royal robe of his righteousness, by suffering and death, which may cover all our nakedness. He came and sought the human nature with all its infirmities. He became in all things like unto us, sin only excepted. On him God laid our iniquities. For he himself “bare our sins in his own body,” when he was slain upon the cross or tree, “that we, being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness,” 1 Pet. ii. 24, 2 Cor. v. 21. Behold what a wonder! Iniquities, and our iniquities, laid upon the immaculate Lamb, Jesus Christ. Our Redeemer hid his divinity, his holiness, and his innocence, as with a vail and covering from the eyes of God's awful justice. He smites the Shepherd, his beloved Son, as he did the rebel creature. It pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief, when his soul was made an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 4-11, Zech. xiii. 7. Justice did not look through the covering to his innocence, but reckoned and numbered him among transgressors, when he bore the punishment of our sins, and made an atonement for them, Isa. liii. 11, 12, Gal. iii. 13, 14.

Now hence it is that the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which he learned in the days of his flesh, and purchased by his death, is prepared for us, to put on. “Who soever will, let him come and take it.” Empty yourselves, stripped naked of all kind of coverings but sin and unworthiness, that which God's holy eye cannot behold, and seek Christ's righteousness to adorn and cover you. Behold it shall hide all your sins and abominations, of whatsoever nature and degree, from the pure and unspotted eyes of God's justice, which are as a flaming fire, to consume what it cannot look upon without abhorrence. Put on this righteousness of God, and justice shall not draw by the covering, to look under it. It shall look upon the sinner as a righteous man on the slave of Satan as a child of God, on the heir of hell as the heir of heaven, if he sincerely repent of, and forsake his sins, believe in Christ and obey his gospel. “Behold all things are new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled the world unto himself by Jesus Christ,” &c., 2 Cor. v. 17-19, Col. i. 19-24. Christ was no worse dealt with for our sins, than we shall be well dealt with for his righteousness. This is the gift of God. And is it not worthy to be sought? Is it not a gift worthy of him to give? Is it not also suitable for us to ask? “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water,” &c. John iv. 10-15. So say I to you, if ye knew the gift of God, what this kingdom is, what this righteousness is, and who is appointed by God to be the treasure house of all fulness, to be communicated to us, ye would certainly ask of him the water of life. Ye would surely seek this kingdom of God and his righteousness. He doth not value other things. God only hath these things offered in the gospel, in choice of many, therefore are they laid up for some few, whom he makes his peculiar treasure and jewels, Mal. iii. 17, Exod. xix. 5, 6. If ye knew a monarch that was a possessor of all this habitable world, and was about to express his singular affection towards some persons, if his kingdom or the half or whole of it was not sufficient, to be a token of it, but he had found out some other thing, and laid it up for them, and distributed the kingdom, the lands and cities among others, certainly ye would think that behoved to be some strange thing of great price. If the Lord was pleased to give you abundance of all things here, make you all great, rich, and honourable persons, then many would seek no other expression of his love. They would think he did well enough to them. But alas! what is it all? He esteems it so little that he often casts it to swine, the profane and wicked world. He fills their belly with his hid treasure, Psal. xvii. 14. He makes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall on the evil and the good, Matt. v. 45. It

is a demonstration that it is but a base thing, when it is so common, I mean, in comparison of the portion of his saints. For though these worldly things are good in themselves, yet they are not precious, they are not pearls. Would he cast pearls before dogs and swine? The honourable man's brutishness and ignorance of God may demonstrate to you he cares not for it. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will," and sometimes "setteth up over it the basest of men," Dan iv. 13-18. If God loved riches well, do ye think he would give them so liberally, and heap them up upon some base covetous wretches? Surely no. But here is the precious thing that is laid up and treasured. The world and its gain seems great, and big in your eyes, ye cannot imagine more, nor wish for more. But alas! how low and base spirits have ye! It is but as the dunghill that the swine feed on, or the husks which the prodigal desired to feed his belly with, when he began to be in want, Luke xv. 13-17. So are all men's worldly pleasures, preferments, and profits. But here are some particular things, that only deserve to be called good, namely, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." And when God had searched the whole world, (to speak with reverence of his glorious Majesty, who needs not inquire into secret things,) when he had looked through all the works of his hand, he sets these apart from all the rest, to be given to the men whom the King shall honour. This kingdom is the substance and accomplishment of heaven's eternal counsel and purpose of grace, which was given in Christ before the world, and it is the end of the Son's redemption of a sinful world, and his intercession for them at God's right hand. "Father," says he, (John xvii. 24), "I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me," and for other things he makes them as the stones of the field.

Now I say, as this kingdom of God and his righteousness are suitable expressions of his love, according to his magnificence, so they are also suited to our condition and necessities. No question but he would permit us to seek great things in this world, if these things were really great and good, and if they did become such great immortal spirits as we have. Your souls are above all these things. But this kingdom, and this only, is above the soul. Now then, if ye go out to seek these earthly things, ye must go down from the throne of eminency that God hath set your souls upon by creation, and abuse your spirits by stooping to the very dust of your feet, to embrace these things, and, which is worse, ye put yourselves out of that high throne of dignity that ye are exalted to by Christ's redemption, which we may call a second creation. Jesus declared by the infinite ransom he gave, when he offered himself a sacrifice without spot to God, (Heb. ix. 14) and laid down his life for us, what the worth of your souls was. "None of them," saith the Psalmist, "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever," Psal. xlix. 6-10. Call and assemble all the creatures in heaven and earth, summon gold, silver, precious stones, houses, cities, kingdoms, places of trust and dignity, great learning and parts, and every other thing ye can imagine, let them all convene in a parliament, and consult how men shall be ransomed. All of them combined together, though they make one purse, cannot do it. They cannot pay the least farthing. The Lord Jesus Christ then stepped in here, "Lo, I come,"—I give the body thou gave me, my life for theirs, "I delight to do thy will, thy law is in my heart."

Are your souls then exalted to such great dignity? Is such a price set upon them, and will ye spend them, for that which could not pay the price for them, "for that which profiteth not?" Ye must go out of yourselves to seek happiness. Then I pray you, go not downward. It is not there, but misery is there. And by going down to the creatures, ye have found it, and cannot lose it to this day. But the kingdom of God is the only thing above. Go up to it. "Seek these things that are above," Col. iii. 1-4. "If then ye be risen with Christ," through the faith of God's operation, "set your affection on things above, where Christ sitteth at God's right hand, and not on things on the earth." These things are but great in your apprehension. If they are at all great indeed, it is only in evil. If then ye seek great things for yourselves, ye may find evil things, ye shall certainly find such evil things as shall drown you in everlasting destruction. "They that will be rich" (in worldly things), who lay up treasures for themselves, and are not rich towards God, "fall into

temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Great things in this world are not always good. To seek them, makes them certainly evil and hurtful. It is not so hurtful to have them, though very dangerous, but it is hurtful, yea, present ruin to seek them. But here is a kingdom that is great, and great in goodness, every way answerable to our necessities. This is the kingdom we should seek above all things.

We would therefore beseech you to be wanters in yourselves, and seekers in Christ, and seekers ye cannot be till ye be wanters, and finders ye cannot be except ye seek in Jesus all satisfaction and remedy of your necessity. This is even the very nature of a Christian, his chief exercise and employment. What then is a Christian's principal study, his great business, his important calling, and what is his success in it? He is a seeker by his employment, or calling here, and he shall certainly find what he asks. But what puts him to seeking? The discovery of his own emptiness, and God's fulness. Therefore study these things most, if ye would be Christians in truth and in deed. It is these two that ye must still pass between, if ye keep them not both in your view at once, ye cannot well perceive any of them, either comfortably, humbly, or profitably.

This is even the sum of Christianity. Look what ye want in yourselves, and make up that in God. Discover your own emptiness and fill it up with God's fulness. "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself," Prov. xi. 25. Be not niggards here. Be liberally minded, both in seeking and receiving, so shall ye please him best who counts it his glory to give. "The instruments of the churl are evil, but the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand," Isa. xxxii. 7, 8. Seek answerable to your own necessity, and God's all sufficiency, and know no other rule or measure.

Now, Christians, this is your calling and employment here, to be seekers of God's kingdom and righteousness. But shall we come speed? Yes certainly. It is so far put out of question here, that it needs not be expressed. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be" superadded to you. He thinks it needless to say, *and ye shall find the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*, for it is supposed as a thing unquestionable, and he adds these words, "and all these things shall be added to you," to answer the faithlessness of these who could not credit him in temporal things, though they had concredited⁷⁸ to him their immortal souls. Ye do not doubt, then, but ye shall have the kingdom of heaven. Ye do indeed seek it. Many by seeking kingdoms lose here—by seeking to make them more sure, they lose the hold they have. Many by aspiring to greater things, lose these things they have, and themselves too. But here is the man that is only sure of success,—the man that may reckon upon his advantage before he take pains, if indeed he resolves to take pains for it. This one thing is made sure, eternal life, if ye lay hold on it here by faith, and quit your hold of present things that end in death, Rom. vi. 21. We may well submit to the uncertainty of all other things, as David, who held himself well satisfied with the everlasting covenant God had made with him, which was well ordered in all things and sure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Though the kingdom and house go, it matters not, if he keep this fast. If he take not away his loving kindness, this is all my comfort, my joy, and my desire. Comfort yourselves with this, amidst the manifold calamities and revolutions of times. Ye see no man can promise himself immunity, or freedom from common judgments. Here ye have no continuing city. Why then do ye not seek one to come, and comfort yourselves in the hope of it? Your rights and heritable securities will not secure your lands and riches for any considerable time. Therefore seek an eternal and sure inheritance, sure mercies. Seek that which ye cannot miss, and having found, cannot lose. Nothing here can you expect either to find, or keep, until ye have found it.

But besides all this, there is an accession to the inheritance. All needful things shall be added, ye shall want "no good thing," Psal. lxxxiv. 11. Will not all this double gain and

advantage recompense, yea, overcome all the labours of seeking? Shall it not drive away the remembrance of them? Here then is the most compendious and comprehensive way to have your desires in this life granted, to get your necessities supplied. “Seek first the kingdom of God” and ye shall have them. But if ye seek these things and not heaven, ye shall want this kingdom. I think then it is all the folly and madness in the world, not to take this way, for it is the way to be blessed here and hereafter. And if we choose any other way, it brings no satisfaction here, and it brings eternal misery hereafter. If ye would be well in this world, seek heaven. Do not think that ye should have heaven, or seek God's kingdom from this sordid principle, that ye shall have all worldly things given you, which God pleaseth to bestow. For now man can seek the kingdom of heaven aright, but he that seeks it for itself. Yet if they were no more to proclaim the madness of men, this would sufficiently suffice, all they can desire or expect is promised with the kingdom, and yet they will not seek it.

Sermon XX.

1 Pet. iv. 7.—“But the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer.”

If ye would ask what ye should do till Christ come again, or what should be your exercise and employment in this old age of the world, here ye have it in a word, “be sober, and watch unto prayer.” When Christ was to go away to his Father, and leave his disciples in this world, as he left them not orphans, or comfortless, without the Comforter, so neither left he them without counsel and direction. The word he left to them was, “Take heed, watch and pray,” Mark xiii. 33. In this chapter, Peter is mindful of his Lord's directions, as Paul also was, 1 Thess. v. 6. The substance of this chapter is to exhort Christians to a holy conversation, suitable to their high calling. He presses mortification in general, from that which should be of greatest force with a believer's heart,—the strongest and most convincing reason in the world,—union with Christ crucified, even as Paul does, Rom. vi. And then, in the 3d and 4th verses, he argues from their former conversation, ye have sinned enough already, all the rest of your time is over little⁷⁹ to consecrate to God, according then as ye have advanced Satan's kingdom while under it, so advance Christ's kingdom when it comes to you, and take that noble revenge upon yourselves and sins, so as to bring them both captive to the obedience of Christ. And although the world may think it strange ye walk not with them, yet so much the rather ought ye to aspire after a disconformity to the world. Be then ambitious of being singular in the world. Ye would lay down such a conclusion as this, I am a stranger, and will walk as a stranger. And ye need not think yourselves miserable to be out of so much company, and to be alone. No, if ye knew what was to come upon them, ye would get you out from among them, lest ye be partakers of their plagues. The day of the Lord is coming, and the world must give an account to the Judge of all flesh. Ye may endure their mockings, and all the hard measure which ye get her, for it shall be recompensed unto them. And your lot is the same that other saints had, who now sleep in the Lord. The gospel was preached unto them, and they had the same fruit of it before God, and got everlasting life by it, yet they were judged in the world as well as you, and were counted base and contemptible. Now, in this verse, he comes to particular exhortations from the former reasons. This text hath two parts. I: An exhortation to some special duties, which are so conjoined in this form of speech that they seem all but one duty. “Prayer” is the duty, and sobriety and watchfulness are means to it. II: There is a reason given, because

“the end of all things is at hand.” So, then, ye have here the posture the world is in, and the posture a Christian should be in. This is the world's old age. It is declining, albeit it seem a fair and beautiful thing in the eyes of them who know no better, and unto them who are of yesterday, and know nothing. It looks as if it had been created yesterday, yet the truth is, and a believer knows, it is near the grave. Gray hairs are here and there upon it, though many know it not, and Jesus the Lord is at hand to put an end to it. Now, what should be your condition in the meantime? What should immortal souls do, that are to remain for ever, and outlive this habitable world? How should they be employed? The spirit and soul is to endure longer than the man's possessions, goods, honour, and place. How, then, should ye look upon these things? Here it is. Be sober in the use of all things. Use the world as if ye used it not, watch unto prayer. Ye are encompassed about with manifold temptations. Therefore watch, and be as men on their way waiting for the Bridegroom. The bride's exercise, since Christ hath ascended unto heaven, should be to say, “Lord Jesus come quickly.”

In discoursing upon this subject, I: We shall speak of these three parts of a Christians duty severally. II: Consider how they help one another, and so jointly speak of them. And then, III: Of the reason and motive to them all, and how it enforces such an exercise. As to be the first of these, we observe, that sobriety is a duty becoming every Christian, that is united unto Jesus Christ, and is separated by God's holy calling from the rest of the world. I add these two considerations because of the preceding verse. For in the first and second verses he lays down an excellent ground of all kind of mortification, viz. the believer's union with Christ crucified. Jesus Christ suffered and died for us, as a Common Person, to sustain the guilt of our sins. He died as a Cautioner and Undertaker for us and as our Head and King, and we by virtue of that, are obliged to crucify sin also. In verses 3d and 4th, the other consideration is set down. There ought to be a vast difference between a believer now, and before his conversion. He should not be the same man, but as Paul, say, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Gal. ii. 20. He should be separated from the world, that all the world may wonder at him, and think it strange to see his conversation. Now I conceive this exhortation is gathered from both these, and the word of reference *therefore* relates to the preceding verse, as well as his reason in the words now read. Now therefore be sober. This sobriety is not limited to meat, drink or apparel, the object of it is more comprehensive in scripture. It uses sometimes to be expressed singly, without making mention of any particular matter, evidently importing, that sobriety ought to be in all things. That which we ought to be sober in is certainly the “all things spoken of in the reason of sobriety, whose end is at hand.” They are most distinctly expressed 1 John ii. 15-17, “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” all that perishes is not of the Father, but of the world, that is, the world which wicked men frame to themselves. Here then is a large commentary on “all things.” Therefore whatever is in the world is the matter of sobriety. Whatever comes under the senses calls for sobriety. Whatever comes under the object of the mind is the matter of sobriety. Nay, whatever is corruptible and perishing, or whatever the last day of the Lord a coming shall put an end to, in all these, there must be sobriety exercised. There is a threefold sobriety: 1. Sobriety in the mind, or sober mindedness, Rom. xii. 3. We ought not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, “but to think soberly,” 1 Cor. iv. 6, 7, Tit. ii. 6, Rom. xi. 20, 1 Cor. vii. 2. Sobriety of mind is that excellent lesson that Christ Jesus both taught and practised in his humble state. “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart,” Matt. xi. 29. Humility is not like Peter, who said, “Depart from me, for I am sinful man, O Lord,” “Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet.” But humility is rather like Mary, that sat down at Christ's feet, and washed them with tears. Sobriety of mind does not undervalue God's gifts and graces, neither doth it overvalue them. It thinks of itself according to the measure of grace freely given, (Rom. xii. 3) and sobriety looks on all its own gifts, and ornaments, as not its own but another's, as free gifts, and therefore it puffs not up a man against his neighbour, though he should see a gift given beyond his neighbour. High mindedness is like the high bending of a string of an instrument, which easily breaks in two pieces. Sobriety walks with a low sail, and creeps through under the wind, but the high mind is like the cedar, that moves with the wind,

and falls when the bowing twig stands still. Some will think the aspiring of the spirit a sign of a better spirit than the humble mind, and so look down upon others. But oh, if they walk safely, they will walk humbly with God.

2. There is also sobriety in the affections when they are moderate. The objects of this world which come under the affections, are either sinful and unlawful or in themselves lawful and allowable. Now sobriety towards the first kind is simple abstinence, towards the second moderation. The rule of the first is, "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the mind" (1 Pet. ii. 11), and, as it was said in another sense, "Touch not, taste not, handle not." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," Eph. v. 11. As a man who would be clean should not touch pitch, and he who would not be burnt should not carry coals in his bosom, so ought the child of God, who walked formerly in the lusts of ignorance, after the custom of this world, to abstain from all appearance of evil (1 Thess. v. 22.), not only from sin itself, but from all the occasions of it, and inducements unto it, all that which hath any appearance of evil. There is no measure of moderation here, a man must not think to give his lusts part, and Christ part. No, he must have all or none. Ye should have no quarters with sin, ye should be out of speaking terms with it. The least motion of the affections and heart that way, is insobriety, and inordinate affections. 3. But sobriety in things lawful is moderation, when the spirit is kept within bounds, Col. iii. 1, 2. And the rule of this is that which Paul prescribes, 1 Cor. vii. 29, "Use the world as not abusing it," knowing that the fashion of the world doth pass away. Love this world as if ye loved it not. Every thing hath too much of the heart, and Jesus Christ would have his royal palace his peculiar place here. He may have suitable affections to God's dispensations in this world, (for the Christian wants none of his senses,) yet he ought not to be "greatly moved," as David speaks, Psal. lxxii. 2. Now we consider this in three things, (1) In seeking of any thing; (2) In enjoying of any thing; (3) In losing or wanting any thing. That rule of Paul's may be applied to all the three, he should seek the world as if he sought it not. He should enjoy the world as if he enjoyed it not. He should want or lose the world as if he lost it not. This sobriety makes him want, in abundance, and abound, in want,—to have nothing, and yet possess all things. All our time and pains and affections are spent out upon these, and turn about on these three points. Desire, attended with care and anxiety, goes out to fetch in any thing that the mind fancies. When the soul hath gotten its desire, it delights and rejoices in it, and when it is frustrated, disappointed, or crossed, it grieves and torments itself. If ye find a Christian sober in these, you find his pulse beat well. (1) Ye should then seek the world or any thing, as if ye sought it not. We are given to idolize the creatures, and dig broken cisterns, and forsake the fountain of living waters, to seek the creature as if it were God, and the strength of affections uses to be spent on it. Men have big and large apprehensions of the things of this world, and are like foolish children amazed with pictures and dreams. Fancy busks⁸⁰ up and adorns the object with all things suitable, and thus the poor soul is put in expectation of some thing, and stretcheth out itself, to the utmost of its ability, to purchase that, which being had will not satisfy. The world promises fair to deluded minds that know no better. But the child of God must be sober here. He ought to have a low estimation of all created things, and conclude all under vanity and vexation of spirit, Luke x. 41, 42. Sobriety so seeks, that it can want, because it seeks a better thing that it cannot miss. But the poor worldling seeks this world as his only thing, and if he want it, what hath he more? He must have it, or else he hath nothing. The child of God should seek as a rich man that is satisfied, and needs no more, so that he cares not whether he obtain or not. The worldlings seek it as their portion, their heart and affections are on it, but he seeks it not as his portion, but as an accessory to his inheritance, Matt. vi. 33. Again we observe, (2.) That the good man uses the world, and enjoys it, as if he enjoyed it not. When riches increase, he sets not his heart on them. He is dead to the world, and crucified to it. It is but an unpleasant thing to him, and he to it. He can be refreshed with his meat more than another, because he sees God and his love in it, yet he hath it not as his portion. He is not excessive in gladness for any dispensation cast in the balance, one kind of dispensation or another. That which would make another man think he was half in heaven, or half in hell, it will not add much moment and weight to such a spirit. It is but like the casting in of a feather in a great balance, that will

scarcely incline it to either side. (3) He loses or wants⁸¹ the world, as if he lost it not. That which would break another man's heart, sobriety will make him go light under, and not be much disquieted for any thing. Why, what is the matter of it? Can it trouble his peace or access to God? Can his portion be removed? What, then, should ail him, for the light of God's countenance is more recompense than all the world? Proceed we now to apply this in some uses.

Use I. It discovers unto the most part of men how little they are advanced in Christianity. Many are insober in the use of the world, and what must their affections be? The works of darkness, that become not the children of God nor the children of the day, are yet common in the visible church. Insobriety in many is palpable, and written on their forehead. That beastly sin of drunkenness abounds in many congregations. But II. We would even convince the Lord's own children of great short coming in this duty. Although your carriage before men might pass free of censure of insobriety, yet O! how many things will God put such a construction on! There are many saints that cannot walk soberly in the use of this world. They spend their time upon it, and this is insobriety. Scarce can prayer and communion with God get an hour in the day from their calling, and when ye have to spend, insobriety is written upon many passages of your behaviour. Your meat, and drink, and clothing, should declare that ye are waiting for a better inheritance. But O! how are your affections wedded unto this present world! The current and stream of many of your thoughts go this way, what shall I eat or drink, or what shall I put on for clothing? And ye spend your spirits in projecting, and in following out your projects. There are some evident demonstrations of insobriety in the affections. For, (1) Most of your thoughts run upon temporal things and certainly if your hearts were not in this world, your minds would follow your hearts. Christians, too many amongst you spend whole days, and never any object enters into your minds but one thing of the world after another. Your minds are highways for the travellers of this world to come through. It may be ye will steal an hour, or half an hour for prayer, but the rest of your conversation is not in heaven, but void of God. According as every hour furnishes new opportunities, so are your minds here, Phil. iii. 20. And meditation upon spiritual things, that is the nerves and sinews of religion, that is a rare thing. If your affections were not more upon this world than upon Christ Jesus, would not our Saviour be uppermost in your thoughts? Would not Christ interrupt your thoughts of the world? Would not heaven come in the midst of your business, and get a spare look and ejaculation? The world uses to interrupt your thoughts of God, and the mind is given to wander in prayer. But put you upon something temporal, ye can fix your heart as long as you please, and never wander. David was not so. He awaked, and was still with God. He meditates upon him in the night watches. He remembers him day and night, (Psal. lxxiii. 8) and this made him a lively Christian. But, (2) If ye be seeking any thing, ye seek it so, as insobriety is stamped upon it. Your seeking of the world is prejudicial to your seeking of God, and takes away much time for prayer. Ye will be so eager in the pursuit of a momentary passing vanity, as ever ye were in the seeking of God, Col. iii. 1, 2. Care and anxiety comes in to be your provision, and ye put not prayer in the place of it, to make your requests known unto God. Ye seek it as if it were your portion and inheritance, surely this is insobriety. (3) Look upon your affections toward present enjoyments, and are ye sober? Ye can delight in these things, and take the sweetness of them, but the consolations of God are a small thing to you. Any thing adds to your joy and lifts you up. Albeit ye be not in good terms with God, yet ye can take your pleasure in the world. Ye see not a worm and moth in your pleasures, ye are not afraid to fill your belly with honey. Some think themselves made up when they get such a lot. But saints, are ye sober when such a thing changes your condition? O but the children of God look upon this world as David did in his fretting condition, (Psal. xxxviii.) and in his prosperous condition, Psal. xxx. Ye sit down and say, "My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved." Ye have more delight in your outward lot than ever ye had in Jesus Christ. But, (4) When any outward thing goes cross to your mind, then your insobriety appears. The taking⁸² of a sad and cross dispensation will evidence how ye sought the world. The taking away of a friend or idol, will declare ye idolized it. As the saints have too longing desires for the things of this world, and look upon them as the paradise of God, not as

Paul did, who thought the world a dead thing, so remove any thing that ye enjoy, and your joy is taken from you. Give you something for which you pray, your sorrow is away, and ye can no more mourn for sin; and take something away, and your joy is gone, ye cannot delight in God. Ye vex and disquiet yourselves in vain, and are weighed down with it. Are ye not then under the feet of this present world, when it tramples upon you? Are ye not servants unto it, when your condition altereth and changeth according to the nod of outward things? Ye may know what puts you up and down that commands you, and this is not sobriety. Ye are drunk with the creature. The child of God should be like mount Zion, that can never be moved. Therefore,

III. We would exhort all the saints to study more sobriety in this world. We need no more exhortation than what Paul gives, 1 Cor. vii. 29. It is a strange language, saints, "Set not your affections upon the things of this earth, but on the things which are above," Col. iii. 1, 2. "Love not the world, nor the things of the world," &c., 1 John ii. 15-17. Ye ought to study such a walk abstracted from this world, that ye might be as strangers at home, as sojourners in your own country. The child of God should sit down in his own family among his children, as if he were abroad, and he ought to be abroad, as if he were at home. Wherefore your life is called a pilgrimage, and ye strangers. Engage not much your heart to any thing of this world. Take but a standing drink and be gone, ye may not lay down your staff and burden, that his may bear you right. (1) Consider that insobriety is idolatry. Insobriety puts the creature in God's place, and sobriety puts all things in their own place. When a man's heart or affections are set on any thing, that is his idol and his master, and Christ says, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," (Matt. vi. 24) these two masters. Sure the worldling thinks not that he serves his riches, yet Christ puts that construction upon his loving them well, Christ calls any thing that is a man's master his god. Now, any thing that the heart goes after is a man's master. That which commands a man's affections commands the whole man, for the affections are the man's master, and they command the man. If ye knew this, ye would be afraid of spending your hearts upon vanity; ye put that vanity in the place of Jesus Christ, and so your heart is a temple of idols, and the great gospel promise (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26) hath not gotten place in you. The due place of the creature is to be subservient to the Lord its Maker, to be only the footstool, that he may have the throne. True insobriety puts the creature upon the throne, and worships it. (2) Insobriety or love to the world hinders the love of God, as much as is added to the one, is taken from the other, 1 John ii. 15. If the love of the world have one gram weight of allowance more than Christ speaks of, that is incompatible with the love of the Father. The creature will suffer a parting of affection, and will be content with a share, like the harlot and false mother that would be content with the divided child; but God must have all or none, and will not share with the creature. Ye may find it by experience when your hearts have been much set upon any thing in this world, Christ Jesus has not been so pleasant to you, ye have not so much delight in him. Affection must run in the channel, or it is but weak, if once ye divide the streams. The love of the world makes the heart carnal, it is the defilement of the whole soul, and a weight that easily besets us, that it cannot mount up in a cloud of divine affection to Jesus. Can the needle go to two contrary points both at once? Can it move to the north and the south at the same time? Such an opposition is there between the Father, and the things of the world. If then ye turn your face on the creature, ye must turn your back upon God. Think not, Christians, to keep love entire to God, and to set your affections on the world. Solomon's backsliding had this false principle, he thought to retain his integrity, and his wisdom should abide with him, though he would try folly and madness, Eccles. vii. 23. But did he not grow more foolish? Did he retain his wisdom? Many have come down from their excellence by this presumption. (3) Insobriety is the world's sin. It is the sin of the days of your ignorance, when ye walked after the lusts of the Gentiles, and it is a shame for a child of God to be so. This duty⁸³ is opposed to their former walking, verses 3d and 4th. There should be a great distance between you and the world, that ye may seem men of diverse countries. Though ye dwell in one city or in one house, ye ought so to walk as men may think it strange, as it may be, a wonder in the world. O but few Christians give the worldly men occasion to speak of them for holiness, few give them any ground for wondering at and mocking their conversation! Your conversation is so

like theirs, that they need not think any thing in it strange. Is it not a shame, saints, to be like pagans? Christ uses such an argument with his disciples to dissuade them from carnal carefulness, Matt. vi. 32. Sobriety is a work of the day becoming a child of light, as Paul observes, 1 Thess. v. 4-9, importing as much as if it were a shame for the Christian to be found much in love with the world, as it is for a man to be drunk at nine in the morning and staggering in the streets. There ought to be as great a difference between you and the world, as there is between day and night, light and darkness. Since the true light hath shined, to discover a more excellent happiness than the world can give, and since it hath concluded all under vanity, ye are not answerable to your holy calling to have it in any higher estimation. Consider also, (4) That the world is not your portion. Your life consists not in what you enjoy, your inheritance is above, reserved in the heavens for you. Therefore be sober. If ye believed this, that one day ye shall put on white robes, and be clothed with immortality, would ye so pursue after the world? It is the world's portion, and let them who know no better seek it as their god, and love it as their inheritance; but fie upon believers, that have a hope laid up in heaven, and fixed as an anchor within the vail. Should ye cause your portion to be evil spoken of, by your groping so much after this present world? If ye walked right ye should torment the world, and oblige them to be convinced that ye seek a city to come, and that ye despise all their enjoyments. But, (5) Insobriety becomes not a reasonable soul and is very unbecoming a Christian, even so is it to every man. Are ye not better, says Christ, than many sparrows? Is not the life more than meat? Matt. vi. 25, Luke xii. 23, 24. So we may say, Is not the soul better than the perishing creature? O it is the disgrace and debasement of an immortal spirit to be put under the feet of a piece of clay, to be subjected to vanity, and to the poor perishing things of the world. If a man but knew himself, and his natural prerogative above the creatures, let be⁸⁴ his Christian privileges, he would despise the world, and think all that is in it not a satisfying portion for his spirit. He would count it a great disparagement to lodge upon this side of infiniteness and divine fulness. Would ye not think it a base thing to see a king's son sitting down among beggars, and puddling in the filth of the city? God made man to have lordship and pre-eminence over the creatures, and his spirit shall outlive all these things he sees, and looks to, and what a dishonour must it be to spend an immortal spirit on vanity, to have no eye beyond the span of time? As Christ said, "What hath a man gained, if he lose his own soul?" What gain ye in this world, though all things should befall you according to your contentment, what gain ye, since ye prostitute an immortal soul unto the service of the world, and have made it, to the prince of the world and all things, a servant and slave?

[Sermon XXI.](#)

1 Pet. iv. 7.—"And watch unto prayer."

"Watch." A Christian should watch. A Christian is a watchman by office. This duty of watchfulness is frequently commanded and commended in scripture, Matt. xxiv. 42, Mark xiii. 33, 1 Cor. xvi. 13, Eph. vi. 18, 1 Pet. v. 8, Col. iv. 2; Luke xii. 37. David did wait as they that did watch for the morning light. The ministers of the gospel are styled watchmen in scripture and every Christian should be to himself as a minister is to his flock, he should watch over himself. This imports the Christian's condition in this world, and expresses his exercise in it. Watching is a military posture, and insinuates the Christian's case in this world. He is compassed about with enemies, and therefore he must be a soldier, 2 Tim. ii. 3. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of

Jesus Christ.” The Christian hath a warfare to accomplish in this world, and therefore the church here is militant, and in heaven triumphant, 1 Tim. i. 18. Every Christian should war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. What is the reason that when Christ triumphed upon the cross, and conquered all his enemies, and is ascended on high, that he hath not made all believers conquerors? Is the man that sits with Christ in heavenly places, (Eph. ii. 6) and he who was dead with Christ, and also risen with him, is he yet a soldier, when Christ hath overcome, and gotten the crown? And the believer, hath he not the victory that Christ obtained? Why then is he put to fight any more? Hath not Christ completely done it? Yes indeed, Christ hath overcome by his own strength, (Col. ii. 15) and is now on high, yet he will have the poor pieces of contemptible clay to overcome the Archangel,⁸⁵ the immortal spirits. It was not so much for the prince Gabriel,⁸⁶ the messenger of the covenant, the King of saints, to overcome his own creature, but he hath drawn out a battle and warfare to all his followers, that, in the strength of their victory in him already past, they may be made more than conquerors, and that there may be a perpetual song of triumph and victory in heaven, he hath made the saints strong, and hath made the strong weak. He hath set the poor with princes, and the kings on the dunghill. The Christian's heart and grace are like a besieged city, that is blocked up upon every hand, there are enemies without, and false friends within. Its party is great principalities and powers, &c. (Eph. vi. 12) and these go about continually to spy a breach. In the city, what strength can do, what policy can do, will not be wanting. All things of the world besiege the heart, and every sense is a port to let the enemy in. All a man's negotiation and trading in the world, is as dangerous as the proclaiming a public market in a town, for the country, while the enemy is about it. There is a desperate wicked heart within, that hath deceived many thousands, and would surrender the city upon any occasion. Here are fleshly lusts which war against the soul, (1 Pet. ii. 11) temptation to sin, and to unbelief. There is a heart within that can conceive and bring forth sin, and needs no temptation, a heart within that can seduce temptation itself, but it follows the tempter and when to all that a foreign power is added, Oh then, who can stand? Christ himself was tempted, but Satan found nothing in him, and had nothing in him, but when Satan comes he finds all in us, and we are like powder to conceive flame. We can even tempt ourselves, as well as be tempted by another. The Christian keeps a house that the enemy surrounds, and if he sleep he will enter, he is here a pilgrim, and is not yet come home, yet he hath a foul and dangerous way to go through. He is like a servant that his lord hath left, and given provision to, and is to come home when he pleases, Mark xiii. 33, Matt. xxiv. 32. If his master find him sleeping, woe to him. This is his case. What then should his exercise and posture be? He should be a watchman. (1) Watching is opposed to security and sleeping, Matt. xxiv. 42, Mark xii. 33. He must keep his eyes open, or else he is gone, (1 Pet. v. 8) be vigilant, lest the devil attack him. The sluggard's destruction comes as an armed man, because of his “little sleep” and slumber, Prov. vi. 10, and Prov. xx. 13. Security is the Christian's night, when he ceases from his labour, and the adversary does with him according to his pleasure. But the Christian is in a better condition when he is wrestling with temptation, and getting sore blows. When he is at peace and dwells securely, as the people of Laish, he troubles himself with nothing, but dreams over his days, but that is a decaying condition. (2) To watch, is to observe all things, 1 Sam. iv. 13, Luke vi. 7. This is a special point of the watchman's duty, to let nothing pass by without observation, whatever object would come in, to ask at it from whence, and whither. The heart is a highway side that all things travel through. If the Christian then be not exact in this to know what comes in, and what is its errand, he may be surprised or he know. He should observe all the motions of the enemy, and be well acquainted with all the subtleties of temptations. He must know his own spirit, or his thoughts, he should also observe all the Lord's motions and dealings with his spirit. It concerns him also to know what is his enemy or friend. Therefore the Christian should get upon the watch tower of the word, and look through the prospect⁸⁷ of faith round about him, that he may know what his spiritual condition is. But, (3) The watchman gives warning while it is seasonable, and the enemy far off. He raises the alarm, and all must be in readiness. So ought ye to be. Come to Jesus Christ with all ye observe, inform the Captain of your salvation whose soldiers you are. It is best dealing with temptation

far off, and resisting the first motions of sin, for when it comes near hand, it gets many friends within, and it is the watchman's part not to give his judgment of what he sees, but to report only. Do not ye sit down to pass the sentence on any thing, whether it be good or evil, sin or not, but come unto Jesus, and let him speak, for oftentimes we reason according to flesh and blood. (4) There must be no interruption in this watching. He must give diligent heed to it, Mark xiii. 33, 1 Thess. v. 6. It is a very laborious exercise for a Christian to watch, all his senses will be exercised by it. He must look up, and that steadfastly, he must stand, and when he hath done all, to stand. When he hath overcome he must yet watch, lest he enter into temptation. He is in greater hazard after victory than before, Ezra vi. 13. He must watch when he is come out of one temptation lest he enter into another. The greatest disadvantage that armies have gotten hath been after some victory, when they were secure. Therefore we ought to give all diligence, and love not sleep, lest we come into poverty.

From what hath been said, (1) We see how few are in a warlike posture against Satan. Many serve under Satan's colours, and the strong man keeps the house. They watch not against him, but for him, they fight for him, and not against him. Do not many Christians, in profession, even watch for their sin, how to encompass what they would be at? Many wait on all advantages to get their own heart's desires, they watch against God's word, to hold out conviction. These are the children of darkness, in whom the devil reigns. We also observe from this, (2) That even the children of God are seldom found watching. There is much woful security among them and this is the universal complaint, who of you walks as if you were among enemies? Ye walk as if ye were in a peaceable city without gates, as the people of Laish, who dwelt securely. Ye have no friend in all the world, and yet what unspeakable negligence and sleeping is there among you? The flesh is so weak, that ye cannot watch but one hour for Christ. And O! but the intermission of one hour's watching hath brought down many strong ones. This made a breach upon David that could hardly be made up for ever again. From the words, (3) We observe, that prayer is a part of a good Christian's exercise. We may be ashamed to speak or hear of this duty. It is true, indeed, our religion is all compendized in this duty. Yet this duty is so little in practice, that our religion must be but little. We would, then, speak somewhat of prayer, and observe,

1. That it is the distinguishing character of a Christian in scripture. The child of God, and the man that calls upon God's name, is all one and the same thing. The wicked man's name is one that calls not upon God, nor seeks him, but the godly call upon their Maker, Acts ix. 11, 1 Cor. i. 2. All the saints in scripture have been praying men. The wicked, or natural man, is not an indigent man, he wants nothing, and therefore seeks nothing from God, but the Christian is one who hath nothing in himself, a beggar by birth, one that is cast out into the open field, and he is still seeking to make up his losses. Praying and wanting goes hand in hand together. Prayer then is the first breathing of the new man. What sign of life would ye know him by? Motion is an infallible sign of life and this is the motion of the new creature. Prayer is the stirring of the soul, and going out of itself for bread, it is the sucking of the breasts of consolation. Grace turns a man's face Godward and Christ-ward. 2. Prayer is the pouring out of an indigent man's heart in God's bosom. It is the emptying of the soul, and the landing of it on God's lee shore, Psal. cii. 2, 1 Sam. i. 10, Psal. cxlii. 2, &c. When a pious heart is overwhelmed and sore disquieted, it prays. Prayer emptieth the vessel, and brings the soul above the water again. It is a present ease in the time of trouble. Care and anxiety of spirit plunge the soul over the ears, but prayer brings it again unto dry land, Phil. iv. 6. Care burns and drowns a man's requests, but prayer makes them known to God in every circumstance of life. Therefore prayer is called a "making known our requests unto God," and "the lifting up of our souls unto God," Psal. xxv. 1, 2. But, 3. Prayer is the provision of a soul, for it is sufficient to do that which carefulness and thoughtfulness undertake to do, and effectuate not, Phil. iv. 6. Prayer does all a man's business. He lives by prayer, as Paul lived by Christ living in him, &c. Gal. ii. 20. He lived the natural life of a Christian by faith. So David says, "I gave myself unto prayer," he opposes this unto all that his enemies do against him. Not only doth it ease the spirit of the present burden, but prayer does all his business, because

it puts it over into a better hand, viz., the hand of him who cares for us, 1 Pet. v. 6. It is like a child who is under his father's tutory,⁸⁸ and he does nothing himself, but all is done for him, and he needs to do no more but ask, and have, to seek, and find, to knock, and it shall be opened unto him. Prayer hath the promise of all spiritual and valuable blessings, and the promise is true. 4. Prayer speaks a life of indigence and dependence in the creature, and also speaks out the attributes of God, for the supply of all our need, sovereignty, bounty, and good will in God. It is the travelling of the poor creature between his own emptiness and God's all sufficient fulness. It acknowledges that he hath nothing, and that God hath all things he can desire to make him happy. Prayer is an act of homage and subjection to our Creator, and it is also an act of love and reverence, for prayer looks upon God, as a Lord, a Father, and a Master. 5. Prayer is the pulse of a Christian, and here ye may find him. If he be vigorous and frequent here, he is well, a decay in this is a woful symptom of a dangerous and dwinning⁸⁹ condition. This is the fountain of the spirit of life, and the Spirit's breath. For the Spirit helps our infirmities with groans which cannot be uttered, (Rom. viii. 26, 27) and according as the Spirit of God dwells in a man, in so far is he a good Christian. If, then, ye would ask how ye should walk here, and thrive in true Christianity, we would only say this, pray fervently and without ceasing. Pray and prosper, and daily be strong, and the Lord shall be with you. He will never fail nor forsake you. Again, consider, 6. That prayer is not so much a duty as a privilege, and if saints knew this, prayer would not so often be a burden unto them. Is there any privilege like this? For prayer is an admission into the secrets of God, it is an emptying of the heart into his bosom. It is a great part of our correspondence with heaven. It is a swift messenger sent thither, that never comes back with ill news. It never returns empty, but accomplishes its intent. Prayer is as it were speaking with God face to face, as a man speaks to his friend, and is it not an honourable privilege, that believers are admitted to him, and may boldly come to him under all their necessities, and have such a sympathizing friend as Jesus? What is wonderful in scripture is, that God hath put that honour upon prayer to be instrumental in obtaining the greatest blessings. Did not the Lord, at the prayer of Moses, dry up the Red sea? Did he not, at the prayer of Elias, withhold and give rain? Did not the prayer of Joshua make the sun to stand still, till he had vanquished his enemies? Wherefore was all this? Could he not have done it unasked? Certainly, but the Lord would put that honour and respect upon prayer in all ages, that it might be a demonstration to all ages and generations, how ready and propense⁹⁰ God was to hear prayer. Nay, to speak with reverence, God will submit his own omnipotence to prayer. Command, ask of me, and command me, says the high and holy One, Isa. xlv. 11. O but "the effectual fervent prayer" of the righteous avails much, 1 James v. 16. It does a man's business, and upon less expenses; it gives a reward in the hand, and the hope of the things sought. Withal, prayer is like Jacob's getting that within doors, without much toil, which careful Esau goes about all the fields for, and toils allday to obtain. Prayer is the most compendious way of remedy of all things else. It always makes up losses either of the same kind, or better; for if the loss be temporal, if the want be bodily, prayer makes it up with access unto God. It pays in gold. If it give not the same coin, yet it is better.

We have spoken something of prayer for this end, that your hearts may fall in love with it. It is the property of a sincere upright man, that he calls always upon God, whereas the hypocrite will not always do it. Count, then, yourselves as much Christians as ye find of the spirit of prayer and supplication in you; for those that call not on God, their portion is very terrible. God will pour out his wrath upon them. God's face is set against such as do not pray. And I believe the multitude of this visible kirk have this brand upon their face, they call not upon God. God hath taken this character to himself, "the hearer of prayer," and those who mock at it, their judgment hasteneth, their damnation slumbereth not.

Sermon XXII.

1 Pet. iv. 7.—“Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

We now come to consider the coherence and connexion these duties have one to another. *First*, Prayer is the principal part of the Christian's employment, and sobriety and watchfulness are subordinate to it. “Be sober, and watch unto prayer.” (1.) Prayer is such a tender thing that there is necessity of dieting the spirit unto it. That prayer may be in good health, a man must keep a diet and be sober, sobriety conduces so much to its well-being, and insobriety makes prayer fail. Prayer respects a wholesome Christian at his best estate. (2.) Because prayer that is well in itself must have much divine affection in it, that may be the wings of it to rise upon, the oil that may keep the flame, James v. 16. Now insobriety is the moth of divine affection. The love of this world eats out the love of God and spiritual things; as much as the one goes up the other goes down, like the contrary points, 1 John ii. 15. Vehement desires would be a cloud of incense to carry the petition up unto heaven; but the love of this world scatters it, pours water upon the heart, and makes it neither to conceive heat nor flame. To be carnally minded is death, both here and hereafter, Rom. viii. 5-7. It is death to duties, it kills the spiritual life of the soul. Insobriety is carnal-mindedness, and minding of the flesh, so that a man hath no more taste of Jesus Christ than the white of an egg. It quite distempers his taste, and makes that only savoury which is like itself, and all other things bitter. But, (3.) Prayer must have hope in it. For how shall a man pray if he hope not to come speed? If he maintain not a lively hope, he will cool in his petitions. Insobriety is not consistent with hope to the end, 1 Pet. i. 17. He that would hope to the end must lift up his garments that hang side, and take a lick⁹¹ of every thing by the way; he must not let them hang down, but gird up his affections with the girdle of truth and sobriety. We observe, (4.) That prayer must come out of a pure heart, and God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, John iv. 23, 24; 2 Tim. ii. 22. Insobriety makes an unclean heart; the lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world defile the spirit, and makes it to send forth impure streams. (5.) There cannot be lodging for the Spirit where there is much love to the world. This grieves the Spirit, and makes him depart from us, and so a man is best to express his own groans, or to have none at all, which is worse. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, and the Spirit must have a clean house; ye must touch no unclean thing, if you would have God to receive you into the holy adoption of his children. (6.) Prayer cannot thrive where faith is not in a good condition. For faith purifies the heart which sends out prayer, 1 Tim. i. 6; Acts xv. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 22; and O! but insobriety makes an ill conscience; and faith and a good conscience scarce sail in one bottom.⁹² Both fall and stand together. How then can the soul look that Holy One in the face whose eyes are pure, and cannot look upon iniquity but with abhorrence? how can it look upon his holiness, when it hath been going a-whoring after the world, and forsaking the fountain of living waters? In a word, the heart that is not dead to this present world, will neither pray much nor well; for the heart is otherwise taken up, hath not many wants to spread before God, nor room for spiritual things. The creature gives him no leave to come to God. O but communion with God is a tender thing, and subject to many alterations and changes of weather! A little more mirth than is needful will indispose us for prayer. A little more sadness than is within bounds will also indispose us for this duty. Carefulness and anxiety cannot pray. Therefore it concerns all the saints to keep their hearts with all diligence, to keep themselves unspotted from the world. If ye would keep yourselves in speaking terms with God, ye must not entertain the creature too much. Any excess in your affections will divert the current of them, that they shall not run towards God. And next, ye see a solid reason why ye are so little in prayer, and keep not a praying temper, because ye are too liberal and lavish of your affections upon the world. Christians, how can ye pray, when your affections are upon the things of the earth? Will ye seek heavenly things, or care much for communion with God, when a present world is so much in your eye? Prayer must be wersh⁹³ and unsavoury when the world is sweet; and religion turns a compliment, when

your hearts are here. Prayer is a special point of your conversation in heaven, and the love of this world keeps your hearts beneath heaven. Your treasure is here, and your hearts can be nowhere else willingly. Ye must then be mortified to the world before ye can pray aright. But we would likewise consider,

Secondly, That sobriety is a great furtherance to watching, and therefore they are usually joined together, 1 Pet. v. 8; 1. Thess. v. 6-9. This is clear. For if a man be not sober, but drink too much of the creature's sweetness, or bitterness, till he lose his feet, he cannot watch, and the enemy will make invasion when he sleeps. Sobriety is the mother of security. A surfeit of any thing indisposes the body for any action. When the mind goes without the bounds of moderation, and stretches its Christian liberty beyond the bounds of edification, it cannot hold waking, a little sleep and slumber overtakes, till poverty and destruction come like an armed man. (2.) When a man hath drunk to excess of the creature and hath his heart engaged to it, he is in an incapacity to discern a friend from an enemy; whatever comes in with his predominant or idol will get fair quarters; though it may be, it will betray him. The love of the world when it stands centry at a man's heart, will keep out true friends. It will hold out Jesus Christ and spiritual things, all that seems to come in contrary terms with itself, and will let in the enemy that will destroy the soul. (3.) Insobriety entangles a man with the snares of the world, and so he cannot be a good soldier of Jesus. I think the conjunction here is expressed more fully, 2 Tim. ii. 2-4. The good soldier of Jesus Christ that wars a good warfare, must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life. He must be sober in the use of all things, or else he cannot be faithful to his master; he will be about his own business when he should be watching. He will not only labour to please the Captain of his salvation, Jesus, but he has many other things to please besides: and if any of his too kind friends come to speak with him, he will leave his duty and go apart with them, the watchman's office will take him up nothing beside. But the insober man cannot give himself wholly to it. Because his idols cry upon him, he will prefer his pleasures before his credit and honesty. Therefore, as ye would not expose your souls and all ye have, to the will of temptation, be sober. The devil hath gotten his will of a man that he can force to lie down with the creature, and sleep in its bosom. If once Satan can gild up the world in your eyes, and represent it amiable, and cause high and big apprehensions of it, O, ye are in the greatest hazard from the world of being overcome wholly by it! That was the temptation Satan sought to prevail with Christ by, but he found nothing in him. If the devil hath taken thee up to a mountain to see the glory of the world, and make you fancy a pleasant life here-away,⁹⁴ take heed of it, for ye will drink drunk,⁹⁵ and forget yourselves, and will not discern between good and evil.

Thirdly. Prayer must be watched unto. We must not only pray, but continue "instant in prayer," Rom. xii. 12. We must "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving," Col. iv. 2. It is a strange expression, and familiar in scripture, Eph. vi. 18. O what a strange word is it! It is either very needless, or else imports the unspeakable necessity of prayer. "Praying always," what needed more? But we must pray with all manner of "prayer and supplication in the Spirit;" and more yet, "watching thereunto;" and to express the superlative degree of the necessity of prayer, he adds "with all perseverance." Since the words at the first view do speak infinitely more than we practise, let many a Christian express their own practice and set it down beside this verse, and blush and be ashamed. The most part of you behoved to speak thus, I pray sometimes morning and evening, when I have nothing to do. And is this praying always, and watching thereunto with all perseverance? To watch unto prayer we conceive speaks these things.

I. To observe all opportunities, occasions, and advantages of prayer,—to be glad of getting any occasion to sit down and pray. It is to seek out occasions and to be waiting for them. Too many use to excuse themselves easily that their other employments take them up, and they think on this account they may omit prayer with a good conscience, as ministers, busied about their calling, and at their book, think it no omission that they pray not often. But alas, is this watching unto prayer? Ye should be as men lying in wait upon some good opportunity to take hold of it. Prayer would hinder no business of that kind,

but much further it. Prayer would be the compendious way of it. Ye used not to be challenged when ye get not a commodity⁹⁶ to pray; but do ye seek opportunity when it is not offered? Do ye look after a retiring place, and withdraw from company, when ye cannot pray with company? This were indeed watching unto prayer. But watching unto prayer will make men sometimes uncivil (so to speak, that which it may be would be called uncivility). It will be a very pressing necessity that will draw away the time of prayer, no compliment should hinder you to go to it. If ye got a corner alone, that would invite a man that watches unto prayer. He even seeks it when he finds it not offering itself. The watcher unto prayer will steal much of his time from others, and other employments, and he will not spend time unnecessarily.

II. To watch unto prayer is to accept willingly of all occasions and opportunities offered. O! if such a man find a corner, but it will be seasonable and sweet unto him. If he have nothing to do, and knows not how to pass his time, then he conceives he is called to prayer, and to keep communion with God. But how many opportunities have ye, and what advantage make ye of them? Ye have time and place convenient, all the day or much of it, and yet ye content yourselves with an ordinary set diet. Sure this is not watching. Watching unto prayer would make all emergent occasions welcome, ye would not have any impulse of the Spirit and motion to pray, but ye would follow it, and be led by the Spirit to your duty. Ye would not hear of any rare passage of providence, or any of God's dispensations towards yourselves, and other saints, but you would think it a good call to pray and make the right use and improvement of it.

III. To watch unto prayer is to observe all the impediments of prayer, all the enemies of that precious thing prayer, that ye ought to keep as the apple of your eye. Whatever ye find by experience prejudicial unto prayer, mark that. What indisposes the spirit and makes it carnal, mark that. What fills you with confusion and astonishment, and what hinders the liberty of your delighting in God, and rejoicing in his promises, mark that; and set yourselves against these. O but many Christians find liberal discoursing, and much mirth, prejudicial to the Spirit's temper, and yet who watches against it?

IV. Watch over your hearts that ye may keep a praying temper, and be still in speaking terms with God. And if ye would still keep a praying temper, 1. Be frequent and often in the meditation of God. Keep yourselves in his presence, as before him, that ye may walk under the sight of his eye, Psal. cxix. 168; Psal. cxxxix. 1-7. Stealing out of God's sight makes the heart bold to sin. The temper of the heart is but like the heat of iron, that keeps not when it is out of the fire, or like the melting of wax. If ye be out of God's sight your hearts will close. But, 2. Let no object come through your mind without examination of it. Let not your heart be a highway for all. If a good motion enter, entertain it, and let it not die out. Give it up to God, that he may cherish it. 3. Repel not any motion of the Spirit, but entertain it. There are three things ye would watch over, as, (1.) Yourselves, your own hearts, Prov. iv. 23, &c. ye must keep your heart, and it keeps all. (2.) Watch over your duty, Luke viii. 18. (3.) The time of Christ's coming, his second coming to judgment, Matt. xxiv. 42; Mark xiii. 33. So did David wait and watch till the Lord should return, Psal. cxxx. 5, 6. So did Job wait all the days of his appointed time, till his change came. Now, Christians, where are ye? Is not your practice your shame? It is one among a thousand professors that can be noted for much praying. Who among you can get this commendation that the Holy Ghost gives to Anna, she served God with fasting and prayer night and day? Your morning and evening are the limits of your duty, and it is almost an heresy to go beyond that. Is there any tender well-doing Christian in scripture, but he prayed much? This made David so exemplary, and hath not Jesus Christ gone before you, (Heb. v. 7.) to lead the way? O! but Christ's praying so often in the days of his flesh, and making supplication with strong cries, is a crying witness against the sloth of Christians in this generation. Both people and pastor, how should ye be ashamed? Hath Jesus prayed so long and often, and should not the poor followers, indigent beggars, be all in supplication? The Christian should name himself as David did, "I gave myself to prayer." Many a man sits down to his employment and prays not much, because he hath gifts and abilities. But so did not Christ, who was able to save, yet he prayed and went

about the Father's work with dependence upon him. And O that ministers would seek all from heaven immediately, and people seek it from heaven also! Think ye that the Spirit will take twice a-day for praying always, and set times for watching thereunto? No, no, we think there is little of this practised in this generation.

Now we come to the reason that is added in the text, "the end of all things is at hand;" that is, the day of the Lord is at hand. Christ Jesus, who was once here offered for sins, shall again appear without sin, unto salvation, unto them who look and wait for his appearance; and he shall put an end to all these things, either to themselves, by consuming them, or to the use of them. All that ye now dote upon is perishing, and it is not far hence that ye shall see the world in a flame, and all that ye spend your spirits on; and Jesus Christ shall bring salvation to his own saints, therefore be sober and watch. But how is it that the end is said to be at hand? Are not many generations passed since this word was spoken? It is almost two thousand years since, and yet Peter spake of it, and Christ spake of this day, as at hand. Sure it must be nearer us now than it was then. The day of the Lord is at hand: I. Because if we would count years as God doth, we would call the world but of one week's standing, for God counts a thousand years as but one day, 2 Pet. iii. 8, 9. The world thinks he is slack concerning his promise, and asks, "Where is the promise of his coming?" But believers, think not ye so, reckon years according to the duration of the Ancient of days, and by faith see the Lord's day at your hand, as it were to-morrow still. But, II. It is not without special reason that the New Testament speaks of all the time from Christ's coming to the end, as the last time, as it were but one age or generation immediately preceding the great day, as if the day of judgment were to be, or this generation of the earth would pass. It is of great use to us, because the Lord would have believers in the last age of the world come to some great pitch of mortification and deadness to the world, and hope of immortality, than has been come to before. He would have them be as men waiting for the Bridegroom, and this their exercise,—every one in his generation standing with his loins girded, and his shoes put on ready for the journey, and his lamp in his hand, Luke xii. 37; Mark xiii.; Matt. xxv. He would have all walking as if the day of judgment were to-morrow, as if the King of saints were now entering into the city, and all believers should go out to meet him as their King bringing salvation.

This then is the posture of the world, all things are near run, the fashion of this world passes away, 1 Cor. vii. 29: and the same exhortation is here pressed. This then, I say, is the state all things ye see are in, it is their old age. The creation now is an old rotten house, that is all dropping through, and leaning to the one side. The creature is now subject to vanity and groaning, Rom. viii. 21, 22. The day is not far hence, that this habitable world must be consumed, and O! but many a man's god and idol will then be burnt to ashes. 2 Pet. iii. 10-12, "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise," &c. God hath suffered men to live long in this world, that they might come to repentance, and he hath kept it so long for the elect's sake. If it had not been for them, the world should not be unburied till six hours at night;⁹⁷ but when he hath gathered in all the election, then shall an end be put to all the administrations of kingdoms, all governments, all nations. Think ye that God had so much respect to the world, or to the kings of it? No, he would put an end to all the kingdoms of the world, and never let them make their testament, if the elect were completed. If Christ were completed, there would be no marrying or giving in marriage, no more food and raiment, no more laws and government, all your fair lands and buildings must go to the fire. Now ask the question that Peter asks, "Seeing all things shall be dissolved, what manner of conversation ought ye to have?" And here it is answered, "Be sober, and watch unto prayer." Ask at Paul, and he will tell you, (1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.) "The time is short," what remains then, but that he that marries be as they who marry not, they that weep as they that wept not, &c. So then here is the duty of those who look for Christ's second coming; Christ hath left it with you till he come again, and put an end to all things: "be ye sober and vigilant." But consider what strength this reason hath to enforce this exercise, and how suitable this duty is to them who look for Christ's second coming. 1. In relation to sobriety it hath a twofold force; for, (1.) It is all the absurdity of the world, that ye should so eagerly

pursue perishing vanities; that ye should fall in love with the old decrepit world that is groaning under vanity, and very near consumption. The day is coming that the soul shall see all these things destroyed to ashes, and what will it then think of this idol? This is the thing I lost my soul for, and it is gone. And O how tormenting a thing will it be to the conscience! How have I been put by heaven for a thing of nought, for a vanity! Be sober, for the world cannot be a portion to an immortal spirit. Your spirit is immortal, and will continue after these things are gone, and it will outlive this world. Your goods and good name, your pleasures and profits, your lands and rents, all will have an end, and your spirit shall continue after them. Why then will ye choose that for your portion that will take wings and flee from you, or you will leave it? When ye see all burnt up, where then will your god and your portion be? (2.) Christian believers, ye have another portion; for Christ, who comes to put an end to these things, shall appear in glory, and ye shall appear with him in glory. He shall come with salvation to you, Heb. ix. 28; Col. iii. 4. Your life shall appear with him. Your inheritance is above. That sweet Saviour that came unto this world for saving lost sinners, shall come again, and will not think himself complete without you, and till he have all his members at his right hand. And therefore, saints, be sober. While ye are in this world, ye need not any other thing in the interim but the hope of eternal life, to keep your hearts, and hold them up. O but ye will think yourselves well come to it ere it be long. Ye may laugh at the poor, blind, demented⁹⁸ worldlings, who are standing in slippery places, and like children catching a shadow, or labouring to comprehend the wind in their fists. They are but dreaming that they eat and drink, and behold when the great day of awakening comes at the resurrection, they find their souls empty, though while they lived they blessed their own souls, and men blessed them also. Your inheritance is above, and what need ye more that have such a hope? May ye not purify yourselves as he is pure, and purge your hearts from all corruptions, and use this world as strangers, in your passage through it, that owns nothing as their own? Ye have no propriety⁹⁹ here, and therefore ye may the better live as strangers. But, 2. In relation to watching; Christ Jesus is coming, and is near, therefore watch. This Christ himself presses earnestly: Be as men that wait for the coming of their Lord, since he is not far off. Therefore, Christians, ye ought to be upon your feet, and not sit down with the creature. Ye should entertain this hope of his coming, and comfort yourselves by it, and be kept at your duty by it. I may say, there is nothing that is less known among Christians. Christ and his apostles often pressed it, as it seems he would have it the one ever running duty, through all generations. Ye ought then to be ready for Christ's coming, and not be found sleeping. 3. In relation to prayer; for if the end of all things is at hand, and Christ will soon come again, then the Spirit's exercise, and the bride's should be, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Pray Christ back again, and say, Why tarry his chariot wheels? Pray him back with salvation, and hasten his return by prayer. He hath left such a dependent condition, left such an employment for us, as speaks dependence and necessity. This is the time of promises, and we ought to pray for their accomplishment. In heaven there will be no prayer, for prayer shall be swallowed up in praise, faith in vision, and hope in possession. But prayer is a duty suitable to the time, and to the Christian's minority, to his banishment and sojourning. Dream not of an eternity here-away. Learn wisdom to number your days, and apply your hearts to religious wisdom; and if ye die thus, ye may rejoice that so many of the number are passed, and cannot return again.

Footnotes

- 1 [A relation of the principal circumstances in Binning's life follows.—*Ed.*]
- 2 [That is, he will not refuse.—*Ed.*]
- 3 [Parcel.—*Ed.*]
- 4 [Such a disburdening of former offences.—*Ed.*]
- 5 [Inclination.—*Ed.*]
- 6 [De Agricola filios suos docente. *Æsop. Fab.* p. 98. Oxon. 1653.—*Ed.*]
- 7 [Subdue.—*Ed.*]
- 8 [Such a wonder.—*Ed.*]
- 9 [Violent inclination.—*Ed.*]
- 10 [That is, truths of little value.—*Ed.*]
- 11 [In the Scottish universities, they were said to have *laureated*, who had a decree conferred upon them, as they were “crowned with laurel leaves.” *Ev. Un. Com.* vol. i. p. 153. Lond. 1837.—*Ed.*]
- 12 [These are the generous sentiments of an enlightened Christian. They would lead us to infer that the author's views, as a Protester, had been modified somewhat before he died or that he had never taken such high ground, as some others on this score.—*Ed.*]
- 13 [Or, *while we, on the other hand.*—*Ed.*]
- 14
- 15 [Perhaps it should be *at least, less.*—*Ed.*]
- 16 [The word *mystery* seems to be used here in the sense of *energy*. It is sometimes spelt by Scottish writers *mister* and *myster*, and signifies an art or calling, being derived from the old French word *mestier*, a trade. When employed to denote something above human intelligence, it has a different origin (being formed from *μυστηριον*, a secret).—*Ed.*]
- 17 [Exonerate, or unburthen.—*Ed.*]
- 18 [Or harness.—*Ed.*]
- 19 [Senec. Ep. 107. See note, [page 76](#).—*Ed.*]

- 20 [We are not, “of our own authority.”—*Ed.*]
- 21 [That is, weight or force.—*Ed.*]
- 22 [That is, *the honour not a load or a load of honour.*—*Ed.*]
- 23 [Confined.—*Ed.*]
- 24
- 25 [The friendly salutation which the steward of Joseph addressed to his master's brethren, when they went a second time to Egypt to purchase corn, was (שלום Shalom leikoum) “Peace be to you.” After the lapse of so many ages, it is interesting to know that this still continues to be, with little variation, the common salutation of friends in the East. Salam aleikoum, “Peace be with you,” is immediately acknowledged by a similar greeting, Aliekoum salam, “To you be peace.”—*Ed.*]
- 26 [To sit an offer is, not to accept it.—*Ed.*]
- 27 [Reception.—*Ed.*]
- 28 [The heathen mythologists represented the Sirens to be three in number, and described them as effecting the destruction of mariners, by luring them from their course with their singing.
- They the hearts
Enchant of all, who on their coast arrive
The wretch, who unforewarn'd approaching, hears
The Sirens' voice, his wife and little ones
Ne'er fly to gratulate his glad return;
But him the Sirens sitting in the meads
Charm with mellifluous song, although he see
Bones heap'd around them, and the mouldering skins
Of hapless men, whose bodies have decay'd.
Hom. Od. lib. xii. v. 39. Cowper's Translation.]
- 29 [That is, one tune from another.—*Ed.*]
- 30 [Or gifts of nature.—*Ed.*]
- 31
- 32 [In the ancient Scottish dialect as in this instance, *always* is frequently synonymous with *although, however, notwithstanding.*—*Ed.*]
- 33 [That is, coldly.—*Ed.*]
- 34 [Natural.—*Ed.*]
- 35 [Fallen out or quarrelled.—*Ed.*]
- 36 [Some words are omitted here, which may be supplied thus:—though *they* said *this*, they perverted God's meaning of the law, &c.—*Ed.*]

- 37 [Serves the purpose.—*Ed.*]
- 38 [Imperfect attempts.—*Ed.*]
- 39 [A Scottish forensic word corresponding to *Surety*.—*Ed.*]
- 40 [Acknowledge this.—*Ed.*]
- 41 [A name formerly given to bankrupts in Scotland.—See Act. James VI. par. 23, cap. 18.—*Ed.*]
- 42 [Attending the church.—*Ed.*]
- 43 [Aim at.—*Ed.*]
- 44 [Near the command.—*Ed.*]
- 45 [A belief in the prevalence of witchcraft at this time seems to have pervaded all ranks and classes. An Act of Parliament was passed against it on the 1st of February, 1649.—*Ed.*]
- 46 [Portal, or gate.—*Ed.*]
- 47 [Exempted.—*Ed.*]
- 48 [The illustration of the second proposition found in the text, “There is a faith feigned, and a faith unfeigned, a true and a false faith,” (p. 602) is omitted. We may conclude that this was the subject of a separate sermon, which has been lost.—*Ed.*]
- 49 [Deposes or testifies.—*Ed.*]
- 50 [That is, foresee or anticipate.—*Ed.*]
- 51 [Charges, or accusations.—*Ed.*]
- 52 [Than.—*Ed.*]
- 53 [Gates.—*Ed.*]
- 54 [Remove.—*Ed.*]
- 55 [Always.—*Ed.*]
- 56 [A proverbial expression signifying food and raiment.—*Ed.*]
- 57 [Much less.—*Ed.*]
- 58 [The sect of *Seekers* hold that there are not at this time, neither have been for many ages past any true ministers or ambassadors of Christ. (Gillespie's *Miscellany Questions*, p. 1. Edinburgh, 1649.) A few years before this, Laurence Clarkson, a *Seeker*, published a pamphlet entitled “The Pilgrimage of Saints.” Edwards, in his *Gangræna* (Part I, p. 24, Part II, p. 6. London, 1646) refers to it for an account of the opinion of the *Seekers*.

Clarkson declared that in these days there ought to be no churches built, no sacraments administered, that the saints as pilgrims, wander here as in a temple filled with smoke, not being able to find religion, and that, on this account, waiting for a church and for the coming of the Spirit as the apostles did, they ought to seek knowledge of any passenger, of any opinion or tenet whatsoever.—*Ed.*]

59

60 [Kindred alliance.—*Ed.*]

61 [Or, in the third place.—*Ed.*]

62 [Notwithstanding.—*Ed.*]

63 [A cold desire.—*Ed.*]

64 [That is a glimmering or slight degree of desire.—*Ed.*]

65 [This was the exclamation of Archimedes the celebrated geometrician of Syracuse, (εὐρηκα, εὐρηκα), after discovering, when in the bath, a method of detecting the quantity of alloy, which a fraudulent artisan had mixed with the gold of Hiero's crown. (Plut. Mor. et Phil. Op. p. 1094.) An exclamation somewhat similar was uttered by Cicero, when, searching for the tomb of Archimedes in the neighbourhood of Syracuse he at length perceived it covered with thorns and brambles (Cic. Tusc. Quest lib. v. cap 23.) But if they had cause to be delighted, much more surely had Philip the apostle reason to be so when addressing Nathanael, he cried out in ecstasy—We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph! John i. 45.—*Ed.*]

66 [In the present world.—*Ed.*]

67 [Specify or enumerate.—*Ed.*]

68 [Acknowledging.—*Ed.*]

69 [Path or way.—*Ed.*]

70 [Than.—*Ed.*]

71 [Fix upon.—*Ed.*]

72 [That is, no thought of eternity.—*Ed.*]

73 [Quid non mortalia pectora cogis Auri sacra fames?
Virg. Æneid, lib. iii. ver. 56.
“O sacred hunger of pernicious gold!
What bands of faith can impious lucre hold?”

Dryden's Translation.

Nihil enim est fam angusti animi, tamque parvi, quam amare divitias nihil honestius, magnifi entrusque, quam pecuniam contemnere, si non habeas si habeas, ad beneficentiam liberalitem que conferre.

“There is no surer characteristic of a narrow and little mind than to love riches, nothing more amiable and noble than to despise money if you possess it not—if you possess it, to be beneficent and liberal in the use of it.” Cic. De Offic. lib. i. cap. 20.— *Ed.*]

- 74 [That is, “It is difficult things that are admired.”—*Ed.*]
- 75 [Excites.—*Ed.*]
- 76 [From these, as from mount Pisgah.—*Ed.*]
- 77 [That is, not “by a leap.”—*Ed.*]
- 78 [Intrusted.—*Ed.*]
- 79 [Too little.—*Ed.*]
- 80 [That is, bedecks.—*Ed.*]
- 81 [That is, has no interest in the world.—*Ed.*]
- 82 [That is, *the way in which you will take or receive.*—*Ed.*]
- 83 [That is, the duty of sobriety.—*Ed.*]
- 84 [Much more.—*Ed.*]
- 85 [It must be perceived that the reading ought to be “overcome *like* the Archangel.”—*Ed.*]
- 86 [It is no less obvious that for “the prince Gabriel” we ought to read, *the prince Michael*. See Dan. x. 13, 21; Jude 9; Rev. xii. 7.—*Ed.*]
- 87 [That is, the prospective glass.—*Ed.*]
- 88 [Or tutelage.—*Ed.*] [Declining.—*Ed.*]
- 89 [That is, disposed. The word, though now obsolete, is found in Hooker.—*Ed.*]
- 90 [That is, that hang *low*, and take a *sweep* of every thing by the way.—*Ed.*]
- 91
- 92 [A single word appears to have dropped out here, the absence of which materially changes the meaning of the author, and makes him contradict himself. The sentence, it is conceived, ought to run thus:—faith and a good conscience scarce sail *but* in one bottom, that is, *in one ship.*—*Ed.*]
- 93 [That is, insipid.—*Ed.*]
- 94 [Upon the earth.—*Ed.*]
- 95 [“It is hard to find many who are not tipplers or common drunkards, or will *drink drunk* on occasions and with company.” Causes of the Lord's Wrath, p. 17. printed in the year 1653.—*Ed.*]
- 96 [That is, a convenient time or place.—*Ed.*]

97 [Or, till the evening.—*Ed.*]

98 [That is, *insane* worldlings.—*Ed.*]

99 [Property.—*Ed.*]