

WRITINGS OF EBENEZER ERSKINE

by Ebenezer Erskine

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Ebenezer Erskine, compiled for study and devotional reading.

13 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00.00. Titles/Contents
2. S. Christ In The Believer's Arms
3. S. God In Christ, A God Of Love
4. S. God's Little Remnant Keeping their Garments Clean in an Evil Day
5. S. The Backslider Characterized
6. S. The Believer Exalted in Imputed Righteousness
7. S. The Groans Of Believers Under Their Burdens
8. S. The Humble Soul the Particular Favourite of Heaven
9. S. The King Held In The Galleries
10. S. The Necessity And Profitableness Of Good Works Asserted
11. S. The Throne Of Grace
12. S. The Wind of the Holy Ghost Blowing upon the Dry Bones in the Valley of Vision
13. S. Unbelief Arraigned And Condemned At The Bar Of God

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Erskine, Ebenezer - Library

S. Christ In The Believer's Arms

S. God In Christ, A God Of Love

S. God's Little Remnant Keeping their Garments Clean in an Evil Day

S. The Backslider Characterized

S. The Believer Exalted in Imputed Righteousness

S. The Groans Of Believers Under Their Burdens

S. The Humble Soul the Particular Favourite of Heaven

S. The King Held In The Galleries

S. The Necessity And Profitableness Of Good Works Asserted

S. The Throne Of Grace

S. The Wind of the Holy Ghost Blowing upon the Dry Bones in the Valley of Vision

S. Unbelief Arraigned And Condemned At The Bar Of God

S. Christ In The Believer's Arms

Christ In The Believer's Arms by Ebenezer Erskine "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Psalms 73:25.

"Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God." Luke 2:28. In the preceding context, from verse 25th and downward, we have the following particulars recorded concerning Simeon, of whom my text speaks: 1. We have an account of his character, Psalms 73:25. He was a just and devout man; that is, one that was conscientious of the duties of the first and second table of the law; just towards man, and devout towards God. Note, That there are no barren branches in Christ the true vine: "They that have believed in him, will be careful to maintain good works, and will have a respect to all his commandments." Another part of Simeon's character is, that he "waited for the consolation of Israel;" that is, for Christ the promised Messiah, who is, has been, and will be the foundation of consolation to all be believers, in all ages and periods of time; and "blessed are all they that wait for him, for they shall not be confounded." Another part of his character is, that "the Holy Ghost was upon him;" and that both as a Spirit of prophecy, and a Spirit of holiness. It is the privilege of all true believers, that they have "the Spirit of glory, and of God resting upon them," 1 Peter 4:14. 1 Peter 4:2. We have here a promise made to Simeon, Luke 2:26 : "And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." In this promise, Simeon saw him by the eye of faith, before he saw him by the eye of his body. Note, that faith's views of Christ in the promise, makes way for the perceptible manifestations of him here, and the immediate enjoyment of him hereafter: Ephesians 1:13 : "After that ye believed, ye were sealed." 3. We have the time when, and the place where Simeon had this promise actually accomplished to him, Psalms 73:27; it was in the "temple, when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law." Note, They who would have a meeting with Christ, must wait upon him in his temple, and ordinances of his appointment; for it is there that "every one doth speak of his glory." 4. In the words of my text we have Simeon's welcome and the kindly reception he gave to the Messiah, when he met him in the temple: "Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God." Where notice, 1. Simeon's privilege, "He took him up in his arms," namely, in the arms of his body: but at the same time he embraced him also in the arms of faith and took him up as the salvation of God; otherwise he could never have blessed God for him, as the promised Messiah, "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." I am ready to believe, that there were many who got Christ in their arms, when he was an infant, who never had him formed in their hearts: but Simeon got him both in the arms of his body and soul at once. Some may be ready to think, O what a happy man was Simeon, and what a sweet arms-full had he, when he had the great Messiah, Immanuel, God-man, in his bodily arms! It is true, indeed, this was a privilege; but yet his greatest privilege was, that he had him clasped in his arms of faith. And though now his body be out of our reach, yet still there is access to embrace him in a way of believing: and this is what every true believer has the experience of, either in less or more. 2. In the words we have Simeon's gratitude for this privilege: he blessed God. He is in an attitude of praise, being "filled with joy and peace in believing." And his heart is so big with praise,

that he wishes immediately to be away to the land of praise, where he might get a well-tuned harp put into his hand, and join with the hallelujahs of the redeemed above: Now, says he, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. So much for explication of the words.

Before I proceed to the doctrine I intend to emphasise, we may observe, from the text and context, 1. That God's word of promise to his people is sure, and never fails of accomplishment. Simeon here had got a promise from the Lord, "that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ;" and, accordingly, my text gives an account of its accomplishment. O sirs, venture on God's word of promise, and look on it as the best security; faithful is he that hath promised: his naked word is as good as payment; he never broke his word to man; yea, "it is impossible for him to lie." 2. That believers will find God not only as good, but better than his word, when he comes, in his own time, to make out his promise to them. Simeon had a promise, that he should only see the Messiah before he died; but we find, that he gets more than a bare sight of him, for he gets him in his arms and heart at once. 3. That a true believer loves Christ so well, that he would put him in his very heart. Simeon here takes Christ in his arms, and lays him in his bosom, as near his heart as he could bring him. So the spouse, Song of Solomon 1:13 : "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." O the mutual endearments betwixt Christ and believers; he carries them as lambs in his bosom, and they carry the Lamb of God in their bosoms, Isaiah 40:11. Isaiah 40:4. That faith's embraces of Christ are so sweet, that they render the prospect of death not only easy, but desirable to the believer. Simeon, here, when he gets Christ in his arms, is content that the union betwixt his soul and body should be dissolved. But passing all these, the doctrine I design to discuss at the time is this:

DOCT. "That faith's embraces of Christ fill the mouth with praise." Simeon took him in his arms, and blessed God; where, as I told you, it was the arm of faith clasped about Christ, that filled him with praise and gratitude, taking him up as the Lord's Messiah. In examining this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, I. Speak a little concerning that arm of faith which embraces Christ.

II. Notice some of these songs of praise, which readily fill the believer's heart and mouth, when he gets Christ in his arms.

III. Whence it is that faith's embraces of Christ thus fill the heart and mouth with praise.

IV. Apply the whole.

I. As to the first, namely, concerning that arm of faith which embraces Christ, I would show, 1. What it Isaiah 2:1-22. What sort of an arm it Isaiah 3:1-26. How it embraces Christ. For the first, I have not time at present to open up the nature of faith at any length; all I shall do, is only, in a few particulars, to show what it supposes and implies.

1. Then, it plainly supposes, that there is a gift or grant of Christ made to sinners, in the free offer and call of the gospel. Receiving necessarily supposes a giving; and to take what is not given, is but theft, robbery, or embezzlement. In John 6:32, Christ there says to a disorderly multitude, the greater part of whom were unbelievers, as is evident from the remainder of the chapter, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven:" where it is plain that giving and offering are much the same thing; with this difference only, that the gift or grant of Christ in the word to sinners is the ground upon which the offer is made. We read, that "God hath given the earth the sons of men;" that is, he made a grant of it to them, to be used and possessed by them. And, by virtue of this

grant, before the earth came to be fully peopled, when a man came to a piece of land, and set his foot upon it, he might warrantably use it as his own property and possession: and the foundation of this was, that God had given, or granted, the earth to the sons of men. In like manner, God had gifted or granted his only begotten Son, John 3:10. For what end? That whosoever believeth in him, or takes possession of him by faith, should not perish but have everlasting life. It is true, indeed, the eternal predestination, the purchase and application of redemption is particular only to the elect: but the revelation, gift and offer, is common to all the hearers of the gospel; insomuch that, as the great Mr. Rutherford expresses it, the reprobate have as valid a revealed warrant to believe as the elect have. Every man has an offer of Christ brought to his door, who lives within the compass of the joyful sound: and this offer comes as close home to him, as if he were pointed out by name. So that none have reason to say, 'The call and offer is not to me, I am not warranted to embrace Christ;' for it is unto you, O men, that we call, and our voice is to the sons of man, Proverbs 8:4. We have God's commission to preach this gospel, and to make offer of this Christ to every creature sprung of Adam, Mark 16:15; and the event of the publication of this gospel among sinners follows in the next words: "he that believeth this gospel shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." No man ever died, or shall die under the drop of the gospel for lack of a full warrant to embrace a Saviour: no, no, sirs, your death and blood will be upon your own head; your unbelief will be the great ground of your condemnation. God will upbraid you at the great day with this, that you had Christ in your offer, and would not embrace him: "I called, but ye refused, I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded, therefore will I laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh," Proverbs 1:24, Proverbs 1:20.

2. This embracing of Christ supposes the knowledge of Christ; for a man, when he believes does not embrace a blind bargain. Now, there is a twofold knowledge that faith necessarily supposes; namely, a knowledge of ourselves, and a knowledge of Christ.

1st, I say it supposes the knowledge of ourselves, or, a conviction and discovery of that sin and misery, thralldom and bondage, we are reduced to, by the breach of the first Covenant. The law must be our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ. Without a revealing of sin and misery by the law, in less or more, the sinner will never flee to him, who is "the end of the law for righteousness." The man, in this ease, is just like a mariner at sea, sailing upon a broken and shattered keel, not far from a great rock: so long as he considers his vessel to be good enough, or sufficient to carry him to land, he will still stay on board, refusing to throw himself upon the rock for safety; but when the wind and waves beat upon the ship, and break her in pieces, then, and never till then, will he cast himself upon the rock. So is it here: while the sinner considers he can do well enough upon the broken foundation of a covenant of works, his own doings, and good intentions, he will never betake himself to Christ "the Rock of ages," but when a hail-storm sweeps down the refuge of lies, and lets him see, that if he stay on board this ship of the law, he must inevitably sink into the bottom of hell, then, and never till then, will the man cry with the jailer, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The same we see in Paul, Romans 7:9 : "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." And, Galatians 2:19 : "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Thus, I say, embracing of Christ necessarily supposes the knowledge and conviction of our lost condition by the law, or covenant of works.

2dly, It supposes or implies a knowledge of Christ, as the blessed remedy of God's providing. And there is so much of this goes into the very nature of faith, that we find it frequently called by the

name of knowledge, Isaiah 53:11; John 17:3. And this knowledge of Christ is not a bare speculative knowledge of him, attained by external revelation, or common illumination: for there are many learned unbelievers: but it is an internal saving knowledge of him, which comes by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, accompanying the external discoveries of him in the gospel, which goes in to the nature of true faith: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must shine in our hearts, giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Corinthians 4:6. He, as it were, cuts out a window in the man's breast, which before was like a dungeon of hellish darkness; and makes a beam of saving, humbling, and captivating light to shine into it. And thus the man is "called out of darkness into a marvellous light." And this light is called the light of life, because with it, and by it, a new principle of life is implanted in the soul: Ephesians 2:1 : "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

3. This embracing of Christ bears in it the soul's firm and steady assent to the revelation of the gospel concerning Christ; so that the man cannot but join together with Paul, 1 Timothy 1:15 : "This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Now, this assent of the soul to the gospel revelation is not a bare historical assent, which leans only to the testimony of man; for thus reprobates may and do believe: but it is such an assent, as is founded upon the testimony of God, or his record concerning Christ in the gospel. Hence it is called a "believing the record of God," a "setting to the seal that God is true." Faith that is of a saving nature, will not venture upon any thing less than the credit and authority of God himself: —Thus saith the Lord, is the ground and reason of the soul's assent. And this is a firmer basis than heaven and earth; for "the fashion of this world passeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever;" "righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." So that he will as soon cease to be God, as cease to make good his word, which is ratified by his oath; these being the "two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie."

4. Upon this, follows the receiving, embracing, or applying act of faith. Christ being known in the light of the word and Spirit, and the truth of the revelation concerning him assented to; the soul goes a degree further, and, as it were, takes him home into its arms and bosom, as a remedy every way suited to the soul's malady and misery. This embracing and appropriating act of faith is just, as it were, the soul's echo to the call and offer of the gospel. I offer him for thy Saviour, says God; and I embrace him as my Saviour, says faith: I offer him for wisdom, to thee who art a fool, says God; and I embrace him for my wisdom, says faith: I offer him for thy righteousness and justification, who art a condemned sinner, says God; and I embrace him as the Lord my righteousness, says faith: I offer him for thy sanctification, who art a polluted filthy sinner, says God; and I embrace him for my sanctification, says faith: I offer him for thy redemption, who art a lawful captive, says God; and I embrace him for my redemption, and my all, says faith. Thus, I say, the soul echoes to the voice of God in the gospel, when it believes, much like that, Zechariah 13:9 : "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." And this is what we call "the assurance of faith," or an "appropriating persuasion," by which the soul, as it were, takes possession and moves in, in Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase as his own, upon the ground of the gospel offer and promise. What lay before in common to all in the offer, the soul brings home to itself in particular; and, just like Simeon, takes Christ in its arms and bosom, saying, with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." I do not say, that the first language of faith is, That 'Christ died for me,' or, 'I was elected from eternity:' no; but the language of faith is, 'God offers a

slain and crucified Saviour to me, and I take the slain Christ for my Saviour; and in my taking or embracing of him as offered, I have ground to conclude, that I was elected, and that he died for me in particular, and not before.' I shall only add, that this appropriating act inseparably attends the knowledge and assent before mentioned; and that they are all jointly comprised in the general nature of saving faith; which I take up as an act of the whole soul, without restricting it to any one faculty, or distinction as to priority or posteriority of time.

Now, this saving faith, which I have been describing in its essential acts, is variously expressed in the sacred oracles of the scriptures of truth; from which fountain alone our understandings of it are to be drawn: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isaiah 8:20.

1. Then, It is called a receiving of Christ: John 1:12 : "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" Colossians 2:6 : "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." This expression of faith leads us to conceive of Christ under the notion of a gift, freely offered and presented to us in the gospel, and bears an appropriation in the very nature of it; for where a man receives a gift he takes it as his own, and it becomes his in possession.

2. It is sometimes expressed by a resting or "rolling ourselves on the Lord:" Psalms 37:5 : "Commit thy way unto the Lord," or, as it reads in the margin, "Roll thy way upon the Lord;" and Psalms 37:7 : "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Which expression may either allude to a poor weary man, who is about to sink under a load, his legs not able to bear him; he leans or rests himself upon a strong rock, which he is confident will not sink underneath. Faith in its justifying act, is not a working, but a resting grace. 'O! says the poor soul, I am like to sink into the depths of hell, under the weight of my iniquities, which "have gone over my head, as a burden too heavy for me to bear:" but I lay my help where God has laid it; O! "this is my rest." Hence he that believes is said to "enter into his rest." Or, this resting of the soul on Christ may allude to one's resting upon a bond, or good security granted to him by a responsible person; he takes it as security to himself, and rests on the fidelity of him that grants it. So, in believing, we rest upon the veracity of a promising God in Christ, as a sufficient security for the blessing promised.

3. It is called a "flying for refuge to the hope set before us," Hebrews 6:18. In which there is an allusion to the man-slayer under the law, who fled from "the avenger of blood." The poor pursued man was not to turn aside to any of the cities of Israel; he was not to flee to his own home; yea, he was not to flee to the temple; and to offer sacrifice; but he was to flee straight to the city of refuge. So, in believing, the soul is never to rest in any thing on this side of Christ, who is "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest:" the hail shall sweep away every other refuge, but as the man-slayer, when once within the gates of the city of refuge, was in such safety, that he could freely speak with the avenger of blood, without any manner of danger; so the soul that is by faith got under the covert of the blood and righteousness of Christ, is in such absolute safety, that it dares speak to the law, and all its pursuers, saying with the apostle, Romans 8:33-34, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died," &c.

4. It is called a "submitting to the righteousness of God," Romans 10:3. A very strange expression! Shall it be thought submission for a condemned criminal to accept of pardon from his prince? or for

a person that is stark naked, to accept of a garment? The expression plainly points out the arrogant pride of the heart of man. We are, as it were, mounted upon an imaginary throne of our own righteousness by the law, thinking, with Laodicea, that we are "rich, and stand in need of nothing," disdain to be obliged to another for righteousness: but now, when a man believes, all these towering imaginations are levelled; he is emptied of himself, and made to "count all things but loss and dung, that he may be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith," Php 3:8-9. The language of the soul, submitting to the righteousness of God, is that of the church, Isaiah 45:24 : "Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

5. It is called a "taking hold of God's covenant," Isaiah 56:4. The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is like a rope cast into a company of drowning men; God comes by his ministers, crying to sinking sinners, who are going down to the bottomless gulf of his wrath, Take hold of my covenant, and of him whom I have given for a covenant of the people; and I will deliver you from going down to the pit. Now, when a man believes, he, as it were, taketh hold of this rope of salvation, this covenant of grace and promise; and, like Jeremiah, when the cords were let down to the pit by Ebed-melech, puts them under his arm-holes, and lays his weight upon them. The poor soul, in this case, says with David, speaking of the covenant of grace, This is all my salvation; here will I lay the weight of my sinking and perishing soul.

6. It is called a yielding ourselves unto the Lord, 2 Chronicles 30:8. Hezekiah, writing to the degenerate tribes, exhorts them to yield themselves unto the Lord; or, as it is in the Hebrew, Give the hand unto the Lord; alluding to men who have been at variance, when they come to an agreement, they strike hands one with another, in token of friendship. The great God, the offended Majesty of Heaven, comes, in a gospel dispensation, "stretching out his hand all the day long" to rebellious sinners, crying, Behold me, behold me: cast away your rebellious arms, and be at peace with me. Now, when a sinner believes, he, as it were, strikes hands with the Lord, according to that promise, Isaiah 27:5 : "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me."

7. It is called an opening of the heart to Christ, Song of Solomon 5:2; Revelation 3:20; Acts 16:14. This expression imports, that as the sinner's heart is by nature shut and bolted against the Lord; so, when he believes, the everlasting doors of the understanding, will, and affections, are "lifted up to the Lord of hosts, the Lord mighty in battle,." Psalms 24:7.

8. It is sometimes called a buying, Isaiah 55:1 : "Buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Revelation 3:18 : "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," &c. This buying does not imply such an exchange of value, as if we were to give to God an equivalent for his grace; for it is a buying "without money, and without price;" it is a giving of poverty for riches, emptiness for fulness, deformity for beauty, guilt for righteousness, pollution for holiness, bondage for liberty; in a word, buying in Christ's market is nothing else but taking: Revelation 22:17 : "Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely."

Many other expressions the Spirit of God makes use of in the word, to [represent] the nature of faith. Sometimes it is called, the substance of things hoped for, Hebrews 11:1; because faith, as it were, realizes and substantiates the promise. Just like a man, looking to bonds, charters, or any other securities; he will say, 'There is my substance, and all my stock,' though they be but bits of

paper. So the believer, when looking on Christ, his righteousness and fulness, as held forth in the free promise of the gospel, will be ready to say, 'There is my substance and everlasting all:' with David, he rejoiceth in God's word of promise, as one that findeth great spoil; yea, it is better to him than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Again; it is called, in the same verse, the evidence of things not seen. The word, in the original rendered evidence, signifies to convince to a demonstration. Faith, acting upon the promise, convinces the soul of the reality of things invisible, as if they were before him, and he saw them with his bodily eyes. And this sight of faith is not such a sight as Balaam got of Christ, when he said, "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh." He saw him by the spirit of prophecy, as the Redeemer of Israel; but not by the spirit of faith, as his Redeemer, as Job, Job 19:25. Balaam saw him, without any personal interest; but Job saw him as his own Redeemer, with appropriation: "I know," says he, "that my Redeemer liveth." Again; in the 13th verse of the same chapter, faith is called an embracing of the promises, Hebrews 11:13. The word in the original signifies a kindly salutation, or kissing; being an allusion to two dear friends, who, when they meet, clasp one another in their arms, in a most loving and affectionate manner. The grace of the promise embraces the soul, and then the soul embraces the promise, and hugs it and Christ in it, in his arms. The reverse of this is the case of the presumptuous hypocrite, who in some sort embraces the promise indeed; but the special grace of the promise not having embraced him, he is like a man taking a tree in his arms; he embraces the tree, but not the tree him.

Again, faith is sometimes called an "eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of man." John 6:53; because faith makes use of, and applies Christ for the life, nourishment, and sustenance of the soul; just as a man makes use of the meat and drink that it is set before him, for his bodily nourishment. Let a man have ever such a rich feast before him, yet he will inevitably starve, unless he walk over to it, and make use of it; so, without faith's application of Christ and his fulness, we inevitably die and perish. And O how sad to perish in the midst of plenty!

Lastly, Faith is called a "trusting in the name of the Lord," Isaiah 50:10, and Isaiah 26:3. We all know what it is to trust in a man of honesty and integrity. When he passes his word, we make no doubt, and have no hesitation concerning his performing what he has promised; so faith takes the promise, and trusts the veracity of the Promiser; as it is said of Abraham, Romans 4:20, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." The perfections of God, such as his power, holiness, goodness, but especially his veracity, are pawned in the promise, as grounds of trust. Hence we are to trust in his NAME: and when we trust in him, and stay ourselves upon him, we are still to take him up as our God in Christ; for we can never trust him, while we take him up as an enemy. The second thing proposed, for opening up the first general head in the method, was to give you some of the qualities of this arm of faith.

1. It is a leaning and a staying arm: Song of Solomon 8:5 : "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Isaiah 26:3 : "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." It is the office of faith to underprop the soul, when it is ready to be overwhelmed with the burden of sin and sorrow, darkness and desertion: Psalms 27:13 : "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the had of the living." It leans and stays itself on him who is "the Strength of Israel, even the man of God's right hand, whom he hath made strong for himself." And thus it bears up the soul under the heaviest pressures.

2. It is a winning and gaining arm. The apostle, Php 3:8-9, speaks of winning Christ and being found in him. And it is said of the wise merchant, that he went and sold all that he had, that he might buy or win the pearl of great price; and this pearl can be won no otherwise but by receiving it, John 1:12. Faith is such a winning grace, that it is ever taking, ever receiving out of Christ's fulness, grace for grace; it digs into the Rock of ages, and makes up the poor soul with unsearchable riches; it maintains a commerce with heaven, travels to the land afar off, and returns richly freighted and loaded with the commodities of that better country.

3. It is a very wide and capacious arm. It is not little that will fill the arm of faith: the whole world, and all the fulness thereof, cannot fill the arm of faith: no, no; it flings them away like dung, that it may get its arms filled with a God in Christ: "I count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Php 3:8. I may add, that heaven, and all the glories of Immanuel's land, bear no bulk in the arm of faith without Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells: Psalms 73:25 : "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

4. It is a most tenacious arm; its motto may be, HOLDFAST. As the arm of faith is wide, and takes in much; so it keeps, and holds fast what it gets: Song of Solomon 3:4 : "I held him," says the spouse, "and would not let him go." Faith is such a tenacious grace, that it will wrestle with an omnipotent God, and refuse to yield to him when he seems to shake himself loose of its gripes, as we see in the case of Jacob, Genesis 32:24, and downward. There Jacob gets a gripe by faith of the Angel of the covenant: the Angel says to him, "Let me go, Jacob." A very strange word, for the Creator to become a supplicant to his own creature! Well, what says Jacob's faith to this proposal? "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." As if he had said, 'Let the day break, and let it pass on, let the night come, and let the day break again; it is all one; lean Jacob and the living God shall not part without the blessing.' To this purpose is that of the prophet, Hosea 12:3-4 : "By his strength," namely, by the strength of faith in prayer, "he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him." O sirs! try to follow the example of Jacob, and you shall be "fed with the heritage of Jacob" your "father," Isaiah 58:14. Thus, I say, faith is a most gripping and tenacious arm. The first grip that faith takes of Christ is so fast, that it never lets go of him again through eternity: it unites the soul to Christ; and the union is so close and intimate through faith, that the man becomes one body and one spirit with him, and so indissoluble, as that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, shall ever be able to separate from the love of God in Christ Jesus."

5. Hence it follows, that faith is a very bold and confident arm. It has a great deal of assurance in it; for it will maintain its claim to Christ, upon the ground of the new covenant, even when hell and earth, sense and reason, and all seems to be against it; it will trust in the name of the Lord, and stand firm upon its God in covenant, even when the poor soul walks in the darkness of desertion, in the darkness of temptation, in the darkness of affliction, or even in the dark valley of the shadow of death. Abraham's faith had much opposition to grapple with, when he got the promise of Isaac, and in him of the promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; yet such was the confidence and assurance of his faith, that he staggered not at the promise. The language of faith is, "When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness," Micah 7:8-9. Yet I would not be here mistaken, as if the poor believer did not lay hold of Christ and the promise with a tottering and

trembling hand; nay, the believer, through the prevalence of unbelief, is many times brought so low, as to cry with the psalmist, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah." Psalms 77:7-9. But let it be remembered, that this was not his faith, but his infirmity, through prevailing unbelief, which made him thus to stagger: for, let faith but get rid of unbelief, let it get up its head, and allow it to speak its proper language, its dialect will be, Abba, Father, Romans 8:15; and, "Doubtless, thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting."

6. It is a very patient and waiting arm; for "he that believeth shall not make haste," Isaiah 28:16. Faith, although it firmly believes the accomplishment of the promise, yet it will not limit the Holy One of Israel as to the time of its accomplishment: "I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him," Isaiah 8:17. "The vision is for an appointed time; (and therefore, says faith,) though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry," Habakkuk 2:3. Faith will not draw rash or desperate conclusions, because the Lord hides or defers his visits: no; but it looks to God's word of promise, and grounds its confidence there, saying with the church, "I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me," Micah 7:7.

7. Faith is a feeding arm; it feeds upon the carcass of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" and thus, like Samson, gets its "meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong." Hence, as you heard, it is called an eating of the flesh and a drinking of the blood of Christ: and in this view Christ is presented to us in the sacrament of the supper, Take, eat; this is my body. There was a part of the sacrifices under the law reserved for food to the priests, when the rest was burnt upon the altar: believers are spiritual priests to God, and they live upon the altar, and that blessed "passover that was sacrificed for us."

8. It is not an idle, but a working arm. Indeed, in its justifying act it is not a working, but only a taking, or a resting arm: it is like the beggar's hand, that takes the alms, without working for it. In justification, faith is a passive or recipient kind of an instrument; but, in sanctification, it is an active or an efficient kind of instrument. It is such an active arm in sanctification, that it "purifies the heart," and actuates and animates all the other graces of the Spirit; it "works by love," it works by repentance, it works by hope, it works by patience, it works by obedience; and "faith without works is dead, as the body without the spirit is dead." In a word, the whole of gospel obedience, is "the obedience of faith;" and the obedience that flows not from faith is but "dead works," which cannot be acceptable to a "living God."

9. Faith is a fighting and warlike arm: In Hebrews 11:34, it is said of the worthies there, that they by faith, "waxed valiant in fight:" yea, it is not only a fighting, but a victorious arm; for it "puts to flight the armies of the aliens." It is by faith leaning on the Arm of Omnipotence, that the believer's bow abides in its strength, and the arms of his hands become strong, to break bows of steel in pieces. By faith we quench the fiery darts of hell, and trample upon the powers of darkness; by faith we overcome the world, and set the moon under our feet. Yes, this gallant grace of faith will take up the spoils of Christ's victory over sin and Satan, hell and death, and triumph in his triumphs, even while it is in the field of battle, and seemingly overcome by the enemy. "Thanks be unto God,

which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." My Head and General, says faith, has overcome, and I have already overcome in him; for "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us," Romans 8:37.

10. Lastly, Faith is a saving arm: "He that believeth shall be saved." There is an inseparable connexion established, by the ordination of Heaven, between faith and salvation, John 3:16 : "Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Although, indeed, there is no connexion of causality, yet there is an undoubted connexion of order. Faith cannot but carry salvation along with it, seeing it takes up Christ the salvation of God in its arms, as you see Simeon did. The third thing proposed here was, to inquire how this arm of faith embraces Christ? In general, I answer, it embraces him just as God offers him in the gospel. There is a manifest proportion betwixt God's offer, and faith's reception of Christ; which I shall illustrate in the four following particulars:—

1. Christ is freely offered in the gospel, Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 22:17; so faith embraces him as the free gift of God. There is a natural propensity in the heart of man, to give something or other of our own, by way of exchange or equivalent, for Christ, and the blessings of his purchase. Proud nature cannot think of being so much beholden to God, as to take Christ and salvation from him for nothing at all; and therefore it would always be bringing in this or the other qualification, as a price in its hand to fit it for Christ; I must be so penitent, so humble, so clean and holy before I come to Christ, and then I will be welcome, he will pardon and save me. But, sirs, whatever you may think of it, this is but a remnant of the old covenant of works, and all one as if a man should say, I must first heal myself before I go to the physician; I will first wash myself clean, before I go to the "fountain opened up for sin and for uncleanness." Beware of this, for it is a secret subverting of the order and method which God has established in the covenant of grace; this being the very money and price which he forbids us to bring to the market of free grace. Faith argues at another rate in its embracing of Christ: 'O!' says the poor soul, 'I am a diseased sinner from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head; and this qualifies me for the Physician of souls: I am a polluted sinner, black, like the Ethiopian, spotted like the leopard; and therefore I will go to the fountain: I am naked; and therefore I will take the white raiment offered me, to cover the shame of my nakedness: I am blind; and therefore I will take the eye-salve, which recovers sight to the blind.' Thus, I say, faith embraces Christ as he is freely offered.

2. Christ is fully and wholly offered in the gospel; and accordingly faith embraces him wholly without dividing him. I claim, indeed, that the first flight of faith is to Christ as a Saviour, Christ as priest, fulfilling the law, satisfying justice, and thereby bringing in everlasting righteousness; this being the only thing that can answer the present strait and necessity of the soul, under the awful anticipations of vindictive justice and wrath; and therefore thither it flees for refuge in the first act of believing. But now, although faith at first fixes upon Christ as a priest; yet at the same time it embraces him as a prophet, submitting to his instruction, and subjects itself to him as a king, receiving the law from his mouth: 'O!' says the soul, "'I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;" but this Saviour "has pity on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way." he opens the book, and looses the seven seals thereof;" and therefore I will sit down at his feet, and receive the whole revelation of the mind and will of God from him: I am a poor captive and vassel of hell; "Other lords have had dominion over me, but," now "I will make mention of his name:" he is "my Judge, my Lawgiver, and my King," even he that "saves me." Thus, I say,

the arm of faith embraces a whole Christ. 'There is nothing of Christ,' says the soul, 'that I can bear going without; I must have him all, and have him all as mine own, as my Prophet, my Priest, and my King. And herein the faith of the hypocrite, or temporary believer, comes short of the faith of God's elect. The hypocrite, halves Christ, or else inverts the order of his office, in his way of receiving him: either he receives him as a Saviour, only to keep him out of hell, but waives the acceptance of him as a King to rule him; or else he professedly subjects himself to Christ's authority as a King and a Lawgiver, hoping, upon that score, that Christ will save him, by his blood and righteousness, as a priest; and thus endeavours to make up the defects of his imperfect obedience; which is, upon the matter, to "put a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, whereby the rent is made worse."

3. God gives Christ cordially and affectionately in the gospel: his very heart, as it were, goes out after sinners, in the call and offer of it. It is not possible to conceive any thing more affectionate, than the word in which he calls to sinners: Ezekiel 33:11 : "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!" Hosea 11:8 : "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together." Isaiah 55:1-3 : "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Now, I say, as God offers Christ most affectionately and cordially, in like manner does faith embrace him. He embraces a whole Christ, with the whole heart and soul; the love, joy, delight, and complacency of the soul, overflows upon him as their very centre of rest: and these affections, like so many springs of gospel obedience, set all the members of the body at work in his service; so that the head will study for him, the hand work for him, the feet run his errands, and the tongue be ready to plead his cause.

4. Christ is offered particularly, to every man. There is not a soul hearing me, but, in God's name, I offer Christ to him, as if called by name and surname. Now, as the offer is particular to every individual person, so faith embraces Christ with particular application to the soul itself. When I embrace a Saviour, I do not embrace for salvation to another man; no, but I embrace him as my Saviour, for salvation to my own soul in particular. Beware, my friends, of a general, non-specific faith, abjured in our National Covenant as a branch of Popery. A general persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, and of Christ's ability and willingness to save all that come to him, will not do the business; no, devils and reprobates may, and do actually believe it. There must therefore of necessity be a persuasion and belief of this, with particular application thereof to a man's own soul; for if the mercy of God in Christ be offered to every man in particular, then surely faith, which, as I was saying, is but the echo of the soul to the gospel call, must embrace Christ, and the mercy of God in him, with particular application to itself, otherwise it does not answer God's offer; consequently, cannot be of a saving nature. So much for the first general head proposed in the prosecution of the doctrine.

II. The second thing proposed was, to take notice of some of these songs, which readily the soul has in its mouth, when, like Simeon, it gets Christ embraced in the arms of faith. We are said to be "filled with all joy and peace in believing;" by faith in an unseen Christ, the soul is replenished with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. And when this is the soul's case, it cannot but bless God, as Simeon did, and express its heart in these or the like songs of praise.

1. It cannot but bless him for electing and everlasting love. Faith's embraces of Christ help the soul to trace the streams of divine love to their fountain head, and to read its own name in the book of life, among the living in Jerusalem. 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that ever I, wretched I, miserable I, should have been upon God's heart before the foundations of the world were laid: "Glory to God in the highest," who hath "drawn me with loving-kindness," by which I know that he "hath loved me with an everlasting love."' "

2. The soul, in such a case, cannot but bless God for Christ, and redeeming love through him, saying with the apostle, "Thanks be unto him for his unspeakable gift." Glory to him in the highest, that "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." And then when the soul views the glorious retinue of blessings that come along with Christ, it cannot shun to join issue with the apostle in his triumphant doxology, Ephesians 1:2, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." And there are these few, among innumerable blessings, that come along with Christ, for which the soul will readily bless God, in the case mentioned.

1st, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ he is become my God, even my own God. I was once without God in the world; but O what a happy turn is this! Now I can view him in Christ, and say, "He is my God, my Father, and the Rock of my salvation; the portion of my cup: and therefore the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.' "

2dly, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ the fiery tribunal is turned into a mercy-seat by his obedience and death. The law and justice having got a complete satisfaction, a way is made for the empire of sovereign grace: so that now "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord," Romans 5:21. And as it is the will of God that grace should reign, so it is the desire of my soul, to make this name of his to be remembered to all generations. O let grace wear the crown, and sway the sceptre for ever; and let all the hallelujahs of the higher house be "to the praise of the glory of his grace.' "

3dly, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ he has "blotted out all mine iniquities, as a cloud, and as a thick cloud." There was a cloud of sin pregnant with wrath hovering above my head; but in Christ I see it scattered: "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. And therefore, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.' "

4thly, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ I am blessed with an everlasting and law-abiding righteousness. Christ, my ever-blessed Surety, was made under the law, and has magnified it, and made it honourable; and the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; and in him, and through him, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in me: and, therefore, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of

salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels," Isaiah 61:10.

5thly, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ he is become a Father of the fatherless, and blessed me with the blessing of adoption and sonship. I may seal it, from my experience, that "in him the fatherless findeth mercy." I was like an outcast infant and helpless orphan, but the everlasting Father took me up, and "gave a place and a name in his house, and within his walls, better than of sons and of daughters, even an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon me, that I should be called a son of God,"' 1 John 3:1.

6thly, 'O glory to God,' will the soul say, 'for the open door of "access into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." The door was once barred against me and all Adam's posterity, by the breach of the first covenant; but in Christ it is again opened, so that we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." An Incarnate Deity is now become the way to God and glory.'

I might tell you of many other blessings that the soul is ready to bless God for, when it gets Christ in the arms of faith; but I will not dwell on this. I conclude this head by referring you to two or three Scriptural songs which will readily occur in such a case. The first you have, 1 Peter 1:3-4 : "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," &c. Another you have, Romans 8:33, to the end of the chapter: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" &c. A third you have, 1 Corinthians 15:55-56 : "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" &c. Another, with which I conclude this head, is that which concludes the Bible, Revelation 22:20 : "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

III. The third thing proposed was, to inquire whence it is that faith's embraces of Christ thus fill the mouth with praise?

Answ. 1. This flows from the certainty that is in faith. Faith is not a doubting grace; no, doubts and jealousies vanish before it, as the clouds and darkness of the night vanish at the appearance of the sun. And the certainty of faith flows from the stability of these foundations upon which it is built, which are more firm than the pillars of heaven, and the foundations of the earth. It builds upon the word of God, the oath of God, the blood of God, the righteousness of God, the power of God, the veracity of God: and seeing it builds upon such immoveable foundations, how can it miss to have a certainty in it proportioned, in some measure, to the grounds upon which it stands? And hence it comes, that it fills the mouth with praise. Let news be ever so good, yet if we have no certainty in our belief of them, it exceedingly mars our joy and comfort. But as regards the glad tidings of the gospel, they are no whispering uncertain reports; no, it is God, that cannot lie, who speaks: and thence comes the certainty of faith.

2. This flows from the applying and appropriating nature of faith; which I hinted at already. Let news be ever so true, though ever so great and good, yet if we have no interest or concern in them, it mars the sweetness and comfort of them. Tell a poor man of mountains of gold and silver, what relief will that afford him, if he has no access to it, or interest in it? But tell him, that all these

treasures are his, and that he has the owner's warrant and command to take and use them as his own, this will make him rejoice indeed. Tell a hungry and starving man of a rich feast or banquet; what is that to him, if he be not allowed to taste it? Tell a naked man, exposed to the injuries of the wind and weather, of fine robes and excellent garments; what will it avail him, if they be not for him, or for his use? But tell the hungry man that the feast is for him; and the naked man that the clothing is for him, this will create joy and triumph. So, here, the gospel report does not tell us of a Saviour and salvation that we have no interest in; no, it tells us, that to us is the word of this salvation sent; that unto us is this child born, unto us is this son given: that he is "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" and that, as the great Trustee of Heaven, he "received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also." Now, faith, accordingly, applies all these good news, this Saviour. and his whole salvation, to itself in particular. And hence it comes, that it fills the heart with joy, and the tongue with praise.

3. This flows from that perceptible assurance of God's love, and of grace and salvation, which commonly follows upon believing; according to what you have, Ephesians 1:13 : "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." There is a certainty of sense, which very frequently accompanies or follows upon the certainty of faith, as a natural fruit of it; and yet is not of the nature and essence of it, because there may be true faith where there is not this perception or reflex assurance of grace and salvation. The certainty of faith is built upon the word of God, the record of and the promise of God, which is a believing because God hath spoken: Psalms 60:6-7, compared. God had made a promise of the kingdom to David, "God hath spoken in his holiness," says he, "I will rejoice;" and, in the faith of this word of promise, he speaks with such certainty, as if he were already in possession, "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine," &c. But now the certainty of sense is a knowing that we have believed, or the soul's reflecting upon its own act of believing. The certainty of faith is like the certainty that a man has of his money in a good and sufficient bond, or the certainty that a man has of his estate, by a good and sufficient charter; he rests upon his bonds and charters as good securities to him. But the certainty of sense is like the certainty that a man has of his money, when he is handling it with his fingers, or taking in his rents. By the certainty of faith, Abraham believed, without staggering, because he had God's word of promise for it; but by the certainty of sense, he knew it, when he saw Sarah delivered of his son Isaac, and got him in his arms. Now, I say, faith commonly produces this sensible assurance, sweet and reviving experiences of the Lord's love to our souls: and hence it comes, that it fills the mouth with praise.

IV. The fourth thing was, the application of the doctrine. And the first use shall be of information. This doctrine informs us,

1. Of the excellency of the grace of faith. It cannot but be an excellent grace, because it embraces precious Christ. Hence it is, that God puts such an estimate upon it, that he cares for nothing we do, if that be lacking: "Without faith it is impossible to please God: Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." Suppose it were possible for a man to attain such a pitch of morality, as to be, touching the law, blameless; yet all his obedience, moral and religious, stands for a zero in God's reckoning; yea, is like the cutting off a dog's neck, and the offering of swine's blood upon God's altar, if faith be lacking. Thus, then, I say, faith is an excellent grace, of absolute necessity in order to our acceptance before God. Only let it be here carefully remembered, that it is not the act of faith, but its glorious and ever-blessed object, Jesus Christ, whom it embraces that renders us acceptable to

God. In point of acceptance, faith renounces its own actings, and looks for acceptance only "in the Beloved:" it "rejoiceth in Christ Jesus" only, and has "no confidence in the flesh."

2. See from this doctrine what a happy and privileged person the believer is. He gets Christ the Lamb of God in the embraces of his soul! And O what can the most enlarged heart or soul of man wish for more! This was the one thing that David desired, Psalms 27:4. We read of one in the gospel that said to Christ, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked;" to which Christ answered, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it," Luke 11:27-28. And who are they that hear the word of God and keep it, but believers, who have him "formed in their hearts," and clasped in the arms of faith? For he that thus hath the Son, hath life. And, concerning such, I may say, as Moses said concerning Israel, Deuteronomy 33:29 : "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord!" Notice the expression, they are a people already saved, they have everlasting life. That day that Christ comes into the heart, the salvation of God comes, as it is said to Zaecheus, "This day is salvation come to thy house."

3. See, from this doctrine, the true way of joy and comfort. Perhaps there may be some poor soul going mourning without the sun, saying, "Oh that I were as in months past." Once in a day I thought I could say, "The candle of the Lord shined upon my head;" but, alas! the scene is now altered; "the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me:" how shall I recover my previous joy in the Lord? Well, here is the way to it; go forth out of yourselves, by a direct act of faith; take Christ anew, in the embraces of your souls, upon the free call and offer of the gospel; and, with Simeon, you shall be made to bless God. It is the wreck of the comfort of the generality of God's people, in our day, that they continue poring within themselves, upon their emotional states, their graces, their experiences, their attainments, without going forth, by faith, to the fulness of a Redeemer for relief. And while we do so, we are just like mariners at sea: while they sail among shallow waters, near the shore, they are always afraid of striking upon rocks, or running upon sands; because they lack deepness of water; but when they launch forth into the main ocean, they are delivered of these fears, being carried far above rocks and sands: so while the believer continues among the shallow waters of his graces, duties, experiences, and attainments, he cannot miss to be harassed with continual fears, because the waters of divine grace are but ebb, while we stay there; but when by faith we launch out into that full ocean of grace that is in Christ, then fears, doubts, and perplexities vanish; the soul is carried up above all these, being strong; not in the created grace that is in itself, but "in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead." So then, I say, if you would surmount your fears, and recover your joy and comfort in the Lord, study to "live by faith upon the Son of God;" for we are "filled with joy and peace in believing."

4. From this doctrine we may gather what a lightsome place heaven will be, where the soul shall live in Christ's embraces for ever. If the believer's heart be so refreshed when he gets Christ embraced by faith, what overpowering floods of joy must flow upon his soul, when he comes to immediate fruition, where no clouds shall ever impede the rays of the Sun of righteousness from him, through an endless eternity! No wonder, though sometimes the believer break forth into such longing expressions, when he thinks of immediate enjoyment, as that of Paul: "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."

Use 2d, may be of trial. Sirs, you have been in the temple this day; I would ask, Have you seen the Lord's Messiah there? Have you got him, like Simeon, in the arms and embraces of faith? O! say you, how shall I know if I ever had him in my arms! For answer, take these following things as marks:—

1. If ever you have embraced Christ, Christ has embraced you first; for there is a mutual embracing betwixt Christ and the believer, and it begins on Christ's side; he first lays hold of the soul by his Spirit, before the soul lays hold of him by faith: Php 3:12 : "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." 'O!' will the soul say, 'I was wandering, like a lost sheep, among the mountains of vanity; I had gone into a far country, with the prodigal, and never had a thought of Christ, till he, by his sovereign grace, seized and drew me with the cords of victorious love and grace, and then my heart grasped and apprehended him.' Never a soul yet came really to believe in Christ, but will be ready to own, that it was not free will, but free grace that began the work: "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him."

2. If ever you had Christ really in the embraces of faith, you have been made to quit the embraces of other lovers: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Particularly, have you been made to part with the law as a husband? Romans 7:4 : "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to a better husband, even to him who is raised from the dead." O sirs! it is a harder business than many are aware of, to make a divorce between a sinner and the law, so as to make him renounce all hopes of salvation and righteousness from that quarter. It is much easier to pull his lusts out of his arms, than to pull the law, as a husband, out of his embraces. And the reason of this is plain, because the law gives a promise of life to them that obey it, "He that doth these things, shall live in them;" which sin and lust cannot do, in regard they carry the stamp of hell and wrath visibly upon them, to the eye of a natural conscience. So that it is much easier to convince a man that his sin is an evil thing, than to convince him that his righteousness is so: hence Christ tells the Pharisees, those self-righteous wretches, "that publicans and harlots should enter into the kingdom of God before them." Publicans and harlots, and such sort of persons, lie more open to the sharp arrows of conviction, than self-righteous persons, who make, as it were, a barricade of the law itself, and their obedience to it, behind which they lie, entrenched and fortified, against all the curses and threatenings of the law that are denounced against them; they still take the law for a friend, while they obey it as well as they can, never dreaming that nothing will satisfy the law, but an obedience that is every way complete. But now, I say, if ever you have embraced Christ, you have been made to part with the law as a covenant, and with your own righteousness by the law, as "filthy rags," saying with Paul, "I through the law am dead to the law." At the same time that the soul quits the embraces of the law as a husband, it parts with "other lovers" also. The first view of Christ by faith, makes all the twinkling stars of created enjoyments to vanish and disappear; so that the soul joins issue with David, Psalms 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

3. If ever Christ was in the embrace of thy soul, thou mayest know it by the desirable concomitants and effects thereof. I shall not stand upon them; only, in so many words. Your estimate of Christ will be raised; for "unto you which believe he is precious." Your love to him will be inflamed; for "faith worketh by love." Your joy and peace will be increased; for "believing, we rejoice with joy

unspeakable, and full of glory." Heart-holiness will be promoted; for "faith purifieth the heart." And, in a word, your souls will make their boast in him; for "in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

Use 3d, shall be of exhortation to all in general. Sirs, before we part this evening, I would fain have every soul hearing me, going home with the great Messiah, the Son of God, in the arms and embraces of their souls; and then I am sure you would go away, blessing God that ever you come here. We must deal with you as reasonable creatures, and persuade you in a moral way: and when we are so doing, look up to God for the concurring efficacy of his Holy Spirit, whose prerogative it is to persuade and enable you to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel. And therefore, by way of motive, consider,

1. The absolute need you have of this Christ, whom we offer to you. Without him you are "condemned already;" without him you are "without God in the world;" God is angry with you every day; the law and justice of God, like the avenger of blood, is pursuing you. And therefore, O sinners, flee to a Saviour, "Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope."

2. Consider the matchless excellency of that Saviour whom we call you to embrace. Angels and men are at an everlasting stand to speak of his worth and glory; he is best known by his own and his Father's testimony concerning him; and if you would know the record of God concerning him, search the scriptures, for these are they that testify of him: it is in this glass that "we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." I despair, that ever a sinner will embrace Christ, till there be an up-taking of his personal excellency, as Immanuel God-man. There is a seeing of the Son, which, in order of nature, although not in order of time, goes before the soul's believing in him, John 6:40.

3. Consider the ability and sufficiency of this Saviour whom we call you to embrace. Take the Father's testimony of his ability, Psalms 89:20 : "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." Take his own testimony, Isaiah 63:1 : "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Take the Spirit's testimony, in the mouth of the apostle Paul, Hebrews 7:25; declaring him "able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him." Thus, you have the "three that bear record in heaven," attesting the sufficiency of this Saviour. O, then, "set to your seal, that God is true, by believing the record that God gives of his Son;" for if you do not, your unbelief gives the lie to a whole Trinity, 1 John 5:10-11.

4. Consider that this sufficient Saviour is the sent of God. This is a designation given to Christ thirty or forty times in the gospel according to John, and the ordinary argument with which Christ persuades sinners to embrace and receive him. And nothing could have greater influence than this designation, if the weight of it were but duly weighed. O consider in what quality and capacity his Father has sent him: shall not God's Ambassador-extraordinary get a hearing among a company of condemned rebels? He is sent as a Redeemer to liberate captives; and shall not captives embrace him? He is sent as a Surety; and will not debtors and bankrupts embrace a surety? He is sent as a Physician; and will not the wounded and diseased sinner embrace him, and his healing balm? &c.

5. Consider, that his heart and his arms are open and ready to embrace all that are willing to be embraced by him. O, may the soul say, fain would I embrace him, but I doubt of his willingness to

embrace me. I tell you good news; he is more willing to embrace you by far, than you are to be embraced by him. He says he is willing and you may believe his word, for he is, "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness;" and he says, that he will cast out none that come to him: he swears he is willing, and will you not believe his oath? Ezekiel 33:11 : "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." Pray tell me, why did he engage from eternity, and voluntarily give his hand to the Father in the council of peace, saying, "Lo, I come —I delight to do thy will, O my God?" Why did he assume the nature of man, and the sinless infirmities of it? Why did he who is the great Lawgiver, subject himself to his own Law? Why did he who is the Lord of life and glory, submit to the stroke of death ignominiously upon a cross? Why does he send out his ministers to you, with call upon call? Why does he wait all the day long, saying, "Behold me, behold me?" Why does he confront you on this matter? Why is he grieved at the obstinacy of your hearts, if he be not willing that you should embrace him? For the Lord's sake, therefore, consider these things, and do not "reject the counsel of God against yourselves."

6. Consider what a glorious succession and retinue of blessings come along with him, when he is embraced in the arms of faith: such as pardon of sin; Hebrews 8:12; peace with God, Romans 5:1; a complete justifying righteousness, Romans 8:3-4; adoption and sonship, John 1:12; sanctification, both in the root and fruit of it, 1 Corinthians 1:30; saving knowledge of God, and the mysteries of his covenant, 2 Corinthians 4:6; the crown of eternal glory at last, John 3:16. All these might be particularly enlarged on; but I will not continue further, but rather proceed to remove some objections that some may make against complying with this exhortation.

Object. 1. Some poor soul may be ready to Say, 'Gladly would I embrace Christ, with my very soul; but still I entertain a suspicion of my right and warrant to meddle with the unspeakable gift of God; he is such a great God, that I am afraid it would be but presumption in me to attempt the embracing of him.' Now, for removing any suspicions of this nature, I shall lay before you a few of these warrants, upon which a lost sinner may receive and embrace this Saviour.

1. Let desperate and absolute necessity be your warrant. You must either do or die; there is no medium: "He that believeth, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Do not halt to dispute the matter; there is no time, no, not one moment of time, in which a man is allowed to toss this question in his breast, after the revelation of Christ to him in the gospel; Shall I believe, or shall I not? Or, if you will dispute the matter, will you argue as the Samaritan lepers did: "If we sit still here, we perish; but if we go into the camp of the Assyrians, peradventure we shall live." So you, 'If we sit still in this sinful and miserable condition, without God, and without Christ in the world, we unavoidably perish; but if we throw ourselves into the arms of a Redeemer, and upon the mercy of God in him, beyond peradventure we shall be saved.' And therefore, I say, let absolute necessity be your warrant.

2. Venture to embrace this Saviour in the arms of faith, upon the warrant of the very design of his Incarnation. Why is there a Saviour provided? Why was he manifested in the flesh? Upon what errand was he sent into the world, but "to seek and save that which was lost?" Well, since this is the very design of God in giving a Saviour, that sinners might be saved by him; what can be more agreeable to him, or his Father that sent him, than that a lost sinner should embrace and receive him?

3. Let the revelation of this incarnate Deity, in the glorious gospel, be your warrant to embrace and receive him: a simple exhibition of a Saviour, without any more, is enough to induce a sinner to believe in him. Why was the brazen serpent in the wilderness lifted up on the pole, but that every one in the camp of Israel, who were stung with the fiery serpents, might look to it, and be healed? The very lifting up of the brazen serpent was a sufficient warrant to any man to look to it: so the Son of man, being lifted up on the pole of the everlasting gospel, warrants every man to believe in him, John 3:14-15.

4. Besides the revelation of Christ, you have a full, free, and unhampered offer of him in the external call of the gospel; and this directed to every one, without exception, Isaiah 55:1-3; Revelation 22:17; Mark 16:15; Proverbs 8:4. Sirs, we offer a Christ to you, and the whole fulness of grace and glory, merit and Spirit, that is in him, as the free gift of God, without the money and price of your own works and qualifications; if you bring any such price, to make a purchase of the pearl of great price, you shall lose him for ever: God loves to give his Christ freely, but he scorns to receive any thing for him. Let this then be your warrant, that Christ is gifted and offered of God in this gospel: and let it be remembered, that in the matter of a gift, there is no difference between man and man; the poorest, as well as the richest, may receive a gift presented to him: a condemned malefactor has as good a right to receive a gift presented to him by the king, as the greatest favourite in the court; his being a guilty criminal is no prejudice at all to his receiving a gift; yea, his being so qualifies him for receiving the pardon. So, here, Christ's being the gift of God, freely offered and presented, warrants the sinner to receive him, without respect to any qualifications but of that of his being a sinner. Hunger is the best disposing qualification for meat, nakedness fits a man for clothing, &c. And that Christ seeks no other qualifications is evident from his counsel to Laodicea, Revelation 3:17-18 : "Thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayst see."

5. You have not only an offer of Christ, but an express command requiring you to embrace him, for your warrant: 1 John 3:23 : "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Sirs, it is not a thing left optional to you, to embrace Christ or not, as you please; no, you are concluded under a law, fenced with the severest penalty; "he that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." The unbelieving sinner counteracts the authority of Heaven; and thus rushes upon "God's neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler." You have no reason to doubt but that the command of believing is to you; for if you were not commanded to believe, your unbelief could not be your sin: "Where no law is, there is no transgression." You do not doubt, but you are commanded by the word of God, to read, hear, pray, sanctify the Sabbath, and to perform the other duties of the moral law; and because they are commanded, you aim at obedience. Now, believing is as peremptorily enjoined, yea rather more than any other, duty, inasmuch as the successful and acceptable performance of all other duties depends upon it. And, therefore, do not stand disputing your warrant, against the express authority of Heaven.

6. Besides the command of God, you have a promise of welcome to encourage you in believing: John 6:37 : "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." John 3:16 : "Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." But, say you, these promises may be to others, and

not to me. I answer, The promise is endorsed to you, directed to you, in the external call and dispensation of the gospel, Acts 2:39. There the apostle is preaching to a company of men, whose hands had lately been dipped in the blood of the Son of God. He calls them to faith and repentance. By what argument does he enforce the exhortation? Why, he tells them, "The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off; even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Where, it is plain, the promise is extended, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles, who at that time were afar off; and then indefinitely both to Jew and gentile, to whom the call of the gospel should reach; the external call, which is only here intended, howsoever the Spirit of the Lord did internally concur, being the alone foundation upon which the promise is to be received, and not the internal call of one person, which can never be a warrant of believing to another. And, therefore as the apostle said to them, so say I to you, in the name of God The promise is unto you, I mean, the promise of welcome; Whosoever of you believeth, shall not perish. This promise is not made to believers exclusively of others, but to every one that hears this gospel; for if so, we could call none to believe but such as have believed, which is most absurd. Well, then, let God's promise warrant you to believe in Christ; and if you do not think this sufficient, take his promise of welcome, ratified with his oath, Ezekiel 33:11: these being the "two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie."

7. Let the indefinite and absolute nature of the covenant of grace be your warrant for embracing the Lord Jesus. The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is conceived in the form of a blank bond or testamentary deed, where there is room left to every man to fill up his name, by the band of faith. The strain and tenor of it is, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: I will sprinkle clean water upon them: I will put my Spirit within them: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness: I will subdue their iniquities." Where, you see, the grant runs in an indefinite way; no man's name mentioned, neither any by name excluded. Why, what is the design of this, but that every man may be encouraged to subscribe his name, or to make application thereof to his own soul, in a way of believing, by which we are said to take hold of God's covenant? O sirs! The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, (for now I abstract from his secret purposes, which are not at all the measure or rule of faith,) is just like a rope cast in among a company of drowning men; he that throws it in, cries to every one of them to take hold of the rope, promising to draw them safe to shore: so, God, in the gospel-dispensation, proposes his covenant to every one as a ground of faith, assuring them, that whosoever takes hold of the covenant, and receives his Christ, whom he hath "given for a covenant of the people,—shall not perish, but have everlasting life." For the Lord's sake, do not put this rope of salvation away from you, under a pretence that you know not if it be designed for you. Would you not reckon it ridiculous madness in any of these drowning men now mentioned, to fall to disputing whether the rope were cast in to them, when they are at the very point of sinking to the bottom? Would not every one of them grab hold of it, with the utmost strength and vigour, without putting any question? Now, this is the very case, O sinner; thou art going down to the pit of eternal misery; God, by his ministers, cries to you to take hold of this rope of salvation: O then? "see that you refuse not him that speaketh from heaven;" do not dispute yourselves away from your own mercy.

8. Let the welcome that others have met with in coming to Christ be your encouragement to venture also. Never any really came to him but they met with a kindly reception. Ask the prodigal

son, ask Mary Magdalene, Paul, and others, what reception they met with from this Saviour; they will be ready to tell you, that they obtained mercy. Now, the same mercy that saved them, is as ready to save you. You do not doubt that Moses, David, Peter, Paul, and other saints who are now in glory, had sufficient warrant to believe. Sirs, you have the same grounds of faith as ever they had, the same God, the same Saviour, the same Bible, the same covenant, the same promises, the same faithfulness, of God to lean on, as ever they had; and these grounds of faith are so firm, that they never disappointed any that leaned on them: and therefore be encouraged to believe, as they did. O how will it for ever gall and torment unbelieving sinners in hell when they see others, who believed upon the same grounds that were common to them also, sitting down in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves shut up in utter darkness, with devils and damned spirits, because of their unbelief. And how will the devil himself upbraid unbelievers in hell, when fallen under the same condemnation with himself, that they had such fair warrants to believe in Christ, which he never had!

Object. 2. 'You tell me embrace Christ; but, alas he is far away out of my reach: Christ is in heaven, how shall I win him?'

Ans. Seeing you cannot come up to Christ, Christ is come down to you; and we bring him near to you, in "this word of salvation which we preach:" Isaiah 46:12-13 : "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry." And therefore, "say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead;) for the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach," Romans 10:6-8 : Sirs, Christ is in this gospel, this word of faith and grace, which we, in the name of God deliver to you: and your faith must be undeviatingly fixed upon this word, otherwise you can never embrace him. As I believe or trust a man by his verbal or written promise; so I embrace Christ by the word of faith, or promises in the gospel. Suppose a responsible man residing in America, should send me his cheque for any sum of money, that man and his money are brought near to me by his cheque and security which he sends me: so here, though Christ be in heaven, and we upon earth, yet the word of faith, which we preach, brings him, his kingdom, righteousness, salvation, and whole fulness, nigh to every one of us, so that we need not ascend into heaven, or descend into hell, in quest of him.

Object. 3. 'My arms have been so defiled with the embraces of other lovers, that I am afraid Christ will never allow me to embrace him.' For answer, I only refer you to Jeremiah 3:1 : "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." 'But,' say you, 'my sins are highly aggravated.' Ans. Isaiah 1:18 : "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Object. 4. 'You tell me embrace him; but, alas! I lack an arm; I have no power to embrace him.'

Answ. If thou hast a will to embrace him, the great difficulty is over for there lies the principal stop: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Where God gives to will, he gives also to do of his own good pleasure. You say, you lack the arm to embrace him; then do as the man with the withered hand did, attempt to "stretch it forth," in obedience to the command of Christ. Believing is a thing we must be essaying, even before we can find the Spirit of God working it in us effectually.

We cannot pray, we cannot sanctify the Sabbath, we cannot think a good thought, till the Spirit of God work it in us; and yet we do not forbear these duties because we have no power to do them; so, although we have no power to believe, yet we should be trying to believe. That way that the Spirit of God works faith in the souls of the elect, is, by making them sensible of their own inability, that they may turn the work over upon his own hand, who "worketh all our works in us, and for us."

Object. 5. 'Let me aim at believing as much as I will, I shall never be able to effect it, if I be not among God's elect; for it is only they that are "ordained to eternal life," that "do believe."

Ans. This is an ordinary sophism of the grand enemy of salvation, by which he discourages sinners from believing in the Lord Jesus: and the fallacy or weakness of it will easily appear, by applying the objection to the ordinary business of human life. When meat is set before you, do you decline to take or use it, for this reason, that you do not know whether God has ordained it for you? Do you not say, Meat is for the use of man, and this meat is set before me, and therefore I will take it. You do not say, I will not plough or sow my ground, because I know not if ever God has decreed that it shall bring forth; or, I will not go home to my house, because I know not if ever God has decreed I should come the length. You would reckon a man mad, or beside himself, who would argue in this manner, in affairs of this nature. Why, the case is the very same: as the secret decrees of Heaven lie quite out of the road in the management of the affairs of this life; so neither are they at all to be the measure or rule of our actings in the great concerns of eternity: "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children." And the ground of your condemnation at the great day will not be, because you were not elected, but because you would not believe. The reprobate Jews were cut off, "because of their unbelief," Romans 11:7 and Romans 11:20. I shall only add, that as you cannot know that the meat set before you is yours, in possession, till you take it: so neither can you ever know that Christ was ordained for you, till you take him into your possession by faith. And therefore, you must believe in Christ, before you know your election; otherwise you shall never know it, and shall never believe either. So much by way of exhortation.

I shall conclude this discourse with a short word to two sorts of persons.

First, To you who, like Simeon, have got him in the embraces of your souls, and who perhaps can say, to your sweet experience, with the spouse, "I have found him whom my soul loveth." All I say to you, shall be comprised in these two or three words;

1. O bless God, as Simeon did, for such a privilege; "let the high praises of God be in your mouths." I told you already, of several songs you have ground and reason to sing, which I shall not stand to resume. Only, to engage you to bless him, consider, that this is all the tribute he expects from you. Who will ever bless him, if not the "people that he has formed for himself?" Consider again, that this is the way to have blessings multiplied upon you; the thankful beggar is best served at the door both of God and man. The trumpeter loves to sound where there is an echo, which brings back the sound to his ears; so God loves to bestow his blessings, where he hears of them again in songs of praise and gratitude. Praise is the work of heaven, through a long eternity: now, they who are bound to that land afar off, should be lisping out the language of the land before they reach there.

2. Have you got Christ in the arms of your souls? O then make good use of your golden season: and while you are allowed to ride with the King, in the chariot of the wood of Lebanon, gain spiritual profit from your interest with him, both for yourselves and others; particularly, entreat him, that he would revive his own work, which is under such a sad decay in our land at this day; study to "bring him into your mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived you."

3. Have you got him in your arms? Then follow the spouse's practice, Song of Solomon 3:4: "I held him, and would not let him go." O keep him in the embraces of your souls; his presence dispels clouds, and turns the shadows of death into the morning; it is like oil to the chariot-wheels of the soul: light, life, liberty, peace, pardon, and plenty, are his continual attendants. And, remember, that his departure is of a very dangerous consequence. It is true, his real presence shall never depart; but yet his quickening, strengthening, and upholding presence may be withdrawn to such a degree, that you may go "mourning without the sun:" and if, through untenderness, you provoke him to withdraw, the quarrel may be pursued even to the gates of hell; so that you may be made to cry out, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me," Job 6:4.

And, in order to your keeping him in the embraces of your souls,

1st, Beware of every thing that may provoke him to withdraw; particularly beware of security, which made him to withdraw from the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:2, and Song of Solomon 5:6, compared. Beware of pride; for "God resisteth the proud," and "beholds them afar off." Beware of worldly-mindedness: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him," Isaiah 57:17. Beware of unbelief, that root of bitterness, which causes to "depart from the living God." Distrust and "jealousy is the rage of a man;" much more is it provoking to God. Under the law, God appointed porters to keep watch at the door of the temple, that nothing might be allowed to enter, which might defile the dwelling-place of his name; thy soul and body, believer, is the temple of God; therefore guard against every thing that may defile the same.

2dly, If you would hold Christ in the embraces of your souls, keep grace in lively exercise; for these are the spikenard and spices that send out a fragrant smell for his reception. Keep the arm of faith continually about him; let the fire of divine love burn continually upon the altar of thy heart; let the anchor of hope be fixed within the veil; let the fountain of evangelical repentance be still running; and under your greatest attainments be humble, and take care to set the crown upon Christ's head, saying, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory." The second sort of persons I would speak a little to, are those who, perhaps, are complaining of hidings and withdrawals, and are perhaps saying, I came to the temple to see if I could get Christ in my arms, but I am disappointed; yea, matters are come that length with me, that I am ready to "raze foundations," and to conclude that I am an utter stranger to him. All I have to offer to you, shall be comprised in these two or three things, with which I conclude.

1. Allow me to ask, If there be not a void and emptiness in thy heart which the whole creation cannot fill, till Christ himself come and fill it? Are not ordinances, ministers, word, and sacrament, empty without him, like dry breasts? That says, thou art not altogether a stranger to him. And, therefore, do not entertain harsh thoughts of thyself; thy case is not at all unprecedented. What think ye of David, Psalms 13; of Asaph, Psalms 77; of Heman, Psalms 88; yea, of Christ himself, who, through the withdrawing of his Father's love, was made to utter that heart-rending cry, "My

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

2. Know, for thy comfort, that thy hiding Lord will return again: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Psalms 30:4-5 : Isaiah 54:7-8. The very breathings and longings of thy soul after him, are a pledge of his return; for "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

3. When you cannot get Christ himself embraced, study to embrace his word of promise, as the Old Testament saints did, Hebrews 11:13. As a loving wife will lay the letters of her absent husband in her breast, and perhaps kiss his hand-writmg; so lay the sweet promises of thy best husband in thy bosom, and between thy breasts, until he himself return.

4. Lastly, Maintain your claim to him on the ground of the covenant, when you cannot maintain it upon a ground of sense; as a wife will maintain her relation to her husband, though he be both angry and absent. The Lord loves to have his people pleading kindness, and maintaining their claim upon the marriage contract of the new covenant, when they "walk in darkness, and see no light," Isaiah 1:10 : and such a carriage as this, commonly lands in a happy meeting betwixt Christ and the souls of his people; for after believing, comes sealing.

S. God In Christ, A God Of Love

God In Christ, A God Of Love by Ebenezer Erskine "God is love." 1 John 4:16 My friends, the gospel is called good news, and a joyful sound; and I do not know what better news could be brought into a company of sinners of Adam's family, who are lying under the sentence of death, and condemned from heaven, and under the awful apprehensions of the wrath and vengeance of the great God, than to tell you that God is love. And I am sure, that, if this report of a God in Christ were but received and entertained in a way of believing, it would make every one of this assembly join issue with the angels at the birth of Christ, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will towards men." God is love. This is not to be understood of God essentially, but manifestatively, in the manifestation that he has made of himself in Christ: he is love, or love is the swaying attribute of his nature.

We are this day called to celebrate a love-feast: I have therefore chosen to discourse a little at this time on that attribute and perfection of the divine nature, which is most signally and remarkably displayed in this ordinance, which is the very same with that by which God is described in the words of my text, God is love.

It is a great question which you have in your Shorter Catechism, What is God? It perplexes and bewilders men and angels everlastingly, to tell what he is. "Who can by searching find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Who is capable to tell the first letter of his glorious and ever blessed name? The highest seraphim in heaven cannot form an adequate conception of him, and, therefore, is not capable to give a full description of him: it is only some of the back parts of his glory that are seen or known by created beings. I remember to have heard of a certain philosopher, who, being asked what God is, desired time to answer it; when that time was come, desired a longer; and when that was come, desired yet a longer; and so on: and being asked the reason why he protracted the time, and deferred his answer, he replied, That the more he thought on God, the more he was swallowed up, and at a loss how to describe him. And so will it be with every finite understanding, that thinks to find him out to perfection: it is only God himself who can resolve the question, and tell what he is. And I remember of a three-fold answer that the Spirit of God gives to this question in scripture, What is God? One you have, John 4:24 : God is a Spirit; a second you have, 1 John 1:5: God is light; a third you have in the words of my text, God is love. The first two tell what God is in himself, but this tells us what God is to us.

If the question were asked, What is God, to a guilty sinner that has violated his law, trampled upon his authority, and lifted up rebellious arms against his Sovereign? One would think that the answer would be, God is a God of fury, God is wrath, God is hatred, God is vengeance: but, to the eternal surprise of men and angels, the very reverse! The answer is, God is love. The text, you see, is short, but, Oh! It is concentrated, marvellously full: it is but one simple proposition. Where notice, (1.) The subject of the proposition, God, whose name commands reverence and adoration among men and angels. I conceive that God is not spoken of personally here, but essentially, as having a respect to all the persons of the adorable Trinity, who are one in essence, will, and operation; so

that the meaning is, the Father is love, the Son is love, and the Holy Ghost is love. (2.) We have the predicate of the proposition, or the thing asserted concerning him, he is love. There is a height and a depth in this expression, which surpasses our comprehension: and we cannot give a just commentary upon it; for we do but darken counsel by words without knowledge, when we speak of God. All I shall say of it, by way of explication, is only to tell you, that God is one simple and uncompounded Being, and the divine, attributes and perfections are all one in him: his wisdom is nothing else but the infinitely wise God; his power is nothing else but the omnipotent or almighty God; his holiness is nothing else but the infinitely holy God; his justice is the just and righteous God; so here love denotes the loving God, or a God of love. I shall only notice farther, that God here, in this description he gives of himself, is presented to our view, not in the law, but in the gospel-revelation of himself. When God is viewed by a guilty sinner in the law revelation, his justice and wrath immediately appear ready to take vengeance on the workers of iniquity; hence, the holiest of the saints of God, when they view him in this glass, cannot fail to fall a trembling: "I remembered God," says the holy man, Psalms 67:3, "and was troubled." But when God is viewed in the gospel revelation, or as he is in Christ, not imputing their trespasses to them, then grace, and love, and good-will present themselves to the sinner's view. And in this view God is to be considered in this description we have of him, God is love. From the words thus briefly opened, the observation I offer is this: —

DOCT. "That God manifesting himself in Christ is a God of love."

Now, in prosecuting this doctrine, I shall endeavour, I. To premise two or three things for clearing the way.

II. Prove that God in Christ is a God of love.

III. Offer you a view of the love of God in Christ.

IV. Inquire whence it is that God in Christ should be a God of love. And, V. Apply the whole.

I. The first thing is, to premise two or three things for clearing this doctrine.

1. Know, that the goodness, sweetness, and pleasantness of God's nature is the foundation of his love; he has a majestic disposition of communicating of himself to others, and from thence flows his love to mankind. Hence it is, that when God had a mind to make known his love to Moses, he tells him, that he would make all his goodness to pass before him; and, accordingly, he proclaims himself to be, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." And with this view, I think our divines, in the 4th question of the Shorter Catechism, speak neither of the love, mercy, nor grace of God, but wrap them up in that general of goodness, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, and truth.

2. I premise, that love is the ruling or prevailing attribute of the divine nature, if I may so speak. So much seems to be pointed at in the expression of the text, God is love. I do not find any other attribute of the divine nature so expressed in the scripture; we do not find it is said, God is mercy, God is justice, God is holiness, God is power, or God is wisdom: no; the expression in this attribute has something peculiar in it, God is love. And I conceive it plainly bears this much, that love is, as it were, the majestic or commanding attribute of the divine nature, insomuch that every other attribute receives a dye and tincture of love from it: there is a strain of love runs through every one

of them, and it is as it were the spring that sets all on work. What but love sets wisdom on work to ingeniously devise our redemption? What but love actuates infinite power to execute that plan? What but love sets sympathetic feelings of mercy rolling towards the miserable sinner? Thus, I say, love is the first wheel as it were that sets all the other wheels a going.

3. The gift of Christ to a lost world is the most signal and glorious display of the love of God that ever heaven or earth heard tell of: hence is that of the apostle, in the 10th verse of this chapter where my text lies, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us," but how was this love manifested? "He sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." To the same purpose is that which you have, John 3:16 : "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The love of God to sinners lay hid, as it were, under a veil of wrath and justice, till Christ appeared, undertaking to satisfy justice, and to bear the wrath of his Father in our stead; then, indeed, the kindness and love of God to man appeared, working itself out in a most glorious and triumphant manner, insomuch that, in and through Christ, grace and love "reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." But this leads to,

II. The second thing in the method, which was, to make it a little more evident, that God in Christ is a God of love. This will be abundantly clear, if we consider these few things:—

1. God in Christ is a reconciled God, a God of peace, that has received the atonement: 2 Corinthians 5:19 : "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Romans 5:10. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." He both finds the ransom, and accepts of the ransom that he has found; and having accepted of the ransom, of the Surety, he proclaims himself to be "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, sirs! Does not this say that God is love? What greater evidence of it could God give, than to provide a ransom, and to receive it, than to cry, "Deliver them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom?"

2. God in Christ is a promising God and does not this say that he is a God of love? God abstractly considered is a threatening God, a revenging God; but in Christ, a promising God; and we find, 2 Corinthians 1:20, that "all the promises of God are in Christ, and in him yea and amen." Whenever you meet with any promise in the Bible, of grace or of glory, of peace or of pardon, or be what it will, you should still take it up as a promise of a God in Christ: Christ having fulfilled the condition of the promise of eternal life, by his obedience and death, the promises are given out to us, through him, as the immediate ground and foundation of our faith, with an intimation and advertisement, "The promise is unto you, and to your seed, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Sirs, if any man should present to you a bond, bill, or security, for a vast sum of money, which would enrich you for all your days, you would look upon it as a great and indisputable evidence of his love to you. Well, this is the very case between God and you; through Christ, he is a promising God; he comes in a gospel dispensation, saying, "I will put my Spirit within you; I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," &c. These promises are presented to you as the ground of your faith; and that very moment you take hold of them in a way of believing, you come to be possessed of them, and all the benefits of his purchase, according to that, Isaiah 55:3 : "Hear, and your soul shall live;" it is the hearing of faith that is intended; "and I will make" or establish "an

everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Oh, sirs! does not this say that God is love?

3. God in Christ is a God sitting upon a throne of grace: and does not this say, that God is love? God has a threefold throne, —a throne of glory, a throne of justice, and a throne of grace. The first of these, his throne of glory, is so bright, that it dazzles the eyes of angels, and they cover their faces with their wings when they approach it. The second, namely, his throne of justice, is clothed with red vengeance; and it is so terrible, that the most holy saints tremble when they behold it, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? In thy sight shall no man living be justified." And because we were not able to stand here, he has erected another throne, namely, a throne of grace, from whence he issues out acts of grace and mercy to guilty sinners; and so soon as he is seen sitting upon his throne, he is taken up as a God of love; and upon this the poor sinner, that was trembling at the thoughts of being cited before the throne of justice, flees for his life to the throne of grace, saying with the apostle, Hebrews 4:16 : "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

4. God in Christ is a God matching with us, and betrothing us unto himself in loving kindness; and does not this say, that he is a God of love? There is a twofold match that the great and infinite J EHOVAH has made with Adam's family. (1.) He espouses with our nature by a personal union in the person of his eternal Son: he marries our nature; and thus he becomes akin to the whole family of Adam, an honour that the angelic family was never dignified with; for "he takes not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Oh, sirs! What shall I tell you? Strange and surprising news indeed, "God is manifested in the flesh!" The great God becomes related to us in Christ; for he is clothed with our nature; he is become "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh;" and what is the language of this, but that of the angels at his birth, "glad tidings of great joy, good will and peace towards men upon earth?" (2.) Another espousal he makes with us, is, by taking us actually under the bond of a marriage relation. The espousal is proposed to all in the call and offer of the gospel: but you know the bare proposal of marriage does not make marriage, till once the consent of the bride be obtained; and the moment the soul gives its assent and consent to the proposal made in the gospel, he betroths that soul to himself in loving kindness and in mercy, in righteousness and in judgment; and the Lord rejoices over that soul, as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, saying to it, "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name," Isaiah 54:5. And, oh, sirs! Does not this say that God is love? Because the distance between him and us was too great, (abstractly considered,) therefore, he first comes on a level with us, by taking on our nature, that so the inequality of the persons might be no barrier: he becomes our husband, and we his spouse and bride.

5. God in Christ is a God with us, on our side, our friend, and takes part with us against all evil or danger: and does not this say, that God is love, as he is in Christ? Oh, sirs! God out of Christ is a God against us: hence, he is said to be "angry with the wicked every day;" he "whets his glittering sword, and his hand takes hold on judgment," to render vengeance to every transgressor of his holy law. But God in Christ is not a God against us, but a God with us, or a God for us; the name Immanuel imports, God with us. And every one that takes a God in Christ for their God, may say, upon warrantable grounds, with the church, Psalms 46:7 : "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." And they may say it upon a covenant ground, for God in Christ has said, Isaiah 43:2 : "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers,

they shall not overflow thee. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

6. God in Christ is a pardoning God: and does not this declare him to be a God of love? "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," &c.

7. God in Christ is a pitying God; he pities Christless and unbelieving sinners, and is loath at his very heart to give up with them: Hosea 11:8 : "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." And how great is his pity to the soul that believes in him! His pity to them is like the pity of a father to his son: Psalms 103:13 : "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." It is like the pity of a fond mother to a sucking child: Is. 69:15: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that he should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

8. God in Christ is a God of infinite bounty and liberality, and a prayer-hearing God; (I cast things together, that I may not be tiresome.) Oh, sirs! his heart is free, and his hand is full and open; open-hearted, open-handed: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Such is his bounty and liberality, that it is nothing but ask and have with him: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," Matthew 7:7. When we have asked great things of him, he chides us, as if we had asked nothing: he does not deal with a miserly or a sparing hand: no, no: "Ask, and ye shall receive," says he, "that your joy may be full." Yes, such is his bounty, that he is ready to do for us exceeding abundantly above what we can either ask or think; such is his bounty, that he presents us with the blessings of his goodness: his goodness and mercy are like the rain or dew, that does not wait for the sons of men: Isaiah 65:24 : "And it shall come to pass, that, before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

9. God in Christ is an urging God, an entreating God, to sinners: and does not this say, that he is a God of love? He invites us to come to him for all needful grace: Isaiah 55:1: "Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." He is an entreating God in Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:20: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." He complains of the backwardness of sinners to come to him: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." He complains to them on this account: "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me." He waits for an answer; he will not take a repulse. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." And he stands knocking till his locks are wet. Oh! Does not all this say that God in Christ is love?

10. To crown all, God in Christ is our God. He makes a grant of himself in the covenant as such; "I will be their God:" and he allows us to claim him by faith as our God, upon this very grant he makes of himself to us in Christ, Zechariah 13:9 : "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." And, oh! happy that soul that is enabled to give faith's echo to this covenant grant, and say, "This God is my God for ever and ever; and he will be my Guide even unto death." In a word, God in Christ is our Father; for it is only a God in Christ that says, "I will be unto them a Father, and they shall be unto me sons and daughters." He has taught us to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." And he is displeased with us, when we are shy withthrough unbelief, to call

him by this endearing title: Jeremiah 3:4 : "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, and not turn away from me?" Oh! What but infinite feelings of sympathy and love could speak in such a style and dialect? Now, from all this I think the truth of the doctrine is abundantly evident, that God in Christ is a God of love.

III. The third thing in the method was, to offer you some views of the love of this God in Christ. And there is only a threefold view of it that I shall present you with. 1. View it in the kinds of it. 2. View it in the dimensions of it. 3. In its qualities.

First, I say, let us view the love of a God of love, in the different kinds of it.

1. Then, He has a love of benevolence, or good-will, which he bears towards men, particularly towards the whole visible church. The lifting up of the brazen serpent in the camp of Israel, that whosoever looked to it might be healed, was a clear evidence of his good-will to the whole camp: so the manifestation of Christ in the nature of man, and the revelation of him in the gospel, is an evidence of the good-will he bears to the salvation of all, John 3:15-16. He declares it on his word, that he is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" and, lest his word should not be believed, he has confirmed it with his oath, Ezekiel 33:11 : "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

2. He has a love, not only of benevolence, but of beneficence; he not only wishes you well but does well unto you. Oh, sirs! Many a good turn has he done you, particularly you who are members of the visible church; he gives you line upon line, precept upon precept; he makes you to hear the joyful sound, the voice of the turtle: many a minister has he sent you; many an offer of Christ, and of life through him, has he made to you; many a time has he knocked at thy door, by word, by conscience, and the motions and whispers of his Spirit; so that he may say to us, as he did of his vineyard, Isaiah 5:4 : "What could have been done more for them, that I have not done?" And because of your obstinacy in unbelief and sin, he may challenge you as he did Israel, and say, Micah 6:3 : "O, my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me. Was I ever a barren wilderness, or a land of darkness?" Thus, I say, God's love of benevolence and beneficence is, in some respects, extended to all.

3. There is a love of complacency, or delight and satisfaction, which is peculiar only to believers; who, because of the excellency of his loving kindness, do put their trust under the shadow of his wings. Oh, believer, the Lord loves thee, a God of love loves thee, not only with a love of benevolence and beneficence, as he does others, in some respects, but he loves thee with a complacent love, as so to take pleasure in thee: "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." He loves thee with a love of estimation: he puts such a high value and estimate upon thee, that thou art precious in the sight of the Lord, thou art his treasure, and his peculiar treasure: "The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." He loves thee with a love of union; he desires thy company, and to hear thy voice, and to see thy countenance: Song of Solomon 2:14 : "O, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." He loves thee with an ecstatic love: his love overflows into a kind of rapture and ecstasy, Song of Solomon 4:9, twice with one breath he cries out, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain

of thy neck." No where is the word used in scripture but here; "Thou hast ravished my heart." New words are, as it were, coined to express the inexpressible love, that a God in Christ bears towards his people. The word signifies, thou hast UNHEARTED ME: it is an allusion to that which is a weakness in us, when our affections run so much out to any particular object, as to become heartless of any thing else. Some render the words, "Thou hast wounded or pierced my heart, Oh, my sister," &c. The love of God runs so deep, that he was content, in the person of his eternal Son, to be "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities."

Now, the complacent love of God to his people is variously expressed in scripture. As,

1st, His love is said to be a pastoral love, or the love a shepherd has to his flock: Isaiah 40:11 : "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd," &c.

2dly, His love is a friendly love: "Ye are my friends," says he, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." And, like a true friend, he communicates his mind to them, John 15:15 : "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom; but to others it is not given."

3dly, His complacency in them sometimes overflows into a conjugal love: Isaiah 54:5 : "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name," &c.

4thly, Sometimes it runs out into a paternal love: "I will be to them a Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." But why do I stand on this? In one word, his love is the love of a God; his love cannot be expressed by any similitude, for God is love; he is as it were all one flame of love to the believer. Love is in him in its perfection, and perfect love casts out hatred: his heart is just the very centre of love; and whatsoever sparks of love are to be found in any of our hearts, they are all kindled at this fire. As all the waters that are in the rivers come originally from the sea, and return back to it again; so any drop of love that is to be found in any of our hearts, is just an emanation of his love, returning back again into its proper centre, from whence it came. And thus much for the different kinds of his love.

Secondly, Let us view the love of God in its dimensions. Among corporeal beings there are only three dimensions reckoned; but the apostle, speaking of the love of God in Christ, admits of a fourth, Ephesians 3:17-18. He there speaks of the height, the depth, the breadth, and length, of the love of God, which passes knowledge.

1. It is so high, that the height of it can never be reached; no, not by the most soaring angel or seraphim in heaven. We find that the Spirit of God, when he would express his love, runs above the height of the highest heavens to borrow a similitude for the illustration of it, comparing it to the love which the Father bears the Son, John 15:9 : "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Oh! who can tell how the Father loves the Son! There is more here than all the angels in heaven are capable either to conceive or express; yet such is the love of a God of love to believers.

2. He speaks not only of a height, but a depth in this love. The heart of man is a great depth, that none knows it, but he that knows all things; and if the heart of man be such a great depth, what must the heart of God be? Yet this love is rooted in the very heart of God; so much is implied in the

very expression of the text, God is love. His love is a heart of love. He loves with the whole heart, and with the whole soul. So deep is his love, that it descended, as it were, to the depth to help and relieve us; it descended unto the depth of hell, in the dying agonies of the Son of God, to bring us up from the depth of misery and distress into which we had plunged ourselves.

3. This love of a God of love has also a breadth with it, which can never be measured. So broad is this love, that in the word of grace, and external dispensation of the gospel, it reaches forth its arms to embrace a lost world: John 3:10 : "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." So broad is it, that it takes in Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; it takes in those that lived before the law, those that lived under the law, those that live under the gospel. Oh, sirs! the love of God is broad; his heart is wide and capacious: you need not fear as if there were no room for you: no, no, for all the innumerable multitude that his love has grasped, there is yet room for you, room for me, and room for all the world that come to him through Christ.

4. The apostle yet adds another dimension to this love, and that is, the length of it; and, in short, it is as long as eternity. Look back to an eternity past, and we shall find, that his love, like himself, never had a beginning: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." And let us look forward to an eternity to come, and we shall find that his love shall never have an end; for it is "from everlasting to everlasting;" he rests in his love, and changes not: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." Thus, you see its dimensions.

Thirdly, Let us take a view of the love of a God of love in its qualities and properties.

1. His love is a free love: Hosea 14:4 : "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." This love is free in its first fountain, viewing it, I mean, as it lies in the heart of God. What made him to set his love upon any of Adam's posterity, and to choose them from eternity? The cause of it is not to be found in the creature, but in himself; only his own sovereign will and grace is the cause of it; for he "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," Ephesians 1:5 : "He hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," 2 Timothy 1:9. And then, again, this love is free, not only in its first fountain, but free in the offer, revelation, and manifestation of it in the word: and the love of God, as it is in the word of grace, is a common love, common to all the hearers of the gospel, in regard it comes to every man's door, and offers itself to him: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come. Whosoever will, let him come," &c. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man." And then it is a free love, in regard of the application of it to the elect soul in the day of power; the love of God is manifested in the word of grace taken by the Holy Ghost, and shed abroad upon the sinner's heart, and that without regard to any good qualification or work of righteousness in us. In a word, this love of a God of love is free, in opposition to merit. That which conciliates love among men, is either beauty, strength, wisdom, riches, or some such qualification or inducement: but no such thing is to be found in any of Adam's posterity: "When thou wast in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live; and thy time was a time of love." Instead of beauty, nothing but deformity; instead of strength, nothing but weakness; instead of riches, nothing but poverty. And as it is free in opposition to merit, so it is free in opposition to any constraint or force. Love is a thing that cannot

be forced; no, it is voluntary, and of its own accord. God's love is only owing to the freedom of his own will, Ephesians 1:9.

2. The love of this God of love is a strong and invincible love. Before his love could reach us in the application of it, it had mountains to level: but, "behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills." There were deep seas and floods in the way of his love, but "many waters could not quench it, neither were all floods able to drown it:" it runs through every difficulty, it encounters every impediment in its way. The infinite distance between God and a creature, was a bar in the way of this love: but he conquers this impediment; for "God is manifested in the flesh." The moral distance between a filthy guilty sinner is an impediment in the way of this love: but he breaks this bar also; for the Son of God is not only manifested in the flesh, but "made in the likeness of sinful flesh, yea, made sin for us." The curse of the law was a bar in the way: but this bar he breaks; for Christ was "made a curse for us, that we might be redeemed from the curse of the law." Sin in its guilt, and filth, and power, lay in the way of his love: but love breaks through this, and "finishes transgression, and makes an end of sin." Ignominy and disgrace lay in its way, grief and sorrow: but this love conquers that: for he was content, out of love, to become "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." And then, when this love comes to the sinner, in order to conversion, it finds him dead, dead in trespasses and sins: the man has perhaps laid twenty, thirty, forty, or sixty years in the grave of sin, so that, lo, he stinks: Oh, what an object he is! He is an object of loathing instead of love: but yet this love of a God of love conquers this impediment also: for, "when we were dead in sins, for the great love wherewith he loved us, he quickened us." And then, after this love has actually grasped the soul in effectual calling, how many provocations gets it by the whoredoms of heart and life-departing from the Lord? And yet, such is the invincible nature of this love, that it overcomes all, and abides firm to the end; hence, says the apostle, Romans 8:35, Romans 8:37, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." It is because his love is invincible, that we are more than conquerors through him that loved us; because his love is strong as death, therefore, death shall not separate; because it is deep as hell, therefore, neither hell nor devils shall be able to make a separation.

3. The love of this God of love, is an incomparable, yea, a superlative love. Let us but view here how much a God in Christ loves them who "trust under the shadow of his wings, because of the excellency of his loving kindness." (1.) He loves them more than he loves all other men: Isaiah 43:3-4 : "I will give men for thee, and people for thy life." (2.) He loves believers more than he loves angels. Angels are his servants, believers are his sons; angels are his subjects, believers are his bride. (3.) He loves them more than he loves the whole world. The world consists of heaven and earth. As for the earth, he did not value that, for the love he had to his people: when the devil proffered him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, he contemned them all, out of love he had to his people. As for heaven, he left the glory of the higher house, to dwell with men upon earth. Yea, I shall add, (4.) The love of an incarnate Deity is greater to his people than to himself. He loved their life and safety more than his own; for he laid down his life for his friends, that they might not die: he prayed more for them than he did for himself, as you may see, John 17:1-26, throughout. In a word, out of love he bore to us, he parted with those things that are reckoned most valuable among men. Men make a great account of their good name; but, out of

love to us, he became a reproach of men. Men make a great account of their riches; but "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." Men make a great account of their life; "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life;" but Christ parted with this, " He loved me, and gave himself for me." Men do or should make a great account of their souls; and yet, out of love to us, he made his soul an offering, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Men, I mean holy men, saints, make a greater account of the love of God than of their life, "Thy love is better than life," says David; and yet Christ was content to lose the sense of that for awhile, out of love to us; and it was withdrawn from him, to that degree, that he cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Thus much for a view of the love of a God of love.

IV. The fourth thing in the method was, to inquire whence it is that, in Christ, God should be a God of love to lost, and undone, and rebellious sinners? Whence comes this strange alteration, that a God of vengeance, who was ready to destroy all Adam's posterity because of sin, should lay aside his garments of vengeance, and appear to us as a God of grace and love?

Answ. 1. An offended and angry God is a God of love to us in Christ, because in him justice is satisfied; a ransom of infinite value is paid in the Redeemer's blood. The justice of God stood as an eternal bar, in the way of the manifestation of love to any of Adam's race; but no sooner did justice get a perfect satisfaction in the death of the Surety, but love expresses itself with infinite delight and satisfaction, and God proclaims himself, as in Exodus 34:6 : "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

2. In Christ the law is fulfilled; its command is obeyed, and its curse is abolished. The violation of the holy law, by the first sin of Adam, was the thing that incensed the Majesty of heaven against us; but now Christ repairs the honour of the divine law, yea, he "magnifies it and makes it honourable:" and hence it is, that in Christ God is a God of love: for he is "well-pleased for his righteousness' sake."

3. In Christ God is a God of love, because in him that arch-traitor against Heaven is condemned and destroyed. No sooner did sin enter into the world, but Heaven cried out for vengeance upon it and the sinner. Now, Christ undertakes to "finish transgression and make an end of sin," Daniel 9:24; and, accordingly, for this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, to take away the sin of the world: he "condemned sin in the flesh," Romans 8:4. And hence it is, that God is a God of love to sinners.

4. In Christ, the holiness of God is vindicated, and his sovereignty is maintained, and all his other attributes, which were affronted by the sin of man, are, as it were, illustrated and set in a pure light. Never were the perfections of God so gloriously manifested as they are in Christ; he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." There is a constellation of all the divine attributes in him, which were obscured by the sin of man. And hence it is, that God in him is a God of love.

5. Because in him, and by him, the image of God in man, which was defaced by the fall, is again restored. This we lost in the first Adam; but it is again restored in Christ, the second Adam; for, through him we are "renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created us." But I do not stay farther upon this head. I proceed now to, V. The fifth thing in the method, which was the application of the whole.

Use first of the doctrine shall be of information, in the few following particulars. Is it so, that in and through Christ God is a God of love?

1. See, hence, how much we owe to Christ; for it is owing to his incarnation, obedience, and death, that ever God manifested himself to any of Adam's posterity as a God of love. The love of God to us runs through the channel of blood, that so it might reach us in a consistency with the honour of justice; for love could never take place, to the hurt or prejudice of justice; but in him, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace kiss each other." Oh, then! How much does it concern us to celebrate the praises of our Redeemer Christ Jesus, and to cry, "To him that loved us, be glory and praise!" and "Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever!"

2. See, hence, the excellency of the gospel, and what a glorious privilege it is, to live under the dispensations thereof. Why, what is the gospel? It is just the revelation of the love of God in Christ, or of God as a God of love and grace in Christ; and may we not cry out with the psalmist, Psalms 89:15 : "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound?" What more joyful sound can come to the ears of a company of traitors, rebels, condemned sinners, than that the God against whom they have sinned, is a God of love, a reconciled God, not imputing their trespasses unto them? Oh, sirs! Prize the gospel, and study to take up God according to the gospel-revelation of him; for "it is life eternal to know him," and his Son Jesus Christ, as he is set forth in the gospel.

3. See, hence, what an unreasonable thing the enmity of the heart against God is, whether reigning enmity in the wicked, or remaining in the saints. "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" and much of this remains in the hearts of believers themselves, while in an imbodyed state, as is plain in the case of the apostle, who groaned under it, saying "Wretched man that I am! I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." But, oh, sirs! Let us see what a ridiculous and what an unjust thing it is. Oh! to have enmity against love! Strange, indeed! What a monstrous thing would you reckon it in a person, lying in the utmost misery, to entertain malice or enmity in his heart, against one whose passionate sympathies are yearning towards him, and offering to relieve him with the most tender compassion! Yet this is the very case between God and us. He shows himself to be a God of love, yea, love itself: he offers his salvation to us, and to bring us out of the horrible pit and miry clay of sin and misery; to heal our wounds, to cure our diseases, and to save us with an everlasting salvation: and, yet, to entertain enmity against this God of love, oh! How unjust and unreasonable is it! May not God say to us on this account, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?"

4. See, hence, what way the natural enmity of the heart and obstinacy of the will, are mastered and conquered in a day of conversion: why, it is just by a revelation of God in Christ to the sinner, as a God of love. The Spirit of the Lord comes in a day of power, and he shines into the heart with the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and with this light of the knowledge, there is an emanation of love from a God of love, which conquers, and captivates and carries down the power of enmity: hence, he is said to "draw with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love." And when this natural enmity begins to gather strength again, in the soul of the believer, and comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up the banner of love against it, by a new manifestation of the love of God in Christ: thus this Jordan is driven back.

5. See, hence, whence it is that those who know God in Christ, so much breathe after communion and fellowship with him; whence it is that they put such a value upon these trysting places where

they often enjoy him: why, they know him to be a God of love; and, therefore, one day in his courts, is "better than a thousand." O! says David, "how amiable are thy tabernacles! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" He knew him to be a God of love: and this made his company so sweet and desirable to him: "O! taste and see that God is good. -How excellent is his loving kindness!" It "is better than life."

6. See, hence, how it comes that there is no fellowship between God and a godless sinner: God does not delight in their company, and they do not delight in his company: why, the matter lies here, God is love, and the sinner is "enmity against God;" and what fellowship can there be between things that are so opposite to one another? "What fellowship hath light with darkness? what concord between Christ and Belial," between heaven and hell? Oh, sirs! beware of venturing to come to the table of a God of love, with enmity in your hearts against him; lest he say to you, as he did to Judas, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" You cannot give a deeper wound to the heart of a God of love, than to come with enmity to his feast of love: hence it is, that unworthy communicants are said to "eat and drink judgment to themselves," and to be "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

7. See whence an evil heart of unbelief causes us to depart from the living God: why, the plain reason is, unbelief, like the spies that were sent up to Canaan, brings up an evil report of a God of love; it represents him as a God of hatred, wrath, or anger; it says that there is no love or kindness in his heart; that God hath "forgotten to be gracious;" that "he has in anger shut up his tender mercy;" it will not believe the report of the gospel, that God is a God of love; it entertains jealousies of his grace, love, and faithfulness: and, hence it is, that it turns us away from him. So long as we, through unbelief, view God as an enemy, we cannot miss to turn away from him; for it is but natural for any man to turn away from an enemy, or to fly his company or presence, as Adam did.

8. See, hence, how it is by faith we draw near to God. As unbelief turns us away from him; so it is by faith we come to him, and have access to his presence: why, faith believes the gospel report of a God in Christ; that he is a God of love, a reconciled God, a God sitting upon a throne of grace, a God matching with our nature, making proposals of marriage to us; a God with us, a pardoning God, a pitying God, a prayer-hearing God, a liberal God; yea, it takes him up as our God in Christ, saying, "My God, my Father, and the Rock of my salvation." Now, I say, this is the view in which faith presents God to the soul; and this makes the soul to follow hard after God, and the desire of the soul to be to him, and the remembrance of his name.

9. See, from this doctrine, whence it is that God's commandments are not grievous, why his yoke is easy, and his burden is light: why, the believer sees them to be the commandments of love; and love sweetens every thing, and makes every thing easy and pleasant. The love that Jacob had to Rachel, made his seven years' service to appear but a few days: so here it is love that commands, and love obeys; and this makes obedience sweet and easy: and it is the lack of due uptakings of God as a God of love, and of his commandments as the commandments of love, that makes them intolerable and burdensome to the wicked and ungodly. Why do they "break his bands, and cast away his cords from them?" Why, they have no consideration of God as a God of love; they take him up as an enemy, and, therefore, any obedience they give him is but slavish.

10. See from this doctrine, what a lightsome and heartsome dwelling-place the believer has: why, he dwells in God; God is his dwelling-place: "He dwells in the secret place of the Most High, and

abides under the shadow of the Almighty:" and that is in the midst of love; for God is love, "and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." Oh what a lightsome dwelling is the bosom of infinite love! and "he carries his lambs in his bosom." Perhaps, believer, you "sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar, thy soul dwells with them that hate peace." But here is thy comfort; thou dwellest in love, dwellest in God, who is love; thou liest in his bosom: and this may bear up thy spirits: for though in the world thou mayst be hated, and have tribulation, yet in him thou hast peace.

11. See from this doctrine the difference between the law and the gospel why, the law presents God as an absolute God, in which respect he is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity: he is a revenging God: but the gospel presents God to our view as a God of love and grace, with whom compassions flow towards miserable sinners. Indeed, we that are ministers of the gospel are bound to preach the law, to stand upon Mount Sinai and Ebal, and to proclaim the curses of the broken covenant of works against Christless sinners: but when we do so, our design is just to scare you from the law as a covenant, to lead you off from "the mount that burns with fire," from "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," that you may fly to mount Zion, and to the blood of sprinkling, and in him to God, the Judge of all, that through his atoning blood you may find him to be a God of love.

Use second of this doctrine, is by way of exhortation.

1. Is it so that God is love? Is God in Christ a God of love? Oh! then, sirs, believe the report of the gospel: Oh! receive it as "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance," that God in Christ is love: and do not receive it upon my testimony, but receive it upon the testimony or the record of the "three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit:" a Trinity of persons is witnessing and declaring to you, that God is love; and, therefore, "set to your seal that God is true" of what he says of himself; and, sirs, remember, that if you do not, you make God a liar, because you "receive not the record that God has given of himself."

2. My exhortation is, not only to believe this truth concerning God, but, Oh! Eat it, (as Jeremiah did) and let it be "the joy and rejoicing of your heart." Eat it, say you; what is that? how can we eat it? I answer, The way to eat it, is to apply and bring it home to your own souls. Oh, sirs, there is much food for faith in this little word, God is love. Oh! may faith say, is God love? Then surely he will make me welcome to his table: he is a God of infinite bounty and liberality in Christ, and he will give that which is good; a God of love will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from his people.

3. Is God in Christ a God of love? yea, love itself? Oh! then, put your trust in him. This is the use the Spirit of God would have you to make of this doctrine, Psalms 36:7 : (a sweet and remarkable word,) "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." Oh, sinners! The wings of a God of love are spread out to you, and his heart is calling after you in this glorious gospel; and his hand is stretched out to you in this gospel, saying, "Behold me, behold me." Oh! do not run away from him as an enemy, but trust him as a friend that bears good-will towards you. What is it, O man, that a God of love in Christ is not ready to grant to thee? Dost thou lack garments to cover the shame of thy nakedness? A God of love is ready to grant thee this. Perhaps thou hast some thoughts of coming to a communion-table; but thou art afraid lest thou be found naked in his presence, and the Master of the feast say unto

thee, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" Is this thy case? O put your trust in a God of love through Christ, and he will clothe you with "the garments of salvation, and with the robes of righteousness." Dost thou lack a pardon for sin? art thou a broken bankrupt, that owes thousands of talents to the law and justice of God? Art thou crying, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me?" Well, a God of love is a pardoning God: and therefore trust him for the pardon of thy sins; for he says, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Oh, may you say, I am a poor captive, I am in chains, under the fetters of captivity to my spiritual enemies; the bonds of iniquity are wreathed about my soul. Well, a God of love proclaims "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" and, therefore, O trust him, and he will make thee to share of the glorious liberty of his own children; he will make thy chains and fetters to fall off from thee. Art thou a black and ugly sinner, by lying among the pots, black like the Ethiopian, spotted like the leopard? Well, put thy trust under the wings of a God of love; for he says, "though thou hast lien among the pots, I will make thee as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. -I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." Art thou a diseased sinner, full of bruises and putrefying sores! Well, put thy trust in a God of love in Christ: for his name is JEHOVAH ROPHI, "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Art thou a poor wandering bewildered sinner, that hast lost thy way to heaven, and hast gone astray like a lost sheep? Well, come, put your trust in a God of love: for he has "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;" a God of love in Christ has said, that he will "lead the blind," &c., and that he will make "the wayfaring man, though a fool, to walk without erring." Art thou a treacherous dealer, that hast "gone a whoring after other lovers," prostrated thyself to every vile lust? Well, come yet and put thy trust under the wings of a God of love; for his voice unto you is, Jeremiah 3:1, "Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me." He is crying from the top of the high places this day, "Return, O backsliding Israel; for I am married unto thee. For I will heal thy backslidings, and love thee freely, and receive thee graciously." So, then, I say, whoever thou art, or whatever thou art, I invite and call you to trust under the wings of a God of love, because of the excellency of his loving kindness. And for motives, consider,

1st, That you cannot do a God of love a greater pleasure. Would you please God today, or oblige his very heart? Well, trust him as a God of love; for "he taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy," or that trust in him as a God of love.

2dly, Would you be fed, yea, feasted, this day, at a communion-table, with the fatness of God's house, with fat things full of marrow? Oh! then, here is the way to it; put your trust in a God of love, come in under his wings: Psalms 37:3 : "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." You see you have not only his promise, that you shall be fed, but his promise supported and ratified by a strong asseveration, Verily, thou shalt be fed. Would you be fed with the blessings of heaven, the blessings of a well-ordered covenant, the sure mercies of David! Oh! then, trust in a God of love; for "blessed are all they that trust in him," Psalms 84:12. Would you have languishing grace revived, brought into a thriving and blooming condition? Oh! then, trust in a God of love, Jeremiah 17:7-8 : "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall he as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Would you be filled with peace? Then trust in a God of love: Isaiah 26:3 : "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." Would you be filled with the joys of God's salvation? Then trust in a God of love: Psalms 13:5 : "I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." In a word, trust in a God of love, and you shall never perish: "None perish that trust in him:" you shall never be confounded nor dismayed; and he will never forsake you: "Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee, and trust in thee." You shall have all needful preparation for a communion table; for "the preparation of the heart, and answer of the tongue, comes from him." So, then, I say, trust in a God of love. I think it is enough to engage you all to trust him, to repeat the text, and to say, God is love. If any of you apprehend a man to be your enemy, in that case you will have no trust to put in him; but if you be once persuaded he loves you, and lacks only an opportunity to do you all the service he can, in that case you will trust him with assured confidence. Well, sirs, we tell you, that God is not only a friend, bearing good-will to you, but he is love, love itself; love is the majestic or commanding attribute of his nature: O, how excellent is his loving kindness! therefore, let the sons of men, let sinners and saints, put their trust under the shadow of his wings.

4. A fourth exhortation from the text is this: Is it so, that a God in Christ is a God of love? Oh, then, sirs, reciprocate your love on a God of love, and render him love for love: "This is the first and great commandment" of the moral law, and the sum of the first table of the law, Matthew 22:37-38 : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Here is the most reasonable and just command that ever was. What can be more reasonable than to love him, who is not only lovely, but love itself, and whose love runs out towards us in such a surprising and astonishing way? Sure I am, it is your "reasonable service," to love him with all thy heart, soul, strength, and mind. And, sirs, this is a command which, to obey, I am sure will not be painful; for, when God commands you to love him, he commands you to make yourselves happy; for the very happiness of the rational soul lies in the outgoings of God's love to you, and the outgoings of your love and affections towards him. Oh, sirs! Love to a God of love "is the fulfilment of the law;" you perform all duties, and exercise all graces at once, when you get your hearts drawn out in love to a God in Christ. What is faith, but love trusting and confiding in the beloved object? What is hope, but love expecting and longing after the enjoyment of him? What is patience, but love bearing and suffering what a God of love lays on? What is humility, but love lying at the feet of a God of love? What is heavenly-mindedness, but love soaring, as upon eagles' wings, after a God of love? What is zeal, but love inflamed with desire to serve a God of love? What are all good works, but love displaying itself in actions of obedience to the commands of a God of love. What is it to communicate? It is just to show forth the dying love of a God of love. What is it to pray, but to offer up our desires to a God of love? What is it to praise, but to give vent to the heart in the commendation of a God of love? So that, I say, when you love a God of love, you, as it were, do all things at once. And then, to engage and encourage your life, in the very command itself he presents himself to thee as thy God, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Thus, he ushers in the commandment of the moral law, with, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the house of bondage." He is thy God, not only by creation, as he is the God of all living; but he is thy God in covenant, thy God in Christ: and when he says, "I am thy God," he in effect says, All that I am, all that I have, all that I can do, I make over to you in an everlasting covenant, which shall never be broken. Oh, sirs! shall not all this kindle a flame of love in your bosoms to a God of love? This is a large field, and would admit of a great enlargement: but, that I

may not hinder the great work of the day, I shall proceed no farther. The Lord bless what has been said, and to his name be praise.

S. God's Little Remnant Keeping their Garments Clean in an Evil Day

God's Little Remnant Keeping their Garments Clean in an Evil Day by Ebenezer Erskine

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. Revelation 3:4.

Revelation 3:1-6 contain an epistle sent by Jesus Christ to the church of Sardis. Where we have, first, the preface, and then the body of the epistle. In the body of the epistle we may notice these three things: 1. An accusation or charge, in the close of the first Revelation 3:2. An exhortation to several duties, such as repentance, watchfulness, and the like, Revelation 3:2-3. 3. We have a commendation given to this church, in the words of my text, Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, &c. Where, more particularly, we have, 1st, The commendation itself, Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments. 2dly, A reward, They shall walk with me in white. 3dly, The reason and ground of this, For they are worthy. First, I say, we have the commendation itself. Where we may notice, the commender, the commended, and the ground on which the commendation runs. 1. The commender. Who he is may be gathered from the connexion. It is "he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars," Revelation 3:1. It is Christ himself. And his commendation may be depended upon; for he trieth the heart and reins, and needs not that any should testify of man unto him, because he knows what is in man. 2. The party commended. Who are described, (1.) From their designation; they are called names. God had "given them a new name, a name better than of sons and of daughters," even a name "among the living in Jerusalem:" they were marked among the rolls of his chosen, redeemed, and sanctified ones. By their zeal, uprightness, integrity, and their honest appearance for God, in that degenerate day and place, they had distinguished themselves from others, and so purchased a name to themselves; and they were known to men as well as unto God: "The Lord knoweth the righteous;" and he knows them by name, they are marked out among others. (2.) They are described by their paucity; they are a few names. They were comparatively few, when laid in the balance with the multitude and bulk of carnal secure professors in this church; there was but a small part of them that had kept themselves free of the corruptions and defections of that church, and that had "not bowed the knee unto Baal." (3.) They are described from the place of their residence, Sardis, one of the seven churches of the Lesser Asia. The expression here is observable, A few names even in Sardis. Christ's character of this church, in the close of the first verse, was, that they were generally dead, though they had a name to live: "But," as if he had said, "though the generality of this church he dead, yet even there I have a few lively and tender Christians." But then, 3. Notice the ground on which the commendation runs; they have kept their garments clean, or, have not defiled their garments. Perhaps there may be an allusion in this expression to the Jews, who were not to come near any thing that was unclean, by the law of Moses, or to touch them with their garments, lest they should be defiled: or it may allude to the practice of the eastern countries, who used to gird up their long garments, to keep them from being defiled, or spotted. The meaning is, that this little remnant in Sardis had maintained their integrity, like Job; they were "perfect and upright men," men that "feared God, and eschewed evil;"

they had not complied with the abounding errors and corruptions of their day, but "exercised themselves to keep consciences void of offence towards God and man." When others were sleeping, they were waking, about their work; when others in that church were dead and secure, they were lively. And so much for the commendation given by Christ to this remnant. Secondly, In the words we have a reward, or rather we may call it a consolatory promise made to this little remnant: They shall walk with me in white. Perhaps the expression may allude to the practice of the Romans, who clothed their nobility, at any solemnity, in white: or to their conquerors, who triumphed, upon any victory obtained, in white garments; or to the priests under the law, who ministered in the temple in white garments. The meaning is, They shall walk with me in white; that is, "They shall be admitted to the immediate enjoyment of fellowship and communion with me, and be partakers of my glory in heaven through eternity." But the import of the expression may be more fully spoken to afterward. Thirdly, In the words we have the reason and ground why the Lord puts such a difference between his remnant and others, For they are worthy; that is, valuable, and excellent persons, as Solomon speaks, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." Not as if they had any worthiness or excellency in themselves beyond others by nature; no, no; "They are children of wrath and condemnation, even as others;" but they are made worthy by justifying and sanctifying grace, by imputed righteousness and inherent holiness. Some render the word, "For they are meet:" so the word is rendered, Matthew 3:8: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." So here the Lord promises, that they who keep their garments clean should walk with him in white; why, because it is meet or suitable it should be so, that they who are holy here, should be happy hereafter.

Doct. "That although there be but few in a visible church that keep their garments clean in a declining time, yet these few are highly valued by Christ, and shall be admitted to partake of his glory in heaven." This doctrine I take to be the scope of the verse, Thou hast a few names, &c. In discoursing on this point, I shall endeavour, through divine assistance, to do these six things: —

I. Offer a few propositions concerning this little remnant.

II. Show that Christ has a high value for this remnant; they are worthy in his esteem.

III. What is imported in their keeping their garments clean.

IV. What it is to walk with Christ in white.

V. Inquire into the connexion between the duty and privilege.

VI. Apply the whole.

I. The first thing is, to offer a few propositions concerning this remnant, who are said to keep their garments clean; and you may take these few following.

1. That God the Father gave a remnant to Christ of the posterity of Adam, in the covenant of redemption, to be ransomed and redeemed by him, from that woe and wrath, into which Adam, by his apostacy, had involved himself and all his posterity. That such a remnant was gifted to Christ by the Father, is plain from John 17:1-26 ; where Christ in his prayer frequently speaks of those that the Father gave him, particularly John 17:6 : "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." He promised to him, for his encouragement in that great undertaking, that he should have "a seed to serve him," and "see of the travail of his soul."

2. The Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, in the fulness of time, took on the nature of man, and in our nature obeyed the law, and died in the room and stead of this remnant which the Father gave him. He did not obey the law, and satisfy justice for the whole world, or for all men, as Arminians talk; no; but he died for a select number. Hence he is said to "lay down his life for his sheep," and not for the goats. And as his death, so his intercession is confined to this remnant, as is plain from John 17:9 : "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine."

3. This redeemed remnant are, in God's own time, sooner or later, under the ministry of gospel-ordinances, determined, by the power and efficacy of divine grace, to close with Christ, upon the call of the gospel, and to go in to the blessed contrivance of salvation and redemption through him: he translates them, in a day of his power, "out of darkness into his marvellous light, and into the kingdom of his dear Son." Not one of this elected remnant, but shall in due time be brought home; for "whom he did predestinate, them he also called."

4. God's remnant are a holy people. They are a set of men that study to keep clean garments; they study to "purify themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord;" and therefore called "the people of his holiness," Isaiah 63:18. Holiness is the design of their election; for "he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." Holiness is the design of their redemption by Christ Jesus: "He hath redeemed us from all iniquity, and purified unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus 2:14. Holiness is the design of their effectual calling: "For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness; and he hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling." So that, I say, God's remnant are a holy remnant.

5. The number of this remnant is but small; there are but a few names in Sardis, that have not defiled their garments. Christ's flock is but a little flock. It is indeed a great flock, and an "innumerable multitude," abstractly considered: but considered comparatively, or when laid in the balance with the droves and multitudes of the wicked, it is but a little flock, and a small remnant. They are few that are elected; "for many are called, but few are chosen;" they are few that are redeemed; it is only God's elect that are "bought with a price:" they are few that are effectually called; for "to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Few that hold out in the time of temptation; but seven thousand among all the thousands of Israel "that have not bowed the knee to Baal."

6. Although they be but few, yet in the worst of times God has always some of this remnant, who cleave to him and his way, even when all about them are corrupting their ways. He had a Lot in Sodom, whose righteous soul was vexed with the abominations of the place; he has a remnant of mourners in Jerusalem, when the whole city was defiled with wickedness; he has his two witnesses to bear testimony to his truths, when "the whole world is wondering after the beast," and over-run with Antichristian darkness and idolatry.

7. Lastly, God has a special eye of favour and kindness on this remnant, in a sinful and declining time. He has "a mark set upon the men that sigh and cry for the abominations in Jerusalem;" his "eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him," &c. But this leads me to,

II. The second thing proposed, which was to show, that Christ has a high value for this remnant. They are the worthies of the world in his esteem, however they be disesteemed and undervalued by the world. This will appear from these following considerations: —

1. Consider what an account he makes of them, when compared with the rest of the world. He values them so highly, that he will give whole nations and kingdoms of the wicked for their ransom: Isaiah 43:4 : "Ever since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee; and I gave men for thee," &c.; that is, he will sacrifice whole nations and kingdoms of wicked men, before he be bereft of his little remnant. The scriptures are very full to this purpose. His remnant is the gold, the rest of the world are but dross: "Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross," Psalms 119:119 : but "the precious sons of Zion are comparable to fine gold," Lamentations 4:2; not only gold, but fine gold, polished by the hand of the Spirit. Again, his little remnant is the wheat, but the rest of the world are the chaff; and "What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?" When he "comes with his fan in his hand, he will gather his wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with fire that is unquenchable," Matthew 3:12. His little remnant is the good corn, but the wicked are the tares; and he will say to his reapers at the last judgment, "Gather the tares together, and bind them in bundles to burn them;" but, "Gather the good corn into my barn." His remnant are his sheep, but the rest are the goats; and he will say to the sheep on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed;" but to the goats he will say, "Depart, ye cursed." His remnant are his vessels of honour, whom he sets by as plenshing to garnish "the house not made with hands;" but the wicked are vessels of wrath, whom he "will break in pieces as a potter's vessel," and cast into the furnace of his anger. Thus, I say, that they are worthy in his esteem, is evident from the account he makes of them, when laid in the balance with others. That this little remnant are worthy in his esteem, is evident from the account he makes of them when laid in the balance with others.

2. That this little remnant are worthy on Christ's account, will appear, if we consider the names and compellations that he gives them. He sometimes calls them his love, his dove, his undefiled, his Hephzibah, his Beulah, his Jedidiahs, the very darlings of his heart. He calls them sometimes his jewels: Malachi 3:17 : "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." He calls them the very apple of his eye, the most tender part of the body: and the eyelid of his special providence doth cover them. Yes, such is the value that he has for them, that he calls them himself and speaks of them as if he and they were but one: "Saul, Saul," says the Lord, "why persecutest thou me?"

3. Consider the endeared relations they stand under to him; and from thence you will see, that they cannot but be worthy in his esteem. There is a legal, a moral, and a mystical union between him and them. He is their Head, and they are his members; he is the Root, and they are the branches that grow upon him; he is the Husband, and they are his spouse and bride; "Thy Maker is thy husband;" he is their Father, and they are his children; he is their Elder Brother, and they are his younger brethren; he is Heir of all things, and he makes them joint-heirs with himself of his heavenly kingdom; he is their Advocate, and they are his clients; he is their King, and they are his subjects.

4. They cannot but be worthy in his esteem, if you consider how much he values not only their persons, but whatever pertains to them. He values their names; 1 have a few names in Sardis; he

keeps them among the records of heaven, and has them written in the Lamb's book of life. He values their prayers: Song of Solomon 2:14 : "O, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, let me hear thy voice; for it is sweet." The prayers of the wicked are like the howling of dogs to him; but the prayers of the upright remnant are his delight. He values their tears, and "puts them into his bottle;" he, as it were, gathers every drop from their eyes: "I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears," saith the Lord to Hezekiah. He values their blood: Psalms 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints:" and they that shed their blood, "he will give them blood to drink."

5. Lastly, That they are worthy in his esteem, appears from what he does for them. He remembered them in their low estate, and set his love on them when they were wallowing in their blood. He has loved them "with an everlasting love," an unalterable love, with an ardent love; his love to them "is strong as death: he has redeemed them with his blood; for we are not redeemed by corruptible things, such as silver and gold," &c. "He hath loved us and washed us with his own blood," Revelation 1:5. He confers many excellent privileges upon them. They have an excellent pardon, it being full, final and irrevocable, Hebrews 8:12. They have an excellent "peace, which passes all understanding;" an excellent joy, being "unspeakable, and full of glory;" excellent food; they "eat of the hidden manna;" have access to an excellent throne, "with boldness," Hebrews 4:16. They have excellent communion, even "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." They have the interposition of an excellent Mediator, even Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. They have an excellent guard attending them; they are guarded with the divine attributes, even "as the mountains are about Jerusalem;" guarded with the "twenty thousand chariots of angels," Mahanaim, "the two hosts of God." They have an excellent store-house, even the "whole fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Christ. They are clothed with excellent robes, even "the garments of salvation, and robes of righteousness." They are "heirs of an everlasting inheritance, that is incorruptible and undefiled; yea, heirs with God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." And, to crown all, they have excellent security for all this; the word of God, his covenant, his oath, his blood, and the earnest of his Spirit. From all which it appears, what a high value he has for them, and how worthy they are in his account and reckoning.

III. The third thing proposed was, to inquire into what is imported in the remnant keeping their garments clean. And,

1. It imports, that God's remnant are clothed, or, that they have garments given them: they are not naked, like the rest of the world. And there is a two-fold garment with which God's remnant are arrayed; namely, a garment of imputed righteousness and a garment of inherent holiness. By the first, all their iniquities are covered, and they screened from the curse and condemnation of the law, and the stroke of avenging justice. By the last, namely, the garment of inherent holiness, their souls are beautified and adorned, the image of God restored, and they, like "the King's daughter," made "all glorious within." And it is the last of these that is here principally intended.

2. It imports, that the garment which God gives his remnant is a pure and a cleanly robe; and therefore called white raiment, Revelation 3:18; and fine linen, Revelation 19:8. Speaking of the bride, the Lamb's wife, it is said, that "to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, pure and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." So that you see white is the livery with which Christ clothes his little remnant: and, Revelation 7:9, they are said to be "clothed

with white robes."

3. That sin is of a defiling and polluting nature. As mire and filth defile our garments, so does sin defile and pollute our souls, and render us vile and loathsome in the sight of God. Hence it is commonly called uncleanness; Zechariah 13:1 : "There is a fountain opened to the house of David, to take away sin and uncleanness." It is the abominable thing which God's soul doth hate, and is more loathsome in his sight, than the most detestable things in nature are to us.

4. That it may be the lot of the Lord's people to live and walk among a people, the generality of whom are polluting and defiling themselves; for this is the commendation of the remnant here, that though the body of this church was corrupted, yet they had not gone along with them. Thus it fared with Noah in the old world, and with Lot in Sodom; and the prophet Isaiah, (chap 6.) cries out, "I dwell in the midst of a people of polluted lips."

5. That even God's remnant are not without danger of defiling themselves with the sins and defections of their day. Sin comes gilded with such fair and plausible pretences, and backed with such powerful motives and arguments, that even some of God's own remnant are not only in danger, but some of them may be actually ensnared and defiled therewith; and, no doubt, some that had the root of the matter in Sardis, were tainted with the corruptions of that church; as I doubt not but many in our own church, who have made very wide steps, are, notwithstanding, dear and near to God.

6. That foul garments are very unbecoming and unsuitable to God's remnant; for they that "name the name of Christ," and profess to be his friends and favourers, are bound to "depart from all iniquity." It brings up a reproach on religion, and makes "the name of God to be blasphemed," when any of God's remnant make a wrong step; as you see in the case of David: his murder and adultery opened the mouths of the wicked in his day, and made "the enemy to blaspheme." And I am sure it cannot but be bitter to any that belong to God, when, through their untenderness, "the way of God is evil spoken of."

7. A careful study of universal obedience to all known and commanded duties. God's remnant are of David's mind and principle; they "have a respect to all God's commandments;" his law is the rule and standard of their walk; it is a "light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths:" and they are always breathing after more and more conformity to it, saying, with David, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes ." They study to have a gospel-adorning conversation, and that "their light may so shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father which is in heaven."

8. A holy caution and tenderness in guarding against all sin, especially the prevailing sins of the day and generation in which they live. They will not "walk according to the course of this world, but they are transformed by the renewing of their minds;" they keep at a distance from common defections, errors in doctrine, profanity in practice, and innovations in the worship of God; they will not so much as give their consent to these abominations; but endeavour, in their station, to oppose them, and give their honest testimony against them. Keeping of the garments clean, in a declining time, implies a steady adherence to the truths, laws, and ordinances, of Christ, and the government that he has appointed in his house. Hence they are said to "keep the word of his patience." They will not sell one hoof of divine truth, no, not though it should cost them the

warmest blood of their heart; they will "buy the truth" at any rate, but sell it at no rate. It implies, that they have supplies of covenanted strength given them, to uphold and keep them from defiling their garments: for they are not able to keep themselves; no, "The way of man is not in himself;" it is "the Lord that keepeth the feet of his saints," when "the wicked shall be silent in darkness;" yea, they "are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation," 1 Peter 1:5 : which implies, a keeping them as in a garrison: "The Lord Jehovah is their strength," and the fortifications of rocks round about them.

9. Lastly, It imports the mortification of sin in the root and fruit of it, together with a holy care to have grace improved and exercised, till it be crowned with glory; for "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself," &c. And thus you see what is imported in keeping of the garments clean.

IV. The fourth thing proposed, was, to inquire a little into the import of the consolatory promise made to the remnant that keep their garments clean; They shall walk with me in white, saith the Lord: that is, as I told you in the explication of the words, "they shall be admitted to share of my glory at death and judgment." But I shall endeavour more particularly to inquire into the import of this promise. And, 1. What is imported in walking with Christ? And, 2. What in walking with him in white?

First, What is imported in walking with him?

1. It necessarily supposes the soul's subsistence in a separate state, or after its separation from the body; otherwise it could not be said to walk with him. This is one of the fundamental truths of our religion, which Christ himself proved and maintained against the Sadducees, from that scripture, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; God is not," says he, "the God of the dead, but of the living." No sooner are the souls of God's remnant divorced from their bodies, but, by the ministry of angels, they are carried into Abraham's bosom.

2. Their walking with Christ, not only supposes the soul's existence in a separate state, but also its activity, for it walks with Christ. The spirits of just men, upon their separation from the body, are made perfect, and so perfect, "as they serve him day and night in his holy temple," with infinitely more activity and liveliness, than when they were cooped up in the prison of the body; which, in this state of sin and imperfection, is a dead weight, as it were, upon the soul, in the service of God.

3. Their walking with Christ implies perfect peace and agreement between Christ and them: for how can two walk together, except they be agreed? The Lord's people, while here, are many times under the affrighting apprehensions of his anger and displeasure, which makes them cry out with David, (Psalms 77:9,) "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah." But there will be no such complaint in heaven: no, no; there will not be the least grudge in his heart, or frown in his countenance, through eternity; nothing but a perpetual smile of his reconciled countenance.

4. It implies intimacy: which is more than agreement; for there may be a good understanding where there is little intimacy and familiarity. But the saints in glory shall walk with Christ; that is, he and they will be very intimate one with another. This intimacy is begun on earth; for sometimes, even in the wilderness, he brings them into the chamber of presence, and allows them sweet fellowship with himself; sometimes they "sit down under his shadow with great delight." But this intimate fellowship shall be consummated and completed in heaven, where all veils shall be rent,

and all clouds shall be for ever dispelled, and nothing shall remain to interrupt the blessed familiarity betwixt him and them: then that word shall be fully accomplished, John 17:23 : "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

5. It implies, that they shall be in the presence of Christ: and this is an addition to intimacy; for two intimate friends may be at a distance one from another. The Lord's people, while "in the body," are said to be "absent from the Lord." But then they shall be at home; he and they shall dwell together through eternity, in the mansions of glory, the "house not made with hands." So much Christ tells his disciples, John 12:26: "Where I am, there shall also my servants be." And, John 14:3 : "I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

6. It implies, that they shall be privileged with the sight of Christ; for two cannot well walk together without seeing one another. Then they shall see the man Christ "exalted at his Father's right hand, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." This is a privilege ensured to the little remnant by Christ's own prayer, John 17:24: "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me. O how ravishing a sight will this be, to behold the glory of Christ in heaven! When he was transfigured upon mount Tabor, "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light:" what will he be on Mount Zion above, when he shall be seen with all his robes of Glory, and all his heavenly retinue attending him?

7. They shall walk with me. It implies, full pleasure, satisfaction, and complacency: for walking is an act of recreation. Heaven is a place of joy and pleasure, Psalms 16:11 : "In thy presence there is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. Then the joy of the Lord shall not only enter into them, but they shall "enter into the joy of their Lord:" "The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads."

Secondly, What is imported in walking with him in white?

Ans. 1. That then all their black and beggarly garments shall be laid aside. A "body of sin and death "shall not then molest them; they shall not any more complain of the errors of their hearts, or the iniquity of their heels: no, they shall be "presented without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

2. White is a badge of purity and innocence: They shall walk with me in white; that is, they shall not only lay aside their beggarly garments, but they shall be "clothed with change of raiment." Perfect holiness shall then be their ornament: "They shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needle-work;" and, like the King's daughter, "they shall be all glorious within:" they who had "lain among the pots, shall become like the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold;" yea, "they shall shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

3. White is a badge of victory, as we told you in the explication of the words, Revelation 7:9; the triumphant company there, "of all nations, tongues, and kindreds, stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," as a sign of their complete victory over all their enemies, whether outward or inward. Sin is an enemy that the believer has many a hot conflict with, while here; but in heaven, "the inhabitants are all forgiven their iniquities;" there is no more sin, Revelation 22:1-21. As for Satan, that grand enemy, that went about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour them, they shall then tread him under their feet: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge angels?" saith the apostle. And as for the world, they shall never any more

be ensnared either with its frowns or flatteries.

4. White is a badge of honour. The Romans clothed their nobility in white, as you heard. O what honour is reserved for the saints of God, his little remnant! They shall be honoured with a place among them that stand by in the new Jerusalem; yea, they shall be honoured with the white stone and the new name; they shall sit with Christ upon his throne, Revelation 3:21. They shall be honoured with a crown of burnished glory: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away." They shall be honoured with a kingdom: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." They shall be honoured to be assessors with Christ at the last judgment: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? They will applaud the Judge in all his proceedings, and cry, "True and righteous are thy judgments, Lord God Almighty;" then that passage will be fully accomplished, Psalms 149:5-9 : "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written. This honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord."

5. White was a garment appointed for the priests under the law, when they were to minister about holy things. The saints of God are all priests, Revelation 1:5-6 : "Unto him that loved us, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." And as priests in the heavenly temple, their continual work shall be, to offer up eternal sacrifices of praise to God and the Lamb. There every bird in every bush shall sing, and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood. Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

6. We find the angels frequently appearing in white. Acts 1:10; while the disciples are looking towards heaven after their exalted Lord, "behold two men," that is, two angels in the form of men, "stood by them in white apparel." So the saints shall walk with Christ in white; they shall be like the angels of heaven: Matthew 22:30 : "In the resurrection, they are as the angels of God in heaven." The original word signifies, they shall be equal to angels, or angels' mates. Like angels, they shall not be liable to hunger, thirst, weariness, or such bodily infirmities. The angels are said to "behold the face of God in heaven;" so shall ye who are God's little remnant: "Now ye see darkly, as through a glass; but then ye shall see face to face." The angels serve God with the greatest voluntariness and freedom, with the greatest activity and nimbleness; for "he maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire;" so shall the saints in glory; they shall do the will of God, as it is done by the angels in heaven.

7. We find Christ sometimes appearing in white, particularly at his transfiguration: "His countenance did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And so it may import this much, they shall walk with me in white; that is, there shall be a blessed conformity between them and me in glory. Revelation 19:11, Revelation 19:14. Christ is there represented as mounted upon "a white horse," and the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, "clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Christ, and all his redeemed company, shall be clothed with the same livery: 1 John 3:2 : "When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Their souls shall resemble him in righteousness and true holiness; yea, "their vile bodies shall be

made like unto his glorious body."

8. Lastly, White has a great reflection of light with it when the sun shines upon it. O how bright and dazzling will the glory of the saints be in that day, when the Sun of righteousness shall shine upon them with a meridian splendour! Christ will then "be admired in his saints;" for they shall "shine forth like the sun, and like the brightness of the firmament:" "the beauty of the Lord their God will then be upon them;" and such beauty as shall eternally astonish and confound the wicked, who contemned them upon earth, and did not reckon them worthy to sit with the dogs of their flock." And this much for the fourth thing.

V. The fifth thing was, to inquire into the connexion between the duty and the privilege, between keeping the garments clean, and walking with Christ in white.

1. Then, negatively, you would know, that there is no connexion of merit, as if our keeping of clean garments did deserve that we should walk with Christ in white: no, no; let "every mouth be stopped; for all the world is guilty before God;" and therefore can merit nothing but wrath and vengeance at the hand of God. "By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified," or saved; it is by the merits of Christ, his doing and dying, as the surety of the little remnant, that they are brought to walk with him in white. But though there be no connexion of merit, yet,

2. And positively, there Isaiah 1:1-31st, A connexion of decree or purpose in this matter. God, by an unalterable decree, has ordained, that they who are holy shall be happy; that they who keep their garments clean shall walk with him in white. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 : "God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2dly, there is a connexion of promise, as well as of purpose. You have them linked together in this promise in the text, and every where almost through the scriptures of truth. You have a cluster of these promises in the second and third of the Revelation: "To him that overcometh," which is the same thing with keeping the garments clean, "will I give to eat of the hidden manna." And this link is so strong, that it can never be broken; for it is one of these "immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie." 3dly, There is a connexion of meetness or congruity. It is suitable, that these who are holy should be happy; that they who have white garments here, should be clothed with white hereafter. It is suitable to the nature of God for he "cannot behold iniquity, neither can evil dwell with him:" none but holy ones shall enjoy a holy God. It is suitable to the work of heaven; for "no unclean thing can enter the gates of the new Jerusalem;" to this purpose is the last clause of our text, They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy, or meet, as the word may be rendered, Colossians 1:12 : "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." 4thly, There is a connexion of evidence. Holiness, or clean garments, is an evidence of the soul's title or claim to glory; for "whom he sanctified, them he also glorified." "Who is the man that shall ascend into the hill of God? and who shall stand in his holy place?" The answer is, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart," Psalms 24:3-4. 5thly, There is a connexion of legacy. Christ, by his latter will, has ensured the kingdom to his little remnant that keep their garments clean: Luke 22:28-29 : "Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me."

VI. The sixth thing is the application. And the first use shall be of information, in these particulars.

1. See hence, holiness is to be studied and pursued, however it may be ridiculed and mocked at by a profane world; for it is they that do not defile their garments that shall walk with Christ in white. The blind world is ready to imagine, that the way to heaven is not so strait and narrow as ministers call it; that there needs not be so much ado, and all is but a piece of needless nicety, preciseness, and the like. But remember, that strict holiness will carry the day at the long-run; and you that are for a lax religion, and a broad way to heaven, will at length land in hell, unless mercy and repentance prevent. "Walk circumspectly," therefore, "not as fools, but as wise," &c.

2. See from this doctrine, that they labour under a damnable mistake, who think or say, that it is a vain or unprofitable thing to serve the Lord, and to keep his way; for they that Walk with Christ here, shall partake of his glory hereafter: "Godliness," saith the apostle, "is great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Religion carries a reward in its bosom, beside the reward that is prepared for the saint in the life to come. "In keeping of thy commandments," says David, "there is a great reward. O how great is the goodness thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" &c. "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," 1 Corinthians 2:9.

3. We may see, that gospel-purity and holiness is not such a common thing as the world apprehend; for there are but a few names, few persons that are helped to keep their garments clean. My friends, beware of taking every thing for holiness that has the shadow and appearance of it. Some are ready to think, that their garments are clean enough, if they keep free of gross scandalous outbreakings, such as lying, swearing, stealing, uncleanness, and the like; but the proud Pharisee came this length, who said, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men; I am no extortioner, adulterer, or injurious person," &c. Some think their garments clean, if they be moral in their walk, just in their dealings between man and man. I wish, indeed, there were more morality among these that profess the name of Christ. But, O sirs, mere morality, in the highest degree now attainable, comes infinitely short of the nature of true holiness; it is quite another thing: and to put morality in the room of gospel-holiness, is in effect to renounce Christ and the covenant of grace, and to run back to Adam's covenant for life and salvation. Some think their garments clean enough, because of some personal reformation that they have made in their outward walk; they have left off lying, swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like. But this will not amount to true holiness. Herod reformed his life, and did many things through the ministry of John the Baptist, and yet beheaded him at last. Some reckon upon their diligence in the outward duties of religion: they read, hear, pray, communicate, and run the round of outward performances, and thereupon conclude, that they are holy persons. But who more diligent in the externals of religion than the Pharisees, who "fasted twice a week, and gave tithes of all that they possessed?" and yet Christ tells us, that "except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." So that, I say, gospel-holiness is no common thing.

4. See hence, that the division of mankind, and particularly of these that live in the visible church, between Christ and the devil, is very unequal as to the number; for the greatest part even of the visible church, go to the devil's share, for there are but a few names in Sardis that do not defile their garments. Christ's flock is a little flock: "I will take them one of a city, and two of a family," or tribe, "and bring them to Zion." It is true, they will be a great company, and make a goodly appearance, when they shall be gathered by the angels from the four winds of heaven; but yet

they are only like the gleanings after the vintage, in comparison of the vast multitudes of mankind that run in the broad way to destruction.

5. See hence what it is that sweetens the pale countenance of the king of terrors to believers; it is this, they see that upon the back of death, they will be admitted to walk with Christ in while. This made the apostle to long so vehemently for his dissolution, saying, "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." Faith's views and prospect of this makes the believer to triumph over death, as a vanquished and slain enemy, Saying, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

6 See hence what they may expect upon the back of death, who habitually wallow in the puddle of sin. It is only they that have clean garments, that shall walk with Christ in glory; and therefore it inevitably follows, that the gates of glory shall be shut upon you: Revelation 21:27 : "There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." And ver. 8: "The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." O sirs! You that live and die in this condition, with the guilt and filth of sin and lying on your consciences, you will find a sting in death which will stick in your souls through eternity: for it is only God's little remnant, "whose garments are washed and made white in the blood of the lamb," that shall triumph with him in glory; while you that wallow in sin now, shall be found flames of Tophet.

7. See hence, that honesty is the best policy in a declining time; for it is only the honest-hearted remnant that shall walk with Christ above. Keep God's ways, sirs, whatever come; and beware of sinful shifts to shun the cross: "They that walk uprightly shall walk surely;" whereas, they who think to shun danger by shifting duty, really run themselves into greater danger and inconveniencies, than those which they imagined to avoid.

USE 2d, may be of lamentation, that there are so many foul garments among us at this day. Alas! sirs, may we not say, that there are but a few names in Scotland, that have not defiled their garments with the corruptions and pollutions of the time? All ranks have corrupted their ways, magistrates, ministers, and people. May not the character which God gave of Israel of old, be too justly applied to us, Isaiah 1:4 : that we are "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, who have provoked the holy One of Israel unto anger, and are gone away backward?" I cannot now stand to show wherein we have defiled our garments. Has not the land been defiled with the blood of many of the saints of God under the late reigns, from which it is not as yet purged? Is not the whole land defiled with breach of solemn national engagements, while these solemn covenants have been scandalously burnt in the capital city of the nation, and that by the countenance and command of authority? And are there not many at this day amongst us, who profess to be of the communion of the church of Scotland, that renounce and disown the obligation of these solemn ties? Are not many defiling their garments with Arminian and Socinian heresies? others with a superstitious worship, which, to the reproach of our holy religion, is tolerated among us by law? Have not many defiled their garments in our land, with a customary swearing by the name of God? Others by jesting with God in the matter of solemn oaths, abjuring a Popish Pretender, with a design to put themselves in a better capacity to do him service, and promote his interest? Others have, even in this province, lately defiled their garments, by putting their hands to scandalous libels, by way of address to the sovereign: in which they

represent ministers as rebels against authority, for appointing fasts, and preaching against the sins of the time, and for giving warning to people of the tokens of God's anger that are visible among us. And, alas! may we not all lament, that we have defiled our garments, by the breach of sacramental and sick-bed vows? But I must not stand on these things.

USE 3d, is of trial and examination. Try, sirs, whether you be among God's little remnant, that are keeping their garments clean, when all round about you are defiling themselves. And, for your trial, I offer you the few following marks of God's remnant: —

1. God's remnant are a people to whom Christ is exceedingly precious. His very name is unto them as ointment poured forth; they love to hear of him, they love to speak of him, and their meditations of him are sweet; "the desire of their soul is unto him, and the remembrance of his name;" and they are ready to say with David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" &c., or with Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

2. God's remnant are a people that do not reckon themselves at home while they are here. This is not their proper country; but "they look for a better country, that is a heavenly," Hebrews 11:16. They "look for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," Hebrews 11:16. See this to be the character of God's remnant, Hebrews 11:13; the apostle tells us of these worthies, that "they confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." This confession David makes, Psalms 119:19 : "I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me." So then, if your home be here, you are none of God's remnant; if your thoughts and affections be confined within the narrow limits of time. God's remnant are a people that are "coming up from the wilderness;" they are always ascending and mounting heavenward, in their affections and desires: they "look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen."

3. God's remnant are a people that speak and think much on God. See this to be their character, Malachi 3:16 : "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Try yourselves by this. It is the character of the wicked, that "God is not in all their thoughts;" and he is as seldom in their mouths, except in a way of profanation. But God's remnant, I say, think much on God; and their thoughts of God, O how precious are they to their souls! Psalms 139:17; and out of the abundance of their hearts their mouths speak honourably and reverently of him. They will speak to one another of his word, of his work's, of his providences, and of his ordinances; their "lips are like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh."

4. God's remnant are a praying people: Psalms 24:6 : "This is the generation that seek thy face, O Jacob!" or, "O God of Jacob!" whereas it is given as the character of the wicked, Psalms 14:4, that they call not upon God. They either live in the total neglect of this duty; or, if they do it at all, it is in a hypocritical, formal, and overly manner. But God's remnant seek the face of God; they seek him with fervency, with truth in the inward parts; they seek him believingly; they seek him constantly and perseveringly, which the hypocrite will not do: Job 27:10 : "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?"

5. God's remnant are a mourning people. They mourn over their own sins, in the first place: Ezekiel 7:16. The remnant of Jacob "that escape, they shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, every one mourning for their iniquity." They mourn over the errors of their hearts, and the

iniquity of their lives, and are ready to cry out, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold on me," &c. And then they mourn, not only for their own personal sins, but for public sins; the sins of others, by which the land is defiled: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law; I beheld transgressors, and was grieved." That this is the character of God's remnant, you may see from Ezekiel 9:4 : "Go through the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and cry for all the abominations done in the midst thereof." And then they mourn for the calamities and desolations of Zion, when they see "the boar out of the wood wasting her, and the wild beasts out of the forest devouring her:" Psalms 137:1 : "By the rivers of Bahylon we sat down, and wept when we remembered Zion." And then they mourn when they see ordinances corrupted, or God's candlestick in any measure removed, the Lord's people deprived of their wonted freedom and liberty in waiting upon him in these galleries: Zephaniah 3:18 : "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, to whom the reproach of it was a burden."

6. God's remnant are a people that will rather venture upon suffering than sinning. They rather venture to run the risk of displeasing kings and queens, potentates and parliaments, than venture upon the displeasing of God: they can rather venture on the rack of outward torments, than upon the rack of an accusing conscience. See this to be the character of God's remnant in the three children, Daniel 3:1-30 &c.; and Moses, (Hebrews 9:27,) "who forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." Many other marks of God's remnant might be insisted upon. They are a people that cannot live without Christ, and fellowship and communion with him, Song of Solomon 3:1; Job 23:3 : "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" They are a people that will not rest in their attainments, but press towards the uttermost of grace and holiness, Php 3:12. They press after more nearness to Christ, Song of Solomon 8:1. They love holiness for itself, Psalms 119:140. Christ for himself; yea, they love heaven for Christ and holiness. In a word, they love holiness, be the event what it will.

USE 4, is of exhortation. Is it so, that God's remnant, who are privileged to walk with Christ in white, are such as keep their garments clean? O then! let me exhort all hearing me, particularly you who have been professing yourselves among the number of God's remnant, by drawing near to him in the holy ordinance of his supper; let me, I say, exhort you to keep your garments clean; be exhorted to the study of true gospel-holiness, both in heart and life. And, by way of motive, I would have you to consider these things following.

MOTIVE 1. Consider, that you are in continual hazard of defiling your garments. You are in danger from every quarter: As,

1st, You are in danger from the world. There are many things in the world that are of a very defiling and polluting nature. There are many polluting opinions broached in the world, which go very glib away with nature, and which nature is very ready to catch at and embrace; as, That God is altogether made up of mercy, and will never damn any of his creatures: That Christ died for all: That morality runs parallel with grace: That empty profession is enough to save folk: That it is better to keep the body whole than the conscience pure: That to be zealous for religion is to be "righteous overmuch." These, and many other such opinions, are of a polluting nature; and we are in danger of defiling ourselves with them. And then, the examples of the world are very infectious; the examples of magistrates and ministers, as you see from Hosea 5:1 : "hear ye this, O priests;

give ye ear, O house of the king; because ye have been a snare on Mizpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor." And then you are in danger from the example of professors, who, perhaps, have a great name for religion in the church of God. O! Will you say, such a man doth so and so, and why may not I do it also? But remember, sirs, that there are many hypocrites in the church of God, that go under a mask of religion. And supposing them to have the reality of grace, yet they may be under a spiritual decay; they may be sadly deserted of God: And do you think, that in this case they are to be imitated? And besides, suppose them to be ever such eminent persons, yet, according to the apostle's direction, we are to be followers of them no farther than they are followers of Christ. And besides, we are in danger from the frowns and flatteries of the world. If the world cannot get us allured into sin by its enticing promises, it will study to drive us into a compliance, by threats of trouble and persecution. Thus, I say, we are in imminent danger from the world. The apostle James exhorts us to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world," James 1:27.

2dly, You are in danger from Satan, that subtle and malicious enemy, who "goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He waits for your halting, and is always ready to trip up your heels. And I assure you, sirs, if you have got any love-token from the Lord at this occasion, this enemy will do his best, or worst rather, to you and it. It was but a little after Peter had been feasting with Christ, at this holy ordinance of the supper, that Christ told him, (Luke 22:31,) "Simon, Simon, Satan hath sought to winnow thee as wheat." And therefore you had need to be on your guard as to this enemy, and labour "not to be ignorant of his devices."

3dly, You are in danger of defiling your garments from your own hearts. My friends, would not that city be exposed to great danger, which is not only besieged with an army from without, but has a strong and powerful party within, that keeps a correspondence with the enemy without, and is ready to comply with all his demands? Just so is it with us: we are not only besieged with the world, and with Satan, who are our enemies without; but there is a strong party of indwelling sin and corruption within us, that is ready, upon all occasions, to betray us into our enemies' hands. This made David cry out, "Who can understand his errors?" and Paul, "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death!" So much for the first motive.

MOT. 2. By keeping your garments clean, you comply and fall in with God's great design in all his dispensations towards you, whether more immediate or mediate. God's great end in all is to bring his people to the study of gospel-purity and holiness. This is the design of his electing some of the posterity of Adam from all eternity: Ephesians 1:4 : "He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." It is a very foolish way of arguing that some people have: If I be elected, I shall be saved, let me live as I list; for God, like all other wise agents, not only decrees the end, but the means leading to that end. Now, holiness is the King's high-way, in which he has ordained and decreed to bring the elect to glory: 2 Thessalonians 2:13 : "God hath chosen us from the beginning to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." This is the design of redemption. Christ did not die, sirs, to purchase a latitude for us to sin: No, no: Titus 2:14 : "He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This is the design of our creation. Why did you get a being, but that you might glorify and serve God? "This people have I formed for myself, that they may show forth my praise." And this is not only the design of our first, but of our second creation; "for he hath created us in Christ unto good works." This is the design of our effectual calling; "for God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto

holiness:" no; "he hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling." This is the design of the whole word of God. Why has God privileged us with his statutes and testimonies, but that they may be "a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path," to keep us out of the polluting ways of sin? Psalms 119:9. "Whereby shalt a young man cleanse his way, but by taking heed thereto, according to thy word?" This is the design of the promises of the word. However carnal persons may make the promises a pillow of security, yet God's design in giving them, is to excite his people to keep clean garments: 2 Corinthians 7:1 : "Dearly beloved, having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness, in the fear of God." This is the design of the threatenings of the word, that so men, knowing the terror of God, may be persuaded to keep at a distance from sin, the abominable thing that his soul hates, and may not defile their garments therewith. This is the design of all providences by which God exercises his people. Why doth God cast thee into the furnace? O man! His design is to purge away thy dross: Isaiah 27:9: "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." The Lord chastens us, that we may be "partakers of his holiness," Hebrews 12:10. This is the design, not only of cross, but of favourable providences. "The goodness of God" should "lead us to repentance," and lays a deep obligation on us to stand off from sin, which is offensive to our gracious Benefactor. This is the design, not only of all providences, but of all ordinances, and of the whole dispensation of the grace of God in the gospel: Titus 2:11-12 : "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." This is the design, not only of the preaching of the word, but of the administration of the sacraments. In baptism, we are solemnly devoted to the service of God, and are engaged to walk as those that are called by "the name of Christ," who are bound "to depart from iniquity." And in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we solemnly renew, before God, angels, and men, our baptismal engagements and swear to keep our garments clean from the pollution of sin; and that by laying our hands on the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. This is the design of every frown, and of every smile. Doth God at any time fill thee with "joy and peace in believing?" lifts he up the light of his countenance upon thee? The language of this is, O do not defile thy garments! "God will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not return again to folly." And why doth God at any time bide his face, and leave thee in the dark, but to engage you to more tenderness in time to come, in keeping at a distance from these pollutions, by which he has been provoked to forsake thee? Thus, I say, if you do not keep your garments clean, you counteract the great design of God in all his dispensations towards you. How dangerous is it to be found fighting against God!

MOT. 3. Consider the dismal effects that will follow upon your defiling your garments.

1st, You will ruin your reputation, and render your names unsavoury in the world. And this is no small loss; for "a good name," says Solomon, "is as precious ointment," and renders a man capable to do service to God in his day and generation. In Proverbs 6:33, it is said of the adulterer, "A wound and dishonour shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away." When professors of religion, or ministers, defile their garments by sin, especially sins of a public nature, they wound their reputation, being a reproach upon themselves that is not easily wiped away; and not only so, but make the word of the Lord, in their mouths, to be contemned and despised. You may read a scripture for this, Malachi 2:8-9 : It is spoken of the priests of that day, "Ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the

Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law."

2dly, You will stain and pollute your souls, which you ought to keep pure as a holy temple unto God. And how dangerous a thing this is, you may see from 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 : "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." My friends, you have been solemnly consecrating your souls and bodies unto God, as his temple; and if any of you shall after this return with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow, that seemed to be washed, to wallow again in the puddle of sin, you run a very dreadful risk. Utter "destruction from the Lord, and from the glory of his power," is abiding all those that are hypocrites in heart. And dreadful temporal destruction from the Lord may over-take even his own children, who defile their garments: "For this cause many are weak and sickly, and many sleep."

3dly, You will break your peace, and mar your comfort. If you keep not your garments clean, you may provoke the Lord to fill you with terrors, and to cast such a spark of hell-fire into your bosoms as shall make you roar, and cry out of broken bones, with David; or, with Job, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit."

4thly, You will cast a blot upon religion, and on "the good ways of the Lord." If you who have been professing to own Christ at his table, shall be found defiling your garments, by lying, swearing, drunkenness, or the like, what will the graceless world say? They will conclude, that professors are but a company of hypocrites; that religion is nothing but a piece of trick and imposture. You will be a blemish to Christian society: "These are spots," says the apostle, "in your feasts of charity." And he speaks of some, who, through their untenderness, "made the way of the Lord to be evil spoken of."

5thly, You will dishonour Christ, that glorious Master whom you have been professing to own. Hence the Lord complains of the children of Israel, that they, by their wickedness, caused his "name to be polluted among the Heathen." David's sin made the name of God to be blasphemed and reproached.

6thly, By polluting your garments, you will "offend the generation of the righteous;" and "it were better for you that a millstone were hanged about your necks, and ye cast into the midst of the sea, than that ye should offend one of Christ's little ones." It is a dangerous thing to grieve the hearts of those that are dear unto God; for God will not grieve their hearts; and he will resent it, if any other do it by their untenderness.

7thly, You will harden others in their sins. When the wicked see professors, or ministers, going along with them, they conclude, that their way is the best of it, and preferable to the way of religion. Thus, you see the dismal effects that will follow upon your defiling your garments.

MOT. 4. Consider the great advantages that shall accrue to you by keeping your garments clean.

1st, It will yield you great peace; peace in life; for "as many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon them." Peace in the midst of all troubles: "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience." Peace at death: Psalms 37:37 : "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Peace after death. In Isaiah 57:2, we are told, that "the

righteous," at death, "enter into peace; they rest upon their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." Peace at the last judgment. It is only the cleanly remnant to whom the Lord will say then, "Lift up your heads; for the day of your redemption draweth nigh."

2dly, By keeping clean garments, you will be in a continual fitness for maintaining fellowship and communion with God in any ordinance of his appointment; for it is the man that "hath clean hands, and a pure heart," that shall stand on God's holy hill, and have a place in his tabernacle. And not only so, but it will fill you with a holy boldness and confidence, in your approaches to God in the ordinances of his appointment: Job 11:14-15 : "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away," &c.

3dly, The influences of ordinances will stay the longer upon you, that you keep your garments clean. What is the reason why the impression of anything of God, that we meet with in ordinances, so soon vanishes, like the morning cloud? The reason is, the untenderness of our walk: we lie down among the pots of sin, and this makes God to withdraw from us. We read of some mountains that are so high, that if men draw figures in the sand upon the tops of them, they will abide for many years. The reason is, they are so high, that they are above the winds and rains. O sirs, if we were living and walking on high with God, the impression of ordinances would stay longer with us than they do.

4thly, By keeping your garments clean, you will perhaps save the souls of others, and commend religion to them. Hence is that [direction] of Christ, (Matthew 5:10,) "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

5thly, By keeping your garments clean, you will find more strength to keep yourselves: "for the way of the Lord is strength to the upright." If ye keep God's way, he will "keep you in the hour of temptation," Revelation 3:10. God will keep you by his power through faith unto salvation.

6thly, After a little time is elapsed, ye shall be clothed in white, and walk with Christ in the new Jerusalem, according to his promise in the text.

Now, I conclude all with directions and advices, in order to your keeping of your garments clean.

1. Be persuaded of your own utter inability to keep your garments clean by your own power, or the strength of created grace: for "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps."

2. Take care that you be united to Christ, the fountain of holiness; for you do but wash the Ethiopian, while you attempt to make yourselves clean and holy, while you grow on the root of the old Adam. You may indeed "wash the outside of the cup and platter," but you will remain "filthy still" in the sight of God, till you be created in Christ, the true root of sanctification: "Can a man gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" The tree must be good before the fruit be good.

3. Being united to Christ, you must make daily use of him by faith. Do not think, that, when you have first believed in Christ, your work is done; no, your life must be a life of faith. By faith we live, by faith we stand, by faith we work, by faith we fight; and "whatever we do, in word or deed," we must "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." You must be always "building up yourselves in your most holy faith," and going on from faith to faith; and whenever you have, through infirmity, or the prevalency of temptation, defiled your garments, be sure to run by faith unto the blood of sprinkling, that you may get your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.

4. Set God continually before you, and keep up the impression of his all-seeing eye on your spirits: Psalms 16:8 : "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

5. Be much in viewing and meditating on the dismal and terrible effects of sin; how it did cast angels out of heaven, Adam out of Paradise, and brought God's curse upon all his posterity; how it brought a deluge on the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah burnt by fire and brimstone; how it made the earth to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

6. If you would keep your garments clean, O then beware of going to the utmost length of Christian liberty; it is dangerous to come too near God's marches. We should take heed to ourselves, even in the use of things that are in themselves lawful; "many things are lawful," but every thing lawful is not at all times "expedient." You would shun every "appearance of evil;" do not stand in the way of temptations, or occasions of sin. And, in particular, take care to avoid evil company; for "can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt?"

7. Beware of giving your consent and countenance to the sins of others; for hereby ye shall be "partakers with them in their sins." We may not only defile our garments by personal sins, but by the sins of others, when we encourage them in an evil way, when we assent or consent to them, or do not faithfully warn and reprove them, or endeavour to reclaim them.

8. Lastly, Be importunate with God, at the throne of grace, for guidance and direction; for "unless the Lord keep the city, the watchmen watch in vain." Unless his "grace be sufficient for" us, we will soon be carried down the stream of temptation and corruption; for "the way of man is not in himself." And therefore, I say, plead hard at the throne, that the Lord would keep you, who "keeps the feet of his saints." And for this end plead the promise that he has made to his people, Jeremiah 32:40 : "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Zechariah 10:12 : "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord."

S. The Backslider Characterized

The Backslider Characterized; Or, The Evil And Danger Of Defection Described. by Rev. Ebenezer Erskine "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."—Hebrews 10:38.

[The following Discourse was represented to the commission, May 1725, by Mr. Alexander Anderson, as if it had been of such a turbulent or erroneous tendency, that he himself, preaching after me, was obliged publicly to contradict me. The following notes are, to the best of my remembrance, the ipsissima verba which I delivered at that time. Whether the doctrines contained therein deserved the character he gave them before the Reverend Commission, or if he had ground publicly to contradict, I submit to the judgment of the impartial world.] "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." John 6:66. In the beginning of this chapter, our blessed Lord works a notable miracle; he feeds five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes, twelve baskets of fragments remaining. The multitude is so taken with this miraculous feast, that they thought to make him a king. But our lowly King of Zion did not affect worldly grandeur, His kingdom not being of this world; therefore he withdraws himself, and passes over the sea to Capernaum. Many of the multitude, whom he had fed, followed him thither. And there our blessed Lord takes occasion to preach a very heavenly and spiritual sermon to them, holding out the necessity of living and feeding by faith upon him, in order to everlasting life. These carnal hearers are exceedingly stumbled at the spirituality of his doctrine, looking upon it as a piece of unaccountable stuff and nonsense. Upon which they begin to drop off from him, as the evangelist remarks here, in the words of my text, From that time many of his disciples went back, &c. In which words we may notice, 1. A defection, or going back from Christ. 2. The season of it: namely, From that time, or, after he had preached the foregoing sermon. 3. The cause of it, implied in the time, namely, the spirituality of his doctrine. 4. The persons guilty of this defection, namely, professed disciples; and that not a few, but many of them. 5. The final and irrecoverable nature of their defection, they walked no more with him. The words are plain and easy; and therefore there is no need of any critical explication. Wherefore, take this natural observation from them; namely,—

DOCT. "That there are some seasons in which many of Christ's pretended disciples fall off from him, and that finally and irrecoverably. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." In handling this doctrine, I shall observe the order of the words, and speak a little, I. To this defection, or falling off from Christ.

II. Inquire a little into the causes of it.

III. The seasons of it.

IV. The persons guilty of the defection, namely, the disciples.

V. Give a few characters of those who fall off finally, and walk no more with him.

VI. Apply the whole.

I. I say, I will speak a little of this defection or falling off from Christ. And here I would, 1. Give you some of the scriptural names of it. 2. Speak of the kinds and degrees of it. 3. Notice some of its ingredients. 4. Mention some of its concomitants.

First, I would give you some scriptural names by which it is called. And sometimes it is called a looking back: Luke 9:62: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." My friends, you have been professing to set your faces heavenward; O beware of casting a back-look upon your old lovers: "Remember Lot's wife;" take heed that God do not set you up as monuments of his vengeance. Again; it is sometimes called a turning back: Lamentations 1:8: "Jerusalem sigheth, and turneth backward." The way to heaven will not admit of a retreat; you must still be pressing forward, whatever opposition may be in your way. Again; sometimes it is called a drawing back: Hebrews 10:38: If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Moreover, it is called a sliding back; intimating, that the people who are not well established in religion stand upon slippery ground: Hosea 11:7: "My people are bent to backsliding from me." Furthermore, it is called a falling back: Isaiah 28:13: "The word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept, and line upon line; that they might go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared and taken;" and you know a backward fall is exceedingly dangerous. Lastly, To mention no more, it is called a turning aside. It is said of Israel, that "they quickly turned aside like a deceitful bow;" which frustrates the design of the archer, by shooting away, or beside the mark. They who "turn aside into crooked ways," whatever may be their pretences to religion, miss the mark of the same, even the "mark and prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and shall be led forth," and have their part "with the workers of iniquity."

Secondly, I come to treat of the kinds and degrees of defections from Christ. And, not to multiply distinctions, which are more ready to confound than edify hearers, I shall only mention these two or three

1. Defection from Christ is sometimes more universal and general, of the body of a church and nation together. Thus, Ephesus, (Revelation 2:4) is charged with falling from her first love. And the whole body of the Israelitish nation are engaged together in a defection, by going in to worship the idolatrous calves which Jeroboam erected at Dan and Bethel: and it was so universal, that the prophet Elijah thought he had been left alone; though, indeed, the Lord tells him, that he had "seven thousand in Israel, which had not bowed the knee to Baal." And sometimes it is more special and particular, as when a single society, family, or particular person, enters upon a course of defection and backsliding from Christ and his ways; of which instances may be afterwards named.

2. Sometimes it is more open and avowed, in contradistinction from the former, by abandoning and relinquishing the very profession of religion to which they once pretended, and become openly wicked and shamefully criminal, giving themselves loose reins in a way of sin. Or, it is more hidden and secret, when, though there be still a profession of religion kept up; yet the power of godliness is quite forsaken, and the heart maintains a close correspondence with sin, and lives in a secret trade of wickedness, inconsistent with the rules of Christianity.

3. There is a total, as also a partial defection or falling off from Christ. A total or final, is that of the wicked and reprobate, who, when they fall, are like lead, or a stone falling into deep water, which never rises again; as it is said of Pharaoh and his host, "They sank like lead in the mighty waters:" they make an utter "shipwreck of faith and a good conscience." A partial defection is incident even to the godly themselves. I may call it temporary; for they may be left for a considerable time, to make many woeful steps of defection from Christ and his ways; as is plain from the instances of David, Peter, Abraham, and many others. But when they fall, they are like wood or cork, falling into water, who, though they sink at first, yet they rise again by faith and repentance, which influence the reformation of their lives, and which, in pursuit of the divine purpose of grace for their salvation, are actuated in them by the Holy Spirit, according to Psalms 37:24: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." The defection here spoken of in the text, seems to have been of the first kinds of each division. It was general and public; for there was a great multitude of them, as we read in the beginning of the chapter: it was open and avowed; for they put a slight on Christ in the face of the sun: and it was total and final; they walked no more with him, nor looked after Christ any more.

Thirdly, I come to notice some ingredients of this defection here spoken of: And there appears to have been these things in it:—

1. A dissatisfaction with Christ, and a vilifying both him and his way; for they said, John 6:42, "Is not his father and his mother, and sisters with us? how then came he down from heaven?"

2. A murmuring and repining against the spirituality of his doctrine, out of a rooted enmity and prejudice against it: John 6:41: "They murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread of life which came down from heaven:" and again, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?"

3. A formal disputing and arguing against his doctrine, as repugnant to reason. They set up their reason as the standard of revelation, and will receive nothing but what they were able to comprehend; for they strove, or disputed, "amongst themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" John 6:52.

4. A formal casting off with Christ, and turning back to their old way and trade of living, by which their latter end was worse than their beginning; for they went back and followed him no more, as in the text.

Fourthly, I come to mention some concomitants of defection from Christ.

1. It is commonly accompanied with a halting and wavering between sin and duty, as Israel did between God and Baal: "How long," says Elijah to them, "do ye halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." When this wavering befalls people, they cannot stand long; for "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways," says James. "Their heart is divided; therefore shall they be found faulty."

2. It is commonly attended with a mercenary kind of spirit. For, as secular and worldly interest is the spring of all their religion; so it is the spring of their apostacy and defection from it; as is plain from what our Lord tells his pretended disciples: "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." Where this mercenary spirit prevails, folk will stand by Christ and religion as long as it will stand with their selfish and secular designs, but no

longer. Christ, conscience, religion, and every thing, must slavishly submit to this at length.

3. It is attended with a stretching of Christian liberty to the uttermost pitch, and a dallying with the appearances of evil. "O," will the man say, "what needs all this needless scrupulosity and preciseness? I may adventure thus far, and yet keep in both with God and a good conscience." Like Eve, who thought she might tamper with the temptation, without any hazard of compromising herself; or Samson, who thought he might dally with Delilah, and yet keep in with God. O sirs, it is dangerous going too near God's marches; for, as one says, he that will go all the length he may, when occasion serves, will go farther than he ought.

4. It is attended with a snarling at reproofs. They cannot abide to have their sores ripped up, and the evil of their ways discovered. Let ministers preach ever such sound doctrine, yet if they but point towards the quarter where their defections lie, presently they are like wild bulls in a net, full of fury and resentment. We find too much of this, even in good men, when engaged in a partial defection. Asa was so irritated by the reproof of the prophet, that he cast him into prison, for telling him that he was fallen from his former confidence in God, when the hosts of the Ethiopians came up against him. And the Galatians reckoned Paul their "enemy, because he told them the truth." With a snatching at the reputation of those that stand their ground, or who give any testimony against their defections: and if they can perceive any such making but the least wrong step, they are sure to make it as open and public to the world as possible, and to represent it in the blackest character imaginable. It is a very true observation, that backsliders are commonly backbiters. They cannot abide to see any out-shine themselves in holiness and tenderness; and therefore they lie at the catch, to wound the reputation of those that cannot run the same length with themselves. This made David pray, "Deliver me, O Lord, from all my transgressions, and make me not the reproach of the foolish: for when my foot slippeth, mine enemies do magnify themselves against me."

6. Division is usually the concomitant and fruit of defection. If we should trace all divisions to their spring, by which the inmost parts of the church of God have been rent, since the first ages of Christianity, we should still find them taking their rise from the bitter fountain of defection. What was it but the defections of some in the church of Corinth, that gave birth to that division, of which the apostle complains, 1 Cor. 1? What was it but the defections of the church of Rome, that has made such a wide breach between Protestants and Papists? It is true, every party and set of men have preached up peace, and cried out against division; as the Papists to this very day, exclaim against us for making a rupture in the church of Christ: whereas it is not we, but they themselves, that make the rupture by their defections. We must not say, A confederacy with any in a way of sin, or purchase peace at the expense of truth and holiness. This was the sentiment of good old Jacob on his death-bed, Genesis 49:5: "Simeon and Levi are brethren in iniquity: instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret," &c. Many other things might be added as concomitants of defection; but I must not stand on them. I go on, therefore, to—

II. The second thing in the text and method, which was, to inquire a little into the causes of defection. And,

1. The main cause, or rather occasion, of this defection here mentioned, was the unpleasantness of Christ's doctrine to the sensual and carnal inclinations of these pretended disciples mentioned in our text. His doctrine did not suit their humours, and answer their expectations; therefore they went back, and walked no more with him. Just like many among ourselves, who, if ministers do not

preach according to their fancies, if they be free and faithful, and preach against the defection of which they are guilty, they either turn their backs on them, or cry out upon them as men of turbulent spirits, incendiaries, fire-brands, and what not? But ministers need not be discouraged on this account, since the apostles of our Lord were characterized after the same manner: "These are they that have turned the world upside down." I fear there are many among us, who, if they would speak the language of their hearts, would join issue with that people, Isaiah 30:10: "Who said to their seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits. But, sirs, we need not wonder to see folk stumbling at the plain truths of the word, seeing Christ himself is "set for the fall," as well as for the "rising of many in Israel."

2. The love of worldly riches is another great cause of defection, as is plain from what the apostle says, 1 Timothy 6:10: "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." Where the love of the world has the ascendant in the heart, the love of God cannot be strong; for, "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him:" and where the love of God is not, it is impossible for that man to stand his ground.

3. The love of worldly ease is another great cause of defection from Christ, especially in a time of persecution for the gospel's sake; for then it will be said, as Peter to Christ, when dissuading him from going up to Jerusalem, Master, spare thyself; it is best to sleep in a whole skin. But let us remember what Christ says in this case, Matthew 16:25: "Whosoever shall save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it."

4. The fear of man is another cause of defection: "The fear of man," says Solomon, "bringeth a snare;" especially the fear of offending and displeasing great men, upon whom we have any kind of dependence. But, as an antidote against this, let us compare the wrath of man with the wrath of the eternal God. Shall we adventure to run upon "the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler," to avoid the displeasure of a worm like ourselves? Isaiah 51:12: "Who art thou, that shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, who shall be made as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" To the same purpose is that caveat given us by our blessed Lord; "Fear not man, that can kill the body, but cannot kill the soul," &c.

5. Bad example has a fatal influence this way; and especially the bad example of men of influence and authority, such as ministers and magistrates. You have a word for this, Hos. 5:1: "Hear ye this, O priests, and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you; because ye have been a snare on Mizpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor." When we have conceived a great veneration for any man, we are very ready to run after his example. Thus, Galatians 2:13: Barnabas, with many of the converted Jews at Antioch, were led away with Peter's dissimulation, who seemed to them a pillar; for which Paul withstood him to the very face. Let us always remember, that we are to be followers of no man, but in so far as they are followers of Christ.

6. The treachery and deceit of the heart, with its natural bent and bias towards sin: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." That character given Israel is exceedingly applicable to it, Hosea 11:7: "They are bent to backsliding." There is not only an easiness and drawability in the heart of man to sin, but a strong propensity and inclination. So that it was not without sufficient ground that Solomon tells us, Proverbs 28:26: "He that trusteth in his own heart,

is a fool." Let us, therefore, advert to that caveat of the apostle's, Hebrews 3:12: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." I might mention many other causes, if time would allow, such as absolute and downright hypocrisy in their dealings with God. If the heart be not "right with God," people can never be "steadfast in his covenant." Again; self-confidence, when men lean to their own understanding, trust to their own strength; like Peter, "Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I." These resolutions, that are founded upon our own strength, will prove like Jonah's gourd, wither, and come to naught, as soon as ever the wind of temptation blows on them. We are not to trust any created grace that is in us, but only the grace that is in Christ Jesus: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Again; when folk voluntarily let down their guard, and slack their watch, they yield themselves an easy prey to the devil: and therefore, "Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil goes about, as a roaring lion, seeing whom he may devour." Again; when folk do not lay a sure foundation. He that builds must count the cost. They that have not a root of solid grace in themselves, will fall away in the time of temptation. And so much for the causes of defection, the second thing proposed.

III. The third thing was, to inquire a little into the seasons of defection. The words also give ground for this inquiry: From that time many of his disciples went back. You may take these few causes, among many others: —

1. Defections may happen after God has been making very signal and remarkable appearances in his providence for a people. Christ, in the beginning of this chapter, had made a signal, yea, a miraculous appearance, for those people, by feeding them in a desert place; and yet a day or two after, they went back, and walked no more with him. This was the sin of Israel: God delivers them out of their Egyptian bondage, in an awe-inspiring way, plaguing their enemies, and dividing the Red Sea before them; and yet they soon forgot his mighty works, and turned aside from the right way. And, alas! May not this aggravate the defections of which we in this land are guilty, that we have turned aside from God, after many surprising and almost miraculous deliverances that he has wrought for us?

2. Defections frequently happen in the midst of the clearest revelation of the gospel, and when the light of the gospel is shining with the greatest brightness among a people. This people here had heard Christ himself preach, who spake as never man spake; and yet, immediately upon the back of hearing him, they turned their back upon him. This also aggravates our defections, and abounding sins, that they are under the clearest sunshine of gospel-revelation: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."

3. After very solemn professions of love and friendship to Christ. This people here professed such a kindness to Christ, that they would needs make him a king; and they are so taken with him, that they follow him to the other side of the sea; and yet, alas! They went back, and walked no more with him. Thus, Israel also, they seemingly professed, that "whatever the Lord their God should command them," that they would "observe and do;" but they quickly "turned aside like a deceitful bow." My friends, you have been professing friendship to Christ, before men and angels, by partaking of the symbols of his body and blood: O take care that you be not found practically renouncing your sacramental engagements, by entering upon a course of defection. Alas! May not the defections of many professors be dated from a communion-table? They come away, after they

have got the sop, with more of hell and the devil in them than before.

4. After some remarkable common illumination, and seeming experiences in religion, Heb. 6 &c. It was a high aggravation of Solomon's sin, that he went astray after the Lord had several times appeared to him.

5. The time of worldly prosperity. Deuteronomy 32:15: "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked." And Hosea 13:6: "According to their pasture, so were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me."

6. A time of trial and persecution for righteousness' sake, when enemies are invading the rights and privileges of the church of Christ, casting fire into his sanctuary, and polluting the dwelling-place of his name. This is a season in which the Lord calls for a special testimony for himself at the hand of professors; and yet even then many fall off; and sail with the stream. The stony-ground hearers, "when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they are offended." Rotten fruit usually drops off in a storm; and the wind commonly drives away the chaff.

7. Defection may happen among a people, even when there is a remnant keeping their ground, and maintaining their integrity; as you see here. When the multitude are turning their back on Christ, he says to his disciples, "Will ye also go away?." To which they answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life." Revelation 3:4: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments," &c.

IV. The fourth thing is, to inquire who they are that make this defection from Christ. We are told here, that they were disciples; that is, they were so professedly. They pretended to be disciples, and had gone considerable lengths with Christ, which had procured for them this character. For,

1. They had entered into Christ's school, and got many a sweet lesson: but, hearing many things, they did not observe them. They were disciples; for they owned him as their Master and Lord: ver. 25. "When they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" and, ver. 34: "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Of the same kind are these, (Matth. 7:22,) who cried, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" &c.

2. They were a set of men that had a very fiery edge upon them for awhile: for they not only followed Christ through the sea, but they have seemingly very strong desires after Christ, and the bread of life; saying, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." But though "with their mouth they pretended much love, yet their heart went after their covetousness."

3. They are called disciples; for they joined themselves to the society of the true and real disciples of Christ, and go along with them, in following Christ for a considerable time; but yet turn their backs on them at length.

4. They had been eye and ear witnesses of the doctrine and miracles of Christ: and yet, for all this, they went back, and walked no more with him. Thus, you see upon what account they might be called disciples. And now, seeing in the text we are told that they were many; hence, therefore, you may take the following observations or remarks:—

1. That, among the multitude of professors, Christ has commonly but a small body of supporters in a winnowing and sifting time: There was but a handful that staid with Christ; the greatest multitude dropped of. The heap of corn is but small, when the straw and chaff are separated from it. Christ's flock is but a little flock: "Many are called, but few are chosen. Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

2. As Christ has but a small number of supporters, so the greatest number of professors usually dance to the devil's pipe, and comply with the side of the times. Many of them went back, only the twelve staid behind: "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

3. Defection from Christ is of a very spreading and contagious nature; "a little of this leaven" is fair to "leaven the whole lump;" like a pestilential air, it flies over a whole country or kingdom in a very little time. Among the many thousands in Israel, only seven thousand had not bowed to Baal. There were but "a few names in Sardis, which had not defiled their garments." Hence it follows, —

4. That the way of the multitude is always to be suspected. And people are never to think themselves safe enough, because they have many neighbours; for we are not to "follow a multitude to do evil," in regard the way of the multitude is a way commonly loathed of God.

5. The followers of Christ need not be discouraged because of the paucity of their number; for it has been so in all ages. It was so at first, and will be so to the end of the world: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth?" And therefore, I say, though you should sit like a pelican in the wilderness, and owl in the desert; though you should become the song of the drunkard, and be held for signs and wonders in Israel, because of the singularity of your way; yet be not discouraged at this, for it is far better to go to heaven alone than to hell in company.

Now, if it be asked, Why the Lord suffers defections among his professed disciples? I answer, briefly, 1. Because God will have a difference put "between the precious and the vile?" 1 Corinthians 11:19: "There must needs be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest. God will have the chaff distinguished from the wheat, the dross from the true gold; he will have his Israel proved and tried, that they may be distinguished from others. 2. That real disciples may be challenged to cleave to the Lord with the more firmness and resolution: "Lord, to whom shall we go, but unto thee?" said the twelve, when they saw the multitude running away. We have a word to this purpose, Job 17:8-9: "The innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite;" and then it immediately follows, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall add strength," as in the Hebrew, or "he stronger and stronger;" intimating that the defections of hypocrites from the way of the Lord sharpens the resolution of the truly godly in cleaving to him; for at such a time, God, as it were, is issuing his proclamation in the camp of Israel, "Who is on the Lord's side?" To which we may add, that these defections of pretended disciples do, in a way of righteous judgment, prove stumbling-blocks to others, by which they are hardened in a way of sin. And thus a woe falls both upon the offender and the offended; according to that of Christ's, Matthew 18:7: "Woe unto the world because of offences: for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

V. The fifth thing is, to give a few characters of those who fall off finally, and walk no more with Christ. Only, before I go on, I would premise, that I do not here offer to give positive marks of an

irrecoverable condition; for who can set bounds to the infinite grace and mercy of him, to whom no case is desperate, and "who is able to save to the uttermost" of sin, and to the uttermost of misery? But all I do is, to offer some melancholy symptoms or presumptions of an irrecoverable defection.

1. It is a ominous evidence of a final defection, when people fall off from the profession and practice of religion, after some signal, though common, illuminations and warmings of the Spirit; for which you may read Hebrews 6:4-6.

2. When people, through the influence of these common illuminations in the knowledge of Christ, have been led to make considerable advances in the way of religion, and yet afterward apostatize, and fall back into the same puddle of wickedness which they seemed to have escaped. A weighty scripture for this you have, 2 Peter 2:20-21.

3. When people knowingly and wilfully venture upon a way of sin, after they have received the knowledge of the truth: for which see Hebrews 10:26-27. When folk come that length, especially after a profession of religion, as to become mockers of true piety, attempting to ridicule things sacred, and to banter those out of their religion, whom they think to be aiming heavenward: this is a black mark of one that is entirely given up of God; this being an open proclamation of war against heaven. "Be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong."

4. Those whose hearts are filled with malice against the image of God in his people, who reject and detest the very picture of holiness in his people, and so become open persecutors of Christ in his members, and take all methods imaginable to extirpate the name of Christ and Christianity out of the world: as did the cursed apostate Julian.

5. When people get success and prosperity in a way of sin. They thirst after sin, and God grants them the desire of their hearts. This is a sign of total and final defection; for, says, the Lord, "Backsliders in heart shall be filled with their own ways." Perhaps, you think all is right, because God in his providence does not check you in your sinful ways. But assure yourselves, there cannot be a sadder mark of his wrath and vengeance; for then he seems to be saying, "They are joined to their idols, let them alone. Let him that is filthy, be filthy still."

6. When, after challenges of conscience, rebukes from the word and Spirit upon the account of sin, all comes to be hushed up in a profound silence, and the senses of the soul are locked up in a deep slumber, then it would appear, that God is saying, as he said to the old world, "My Spirit shall no more strive with them." They "would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts; and they walked in their own counsels. I would have purged them, and they were not purged; therefore they shall not be purged from their filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon them." We have a sad instance of this nature, Isaiah 6:10: There is a people on whom God had taken a great deal of pains, as we read, chap. 5 (Isaiah 5:1). He had chosen them as his vineyard, planted them in a fruitful soil: but all his labour was lost; they still went on in a course of defection and apostacy; "instead of grapes, they brought forth wild grapes." Well at length God seals them up under a stroke of judicial blindness and hardness; so that no reproof from word, providence, or conscience, should ever affect them. "Go," says the Lord, "and make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert,

and be healed."

Before I proceed to the application, I shall do away with a question which some serious soul may be ready to ask, upon what has been said on the former head; namely, Wherein lies the difference between the partial and temporary defections of the godly, and these total, final, and irrecoverable apostacies of hypocrites and temporary believers? To which I answer, 1. The believer, when he is left to backslide, or to fall into any sin, howls and groans under it; it lies heavy on him, like a burden too heavy for him to bear. "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." They can never enjoy themselves with satisfaction, till they be recovered again. An instance of this we have in the apostle Peter, after he had been left to make that foul step of defection, in denying Christ with curses and imprecations: after Christ gave him but a look, he went out, and wept bitterly. The same we see in David, Psalms 51:1-19. After he had been guilty of murder and adultery, in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba, how does he lament and bewail his folly? And that which principally touches them, is not so much the penal, as the moral evil of their defection; they are not so much grieved that they themselves suffer, as that God is dishonoured, and religion wounded by their means; as we see in David, Psalms 51:4: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

2. They are never at rest, or ease, till they have the guilt and filth of their sin expiated and washed away by the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus; and all the world will not quiet their consciences, till this be obtained. O, says David, after he had made this foul step, "wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin:" And again, ver. 7: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Whereas the hypocrite, when he falls, satisfies the clamours of his conscience either by extenuating his sin, or by multiplying his duties. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil?" But he never runs to Christ, to have his "conscience sprinkled from dead works."

3. The believer, after he has fallen, does not satisfy himself with a turning from sin to God, but he must have some reviving intimations of God's favour and reconciled countenance: as David, (ver. 8:) "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." Though all the world should fawn upon him, yet it will not please him, unless he get a smile from God himself.

4. When the believer falls, his fall leads him to bewail the corruption and depravation of his nature. He traces the streams to the fountain, and sits down there, and weeps over it, as the cause of all his defections and backslidings from God as David did, (ver 5:) "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me:" and looks up to God for a cast of renewing grace, (ver. 10:) "Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me." Whereas hypocrites bewail the loss of their reputation more than they do their sin or the depravation of their nature.

5. When believers fall, they come under fresh engagements, through grace, to walk more closely with God than ever they have done before, and endeavour to be more serviceable to him in their generation than ever; as David, (ver. 12,13:) "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

6. As burnt children dread the fire, believers are afraid of falling into the same sins again; and for this end indent with God, not in their own, but only in his strength to keep them; as David, "Uphold me with thy free Spirit;" and again, elsewhere, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps may not slide:" and Psalms 119:5: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" Now, from these marks of the partial falls of the godly, you may easily gather the difference between them, and the damnable apostacy and total defection of hypocrites and reprobates. And now I go on to the application of this doctrine; and all the use I make of it shall be in a word of exhortation. Is it so, that many of Christ's pretended disciples do, some time or other, fall totally and finally away from him? Then let me exhort and persuade all hearing me, but especially you who have been lifting up your hands to him at a communion-table, and professing to be his disciples, by laying your hands on a slain Redeemer, to endeavour firmness and stability, in cleaving to Christ and his way. O let it not be said of you, as it is said of these disciples here, From that time they went back, and walked no more with him. To enforce this exhortation, consider, first, the evil of apostacy either in part, or in whole.

1. It is a provocation of the highest nature. And there are especially two evils in it, which cannot but awaken divine resentment; namely, treachery and ingratitude. 1st, There is treachery in it. What husband would take it well, if his wife should abandon him, and follow after other lovers. My friends, you have been taking God for your husband, in a solemn manner, before angels and men; and will it not be treachery in the highest degree, to go and prostitute your souls to sin, his greatest enemy? Will not this cast a calumny and reproach upon God, as if others were better than he? This will make him say, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" &c. "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?" 2dly, There is ingratitude in it, also. It was a very cutting word that Christ had to his disciples, in the verse following our text, "Will ye also leave me?" The same is he saying to every one of you: 'Will ye also go away, after such proofs of my kindness, after such repeated vows and obligations?' From all which it is evident, that apostacy is a provocation of the highest nature.

2. Your backsliding will give a deep wound to religion, and bring up a reproach upon the good ways of God. You have been owning him as your Lord and Master, and declaring before the world, that you think his service the best service, his wages the best wages; that one day in his courts is better than a thousand. Now, if after all you backslide, will not the world conclude, that you have not found that in his service which you expected? And thus others will be scared from the good ways of the Lord.

3. You will grieve the hearts of the godly, whose hearts God would not grieve. And it is a dangerous thing to offend one of his little ones: "It were better for you that a mill-stone were hanged about your neck, and you cast into the midst of the sea, than that you should offend one of these little ones."

4. If you shall apostatize in the whole, and slide back with a perpetual backsliding, it will be a prelude of your eternal banishment and separation from the presence of God. God's soul takes no pleasure in backsliders, and therefore they can never have access into his gracious presence; consequently, " shall be punished with everlasting destruction."

5. If you be believers, and apostitize in part, you shall put a whip in God's hand to chastise you. If you shall after this turn careless in your walk, more remiss in duty, less frequent, less fervent, less

lively, than before, you may assure yourselves, that you shall not go unpunished: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. -If his children forsake my law, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

Secondly, Consider some great advantages of stability in cleaving to Christ, and standing firm to his cause and interest.

1. It will furnish you much inward peace and tranquillity of mind: "Great peace have all they which love thy law." God tells Israel, that if they had cleaved to him and his way," their peace should have been as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea."

2. It will glorify God, and reflect a lustre upon religion; make the world conclude you serve a good Master. Hence is that of Christ; "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

3. As backsliding strikes a damp upon the spirit at the approaches of death; so stability of heart, in the Lord's way, affords courage and confidence, through Christ, upon the approach of that grim messenger of the Lord of hosts. Hence is that of Paul, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," &c.

4. The reward of grace is ensured in Christ to the steadfast soul: 1 Corinthians 15:58 "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." Remember, that your title to the reward comes in by virtue of your union with Christ; and O how glorious is that reward the steadfast soul is entitled to through him! It has a kingdom secured to it: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom." A throne: Revelation 3:21: "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne." A crown is secured; a crown of life: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." A crown of glory: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away." A crown of righteousness, which is "laid up for all that keep the faith, and love his appearing." A crown of joy, yea a crown of everlasting joy, shall be "upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away."

I conclude with two or three advices:—

1. Take care that the foundation be well laid, upon the everlasting Rock Jesus Christ; for this is the foundation that God hath laid in Zion, and another foundation can no man lay. You must be cemented to this foundation by the Spirit and faith, otherwise you can never stand in a day of trial; for your root being rottenness, your "blossom shall go up as the dust." The house built upon the sand fell, when the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon it; but the house founded upon this rock shall stand out against the utmost efforts of the gates of hell.

2. Maintain an everlasting suspicion over your own hearts; for "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," considering that it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Particularly take heed of the workings and sproutings of the bitter root of unbelief, which causes to depart from the living God, Hebrews 3:12.

3. Keep your eyes upon the promises of persevering grace, particularly that, Jeremiah 32:40: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I

will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." If you plead and improve this promise by faith, it is impossible you can draw back; for it is "impossible for God to lie." God stands on both sides of the covenant, to fulfil both his and our part of the same; and therefore plead, that he may fulfil his in you, that he would keep you by his "power, through faith unto salvation."

4. Keep a steady eye on Christ, the blessed Mediator of the covenant." Eye him as the store-house and fountain of all your supplies of grace and strength; for it is "out of his fulness that we receive, and grace for grace." Eye him as your Captain, to fight all your battles against sin and Satan; for he has "spoiled principalities and powers;" and if ever we overcome, it must be in the blood and strength of the Lamb. Eye him as your guide, to lead you through all the dark and difficult steps of your pilgrimage; for "he leads the blind in a way that they have not known." Eye him as your pattern; endeavour to imitate him in all his imitable perfections; run your Christian race, "looking unto Jesus." Remember how steady and firm he was in carrying on the great work of redemption; he set his face like a flint against all the storms and obstacles that lay in his way; "he did not faint, nor was he discouraged," but "travelled on in the greatness of his strength, enduring the cross, and despising the shame;" for he said on the cross, "It is finished." So study ye, after his example, to run your Christian race, your course of obedience, and press oil against all temptations and difficulties, till ye "have finished your course with joy," and arrive at "the mark and prize of the high calling of God in Christ."

5. Beware of the first beginnings of defection and backsliding; for one trip makes way for another. Defections, are like the rolling of a stone upon the brow of a high mountain; if once it begin to roll, it is likely never to rest till it be at the bottom. You have been upon the mount of God, sirs; and if you begin once to roll down the hill of your high professions and resolutions, it is a hundred to one if you do not land in the depths of apostacy, and at last in the depths of hell.

6. Lastly, Study to be well skilled in unmasking the mystery of iniquity, and in detecting the wiles and stratagems of the tempter, and to provide yourselves with suitable antidotes against every attack of the enemy. For instance, if he tell thee sin is pleasant, ask him, if the complaints of the worm of conscience be pleasant too? and if "one day in God's house" be not "better than a thousand in the tents of sin?" If he tell thee, that nobody sees, ask him if he can shut the eye of an omniscient God, whose "eyes are as a flame of fire," and who "setteth our most secret sins in the light of his countenance?" If he tell thee, that it is but a little one, ask him, If there be a little God? Or if His displeasure be a little thing? If he tell thee, that sin is profitable, ask him, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" By considerations of this nature, the mind comes to be fortified against the attacks and onsets of that grand enemy of salvation, and prove a notable ballast to keep the soul firm and steady against the most violent storms and tempests that may blow either from earth or hell.

S. The Believer Exalted in Imputed Righteousness

The Believer Exalted in Imputed Righteousness by Ebenzer Erskine From "The Whole Works of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine: Consisting of Sermons and Discourses. To which is Added, an enlarged memoir of the Author, by the Rev. D. Fraser," Volume 1 (of 3). Philadelphia: Wm. S. & A. Young, 1836. Pages 146-160.

Preached at the celebration of the Lord's supper, at Largo, Sabbath morning, June 4, 1721.

["Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."—Isaiah 45:24-25 The subject of the following discourse is high, noble, and excellent. — But my design at that time, being only to preface a little before the action-sermon, by that eminent and worthy servant of Christ, Mr. William Moncrief, I took care to abridge my thoughts upon it as much as possible. I have since handled the same text, in my ordinary, at far greater length. But the discourse having been quarrelled with, as was hinted in the preface to that on Revelation 3:4, I judged it fit to send it abroad, in the very same dress in which, to the best of my remembrance, it was delivered. It is not accuracy of style or method I set up for, but the edification of the poor, to whom the gospel is preached; and therefore shall contend with none upon those heads. But as for the doctrines here delivered, if I durst not hazard my own salvation upon the truth of them, I had never adventured to preach them as the truths of God to others. I am fully persuaded, that one great reason why the gospel has so little success in our day, is, because our discourses generally are so little calculated for pulling down our own, and exalting the righteousness of Christ, as the alone foundation which God hath laid in Zion. Our sermons lose their savour and efficacy for salvation, if this be wanting: and I humbly think the great apostle Paul was of this mind, Romans 1:16-17 : "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." And if any ask, Whence comes the gospel to have such power to salvation? He immediately answers, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."]

"In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."—Psalms 89:16. The psalmist, in the beginning of this psalm, having run out at great length in the praise and commendation of the God of Israel, proceeds, from Psalms 89:15, to declare the happiness of his Israel, or of true believers, of whom Israel according to the flesh were a type.

Now, God's Israel are a happy people upon several accounts. 1. Because they are privileged to know the joyful sound, in the beginning of Psalms 89:15. The gospel has a joyful sound; a sound of peace, a sound of life, a sound of liberty and salvation. You are all privileged to hear this sound with your bodily ears; but the great question is, do you know it, understand it, and give faith's entertainment to it? Alas! Isaiah's lamentation may but too justly be continued, with respect to the greatest part of the hearers of the gospel, "Who hath believed our report?" 2. God's Israel are a happy people, because they "walk in the light of his countenance," in the close of Psalms 89:15.

They are privileged with the special intimations of his love, which puts more gladness in their hearts, than when corn, wine and oil abound. 3. Whatever discouragement they may meet with from the world, yet still they have ground of rejoicing in their God: "In thy name shall they rejoice all the day;" and, "Thanks be unto God," says the apostle, "who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." 4. Their happiness is evident from this, that they are dignified and exalted above others, by the immaculate robe of a Surety's righteousness; as you see in the words of my text, In thy righteousness shall they be exalted. In which words briefly we may notice, 1. The believer's promotion; he is exalted. In the first Adam we were debased to the lowest hell, the crown having fallen from our heads: but in Christ, the second Adam, we are again exalted; yea, exalted as high as heaven, for we "sit together with him in heavenly places," says the apostle. This is an incredible paradox to a blind world, that the believer, who is sitting at this moment upon the dunghill of this earth, should at the same time be sitting in heaven in Christ, his glorious head and representative; and yet it is indisputably true, that we "sit together with him in heavenly places," Ephesians 2:6. Yea, in him he "rules the nations with a rod of iron," and triumphs over, and treadeth upon all the powers of hell. 2. We have the ground of the believer's preferment and exaltation; It is in thy righteousness. It is not in any righteousness of his own; no; this he utterly disclaims, reckoning it but dung and loss, filthy rags, dogs' meat: but it is in thy righteousness; that is, the righteousness of God, as the apostle calls it, Romans 1:17 : "The righteousness which is of God by faith," Php 3:9. The righteousness of God is variously taken in scripture.—Sometimes for the infinite rectitude and equity of his nature: Psalms 11:7 : "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." — Sometimes for his rectoral equity, or distributive justice, which he exercises in the government of the world, rewarding the good, and punishing evil-doers; Psalms 97:2 : "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Sometimes it is put for his veracity and faithfulness in accomplishing his word of promise, or in executing his word of threatening; Psalms 36:5-6 : "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds: thy righteousness is like the great mountains." Sometimes it is put for the perfect righteousness which Christ, the Son of God as our Surety and Mediator, brought in, by his obedience to the law, and death on the cross, for the justification of guilty sinners; and this, as I said, is frequently called the righteousness of God: and in this sense I understand it here in the text, In thy righteousness shall they be exalted. The observation is much the same with the words themselves; namely, That in, or by, the righteousness of Christ, believers are exalted. Or thus, To whatever honour or happiness believers are exalted, the righteousness of Christ is the ground and foundation of it. It is owing to the complete obedience, and meritorious death of the ever-blessed Surety. This is "the foundation which God hath laid in Zion," upon which all our happiness in time and through eternity is built.

I have not time now to adduce parallel texts of scripture for the confirmation of this doctrine, neither can I stand upon a long prosecution of it, considering what great work you have before you through the day. All I shall do, shall be only,

I. To offer a few propositions concerning this righteousness, that you may understand both the nature and necessity of it.

II. Give you a few of its properties, to clear its excellency.

III. Speak a little of the believer's exaltation by virtue of this righteousness.

IV. Apply.

I. For the first thing, to offer a few propositions respecting this righteousness for clearing its nature and necessity.

1. Then, you would know, that God having made man a rational creature, capable of moral government, gave him a law suited to his nature, by which he was to govern himself in the duties he owed to God his great Creator. This law was delivered to man in the form of a covenant, with a promise of life upon the condition of perfect obedience, and a threatening of death in case of disobedience, Genesis 2:17. Thus stood matters between God and man in a state of innocence.

2. Adam, and all his posterity in him, and with him, having broken the covenant, are become liable to the curse, and penalty of it; so that our salvation is become absolutely impossible, until justice be satisfied, and the honour of the broken law repaired. The law and justice of God are very peremptory, and stand upon a full satisfaction and reparation, otherwise heaven's gates shall be shut, and eternally barred against man and all his posterity. The flaming sword of justice turns every way, to keep us from access to the paradise that is above.

3. While man in these circumstances, was expecting nothing but to fall an eternal sacrifice to divine justice, the eternal Son of God, in his infinite love and pity to perishing sinners, steps in as a Mediator and Surety; offering not only to take our nature, but to take our law-place, to stand in our room and stead: by which the whole obligation of the law, both penal and preceptive, did fall upon him; that is, he becomes liable and obliged both to fulfil the command, and to endure the curse of the covenant of works, which we had violated. And here, by the way, it is fit to advertise you, that it was an act of amazing grace in the Lord Jehovah, to admit a surety in our room; for had he stood to the rigour and severity of the law, he would have demanded a personal satisfaction, without admitting of the satisfaction of a Surety: in which case Adam, and all his posterity, had fallen under the stroke of avenging justice through eternity. But "Glory to God in the highest," who not only admitted of a Surety but also provided one, and "laid help upon one that is mighty."

4. Christ, the eternal Son of God, being in "the fulness of time, made of a woman, and made under the law," as our Surety, he actually, in our room and stead, fulfilled the whole terms of the covenant of works; that is, in a word, he obeyed all the commands of the law, and endured the curse of it, and thus brings in a complete law-righteousness; by which guilty sinners are justified before God. And this is the righteousness by which we are exalted. By his active and passive obedience he magnifies the law, and makes it honourable, and the Lord declares himself to be well pleased for his righteousness sake.

[5. - DK] Although Christ obeyed the law, and satisfied justice, and thus brought in an everlasting law-righteousness for a whole elect world; yet the elect of God are never exalted by virtue of this righteousness, till, in a day of power, they be brought to receive it by faith, and submit to it for justification before God. We disclaim that Antinomian error, of an actual justification from eternity, or yet of a formal justification, bearing date from the death of Christ. We own, indeed, with all sound Protestant divines, that it was the purpose of God to justify his elect from eternity, and that all the elect were represented by Christ in his obedience unto the death; but that they are actually justified before conversion, or before their application by faith to the blood of Jesus, is impossible; because the sentence of the broken law stands always in force against them, till they actually believe in the Son of God for he that believeth not, is condemned already. And how can they be both justified and condemned at the same time? Till then, they are children of wrath even as

others.

6. This righteousness of the Surety is conveyed to us by imputation; as is abundantly plain from many places of scripture, particularly, Romans 4:6, Romans 4:11-12, Romans 4:23-24. God reckons what the Surety did in our room to us; so that his righteousness becomes as much ours for justification before God, as though we had obeyed the law, and satisfied justice in our own person. Now, this imputation of the Surety's righteousness runs principally upon these two or three things: (1.) Upon the eternal transaction between the Father and the Son, in which the Son of God was chosen and sustained as the Surety of an elect world. Then it was that he gave bond to the Father, to pay their debt, in the red gold of his blood, saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: — Lo, I come: — I delight to do thy will." (2.) It is grounded upon the actual imputation of our sins to him: "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." There is a blessed exchange of places between Christ and his people: he takes on our sin and unrighteousness, that we may be clothed with the white robe of his righteousness: 2 Corinthians 5:21 : "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (3.) This imputation goes upon the ground of the mystical union between Christ and the believer. When the poor soul is determined in a "day of power" to embrace the Lord Jesus in the arms of faith, Christ and he in that very moment coalesce into one body, he becomes a branch of the noble vine; a member of that body of which Christ is the glorious Head of eminence, influence, and government. And being thus united to Christ, the long and white robe of the Mediator's righteousness is spread over him; by which he is not only freed from condemnation, but for ever sustained as righteous in the sight of God; 1 Corinthians 1:30 : "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

II. The second general head was, to offer a few properties of this righteousness in which believers are exalted, from whence its excellency will appear.

1. Then, it is an every way perfect and spotless righteousness: and how can it be otherwise, seeing it is the righteousness of God? So perfect is it, that the holy law is not only fulfilled, but magnified and made honourable thereby, Isaiah 42:21. So perfect is this righteousness, that the piercing eye of infinite justice cannot find the least flaw in it: yea, justice is so fully satisfied that God speaks of the soul who is clothed with it, as though it were in a state of innocence, and perfectly freed from sin: "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." Indeed, he beholds many spots in the believer, considered in himself; but not a spot is in him, considered as under the covert of this spotless righteousness.

2. It is a meritorious righteousness. The redemption of the soul is so precious, that it would have ceased for ever, unless it had been redeemed by this righteousness; for silver and gold, and such corruptible things, could never do it. Lay heaven, and all the glories of it, in the balance with this righteousness, they would be all light as a feather, compared, with it. Heaven is called a purchased inheritance, and this righteousness is the price that bought it. There is such merit in it, that it expiates sins of the blackest hue, and redeems a whole elect world from wrath and ruin. Such is the intrinsic value of it, that, had it been so designed, it was sufficient to have redeemed the whole posterity of Adam, yea, ten thousand worlds of angels and men, upon a supposition of their existence and fall. O with what confidence, then, may a poor soul venture its eternal salvation

upon this foundation!

3. It is an incomparable righteousness. There is no righteousness among the creatures that can be compared with it. Compare it with our own righteousness by the law, and the apostle Paul will tell us, that he reckoned his Pharisaical righteousness before conversion, yea, his own obedience after conversion, but as dung, when laid in the balance with it, Php 3:8. Compare it with Adam's righteousness in a state of innocence, or with the righteousness of the spotless angels, they are but like glow-worms, when compared with this sun: the one is but the righteousness of a creature, but here is "the righteousness of God."

4. It is a soul-beautifying and adorning righteousness: Isaiah 61:10 : "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh herself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." The poor soul, that was black, by lying among the pots, when clothed with this robe, shines "as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

5. It is an everlasting righteousness, as the prophet Daniel calls it, Daniel 9:24. Indeed, this righteousness had no being, save in the purpose and promise of God, till Christ actually appeared in our nature, and satisfied the commands of the law, and demands of justice: however, upon that very being that it had in the purpose and promise of God, it became effectual for the justification of all the Old Testament saints. This righteousness, then, I say, is an everlasting righteousness, both as to the contrivance and duration of it. The contrivance of it bears date from the council of peace in the ancient years of eternity; for the Surety was set up from everlasting. And, as it is everlasting in its root, so also in its fruit; for upon this righteousness the saints will stand, and be acquitted at the day of judgment; and upon this bottom they will have their standing in heaven through eternity. The song of the redeemed for ever will be, "he loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

6. It is a soul dignifying and exalting righteousness. Solomon, (Proverbs 14:34,) speaking of equity in the administration of justice, says, that even that kind of righteousness exalteth a nation. I am sure this holds true of the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, as you see in my text, In thy righteousness shall they be exalted. But this leads to,

III. The third thing in the method, which was to speak of the believer's exaltation by virtue of this righteousness. And here I will very briefly show, 1. What evils it exalts him above. 2. What happiness and dignity it exalts him to.

First, What evils it exalts him above.

1. It exalts him above the law as a covenant of works; yea, above both the commanding and the condemning power of that covenant. "Ye are not under the law," says the apostle, "but under grace," Romans 6:14. And if they be not under it, it follows that they are exalted above it. Indeed, they are not, and cannot be above it as a rule of duty; no creature can be dispensed from the obligation of yielding obedience to the laws of the great Creator; and the believer, in a peculiar manner, is bound to obey the law of the Creator, in the hand of a Mediator. But considering the law as a covenant of works, demanding the debt of obedience as a condition of life, or threatening eternal wrath in case of disobedience, the believer is indeed exalted above it by the righteousness

of Christ. And if the law at any time attempt to bring the believer in bondage to it, he is to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free." The bond woman Hagar, with her offspring of legal fears and terrors, are cast out by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Galatians 4:30. If a believer in Christ shall hear the thunderings and curses of mount Ebal, or Sinai, he has no reason to be affrighted; for "Christ," by his righteousness, "hath redeemed from the curse of the law." "Thou art not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest: — but thou art come unto mount Sion,— and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." The believer is "dead to the law by the body of Christ," being married to a better husband, even him that is raised from the dead.

2. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above the world. Revelation 12:1, the "woman clothed with the sun, has the moon under her feet;" which may not only point at the believer's duty to soar heavenward in his afflictions, but also his privilege in Christ, to trample both upon the frowns and flatteries of this lower world; according to that [declaration] of the apostle, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

3. By this righteousness he is exalted above the power and malice of Satan, indeed, as long as the believer is on this side of Jordan, the devil will be harassing him with his fiery darts, and do his utmost to make him go halting to heaven; but by virtue of this righteousness, namely, the doing and dying of our ever-blessed Surety, the devil is both disarmed and destroyed. The head of the of the old serpent is bruised; for "through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And by faith in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus, the believer treads Satan under his feet; they overcome him by the blood of the Lamb.

4. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above death. Perhaps thou art in bondage through fear of death; thy heart is like to faint and fail thee, when thou lookest to the swelling of this Jordan. But take a view of this righteousness, and thou shalt be exalted above the fears of it for although thou be liable to the stroke of death, yet by this righteousness thou art freed from the sting of it. What is the sting of death? It is sin. Now, Christ has "finished transgression, and made an end of sin," by bringing in "everlasting righteousness." And therefore thou mayest roll that word like a sweet morsel under thy tongue, Hosea 13:14 : "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

5. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above all accusations, from whatever quarter they may come, Romans 8:23. There the apostle gives a bold challenge, "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" The challenge is universal in every respect of all accusers: as if he had said, Is there any in heaven, earth, or hell that can accuse them? It is universal in respect of all the accused; for the whole elect of God are comprehended, among whom there have been as great sinners as ever breathed on God's earth. And it is universal in respect of all crimes: it is not said, Who shall lay this, or that, or the other crime to their charge? But any thing? And what can be more comprehensive? Now, what is the ground of this bold challenge! It is grounded on the righteousness of Christ: for, says the apostle, "It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, &c."

Secondly, I come to show what happiness or dignity the believer is exalted to by virtue of this righteousness. And, in so many words, I only name these two or three particulars: —

1. He is exalted by it to a state of peace and reconciliation with God: Romans 5:1 : "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." God forever lays aside every grudge in his heart against the soul that is clothed with it.

2. They are exalted by this righteousness to a state of son-ship. Christ was "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Galatians 4:4-5.

3. To a state of fellowship and familiarity with, God and access to him with holy confidence and boldness: Hebrews 10:19-22 : "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 4:16 : "Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace." The believer may come, under the covert of this righteousness, with as great freedom to God as his Father in Christ, as ever Adam could have done in a state of innocence.

4. At last thou shalt be exalted to a state of endless glory. For heaven (as I intimated before) is the purchase of the obedience and death of Christ; and faith acted on this righteousness and satisfaction, is the path of life, by which we enter into these rivers of pleasures, and that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand for evermore.

IV. The fourth thing was the application of the doctrine. And my first use shall be of information, in these few particulars: —

1. Is it so, that in a Surety's righteousness believers are exalted? then see hence, that whatever account the world may make of them; as the dross and off-scouring of the earth; yet they are dignified persons in God's reckoning: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable."

2. See, hence, that the believer has no ground of boasting. Why? Because it is not in his own, but in Christ's righteousness, that he is exalted: "Boasting is excluded," says the apostle. "By what law? of works! Nay; but by the law of faith," Romans 3:27. If it were by our own doings or obedience that we were exalted, we would have something to boast of: but since it is in his righteousness that we are exalted, we have nothing whereof to glory in ourselves. There are three questions that the apostle asks, which may silence all flesh, and put all boasters to an eternal blush, 1 Corinthians 4:7 : "Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" Let believers themselves ask their souls these, or the like inquiries, when pride begins to rise in their breasts.

3. See, hence, what obligation we lie under to the Lord Jesus; who, although he was the great Lawgiver, yet was content to be made under the law; though he was the Lord of life, yet humbled himself unto the death, to bring in that righteousness by which we are exalted. He was content to be "numbered among the transgressors," that we might be counted among the righteous; he was content to become sin," that we might be made the righteousness of God;" content to become "a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might rest upon us." O admire this love, which passeth knowledge.

4. See, hence, a noble antidote against a spirit of bondage to fear. What is it that thou fearest, O believer? Indeed, if thou sin, thou mayest fear the rod of a Father; for he "will visit thy transgression with the rod, and thine iniquity with stripes." But art thou afraid of vindictive wrath? There is no ground for this, (Luke 1:74) he has "delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear;" that is, without all servile or slavish fear of wrath. Art thou afraid of the tempests of mount Sinai? There is no ground for that, for the storm broke upon the head of thy Surety; and, therefore, thou mayst sing and say; as Isaiah 12:1, "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away." Art thou afraid, lest thou be refused access to the presence-chamber? Improve this righteousness by faith, and thou shalt see that the way to the holy of holiest is opened, and get the banner of love displayed over thee. Whenever the poor believer takes the righteousness of the Surety in the hand of faith, and holds it up to God as a ransom of his own finding, he is so well pleased with it, that his frowns are turned into smiles. In a word, you shall never get rid of a spirit of bondage, till you learn by faith to improve this law-biding righteousness; and then, indeed, legal fears and terrors vanish, like the darkness of the night before the rising of the sun.

Use second, of reproof to all those who are seeking to exalt themselves by a righteousness of their own, like the Jews, Romans 10:3; who "went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God." There are some of the hearers of the gospel, who exalt themselves in a negative righteousness: they are not so bad as others: they are free of gross outbreakings, being no common drunkards, swearers, or Sabbath-breakers; and, therefore, conclude that all is right with them. But, sirs, the Pharisee could make this boast: and Paul before conversion could say, that touching the law he was blameless, and yet, when God opened his eyes, he found himself lying under the arrest of justice; for, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died." Others are exalting themselves in a moral kind of righteousness; they not only cease to do evil," but do many things that are materially good: they are sober, temperate, just in their dealings, liberal to the poor, good peaceable neighbours; they love every body, and every body loves them; they keep the commandments as well as they can: and this is the ground they are standing upon. But I may say to you, as Christ said to the young man, who told him, "All these things have I kept from my youth up, Yet lackest thou one thing." O what is that? say you. I answer, it is to be brought off from the rotten bottom of a covenant of works, that you are standing upon. You want to see that you are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, and that you are legally dead, condemned already, and the wrath of God abiding on you. You want to see, that "all your own righteousness is as filthy rags," and to be made to say, with the church, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Others will go farther than bare morality: they will abound in the duties of religion, read, bear, pray, communicate, run from sermon to sermon, from sacrament to sacrament; and upon these things they rest. All these things are good in their proper places; but if you build your hope of acceptance here, you are still upon a covenant of works bottom, seeking righteousness, "as it were by the works of the law;" and while you do so, you do but seek the living among the dead. All your works are but dead works, till you are in Christ; and they will but stand for ciphers in God's reckoning, till you be brought to submit to this righteousness, by which alone guilty sinners can be exalted. Others rely upon a mixed kind of righteousness: they will freely own, that their duties and performances will never exalt them into favour and acceptance with God; but, O, say they, it is Christ and our duties, Christ and our prayers, he and our tears and repentance, that must do it. But believe it, sirs, Christ and the idol of

self will never cement; these old rotten rags will never piece in with the white and new robe of the righteousness of the Son of God: and if you adventure to mingle them together, "Christ shall profit you nothing," Galatians 5:2-4. Others again, will pretend to renounce all their works and duties, and own, with their mouths, that it is by faith in Christ only that they hope to be accepted: but though they own this with their mouth, yet still their hearts cleave fast to a covenant of works; they were never "through the law, dead to the law;" and when nothing else will do, they will make their own act of believing the righteousness on which they lead for acceptance; which is still a seeking righteousness in themselves: whereas, if ever we be justified before God, we must have it in the Lord Jesus, saying, "In him" will we "be justified," and "in him alone" will we "glory." Faith carries the soul quite out of itself; yea, faith renounces its own act in the point of justification. All these, and many other rooms and lying refuges, have the devil and our own hearts devised, to lead us off from Christ. But, O sirs, believe it, these are but imaginary sanctuaries, and the hail will sweep them away. Nothing but the doing and dying of the Surety, apprehended by faith, will ever exalt you into favour and fellowship with God, or acquit you from the curse and condemnation of the broken law. And unless you betake yourselves to the horns of this blessed altar, to this refuge of God's appointing, you are undone; and you may read your doom, Isaiah 50:11 : "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."

Use third, of trial. Is it so, that in Christ's righteousness we are exalted? O then, sirs, try if you be really exalted by this righteousness.

There is a the more need to try this now, that you are to approach the table of the Lord. This righteousness is the wedding-garment, without which you cannot be welcome guests. And if you adventure to meddle with the symbols of Christ's body and blood without it, you may expect that the master of the feast will say to you, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?" For your trial, I offer these two or three things: —

1. Hast thou seen thyself condemned by the law or covenant of works? Every man, by nature, "is condemned already," while out of Christ. Now, the ordinary way that God takes of bringing an elect soul into Christ, and under the covering of his righteousness, is by discovering to him the sentence of condemnation that he is under by virtue of the broken law; and thus paves the way toward his acceptance of Christ as "the Lord our Righteousness;" for thus it is that "the law is our schoolmaster, to lead us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith." The Lord leads the sinner to mount Zion by the foot of Sinai: the Spirit's way is, first, to "convince of sin," and then "of righteousness."

2. Has the Lord discovered the Surety and his righteousness to thee? And has thy soul found rest here? Perhaps the law, and its curses, justice and wrath, were pursuing thee; and thou couldst not find a hole in which to hide thy head, "all refuge failed." At length the Lord drew by the veil, and discovered his righteousness as a sufficient shelter, saying, "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." And thither thou fledst, as to a city of refuge, saying, "This is my rest, here will I dwell." Readily, when it comes to this, there is a little heaven of serenity and joy enters into the soul; so that, if it were possible, it would make heaven and earth to ring with hallelujas of praise to God for "his unspeakable gift." Dost thou not know, O believer, something of this, to thy sweet experience? This says, that in his righteousness thou art exalted.

3. When an arrow of conviction is at any time shot by the hand of God into thy conscience, by which thy peace and quiet is disturbed, whither dost thou run for ease and relief? The man that is "married to the law," runs to the law for relief and ease: the law is the thing that heals him; his prayers, his tears, his reformation, is that which stops the mouth of conscience. But, as for the believer, he can never find rest on this side of "the blood of sprinkling," he gets his healing only from under the wings of the Sun of righteousness. No other balm will give him ease, but the balm of Gilead; and no other hand can apply it, but the Physician there.

4. If you be exalted by imputed righteousness, you will be the real students of gospel-holiness. It is a gross perversion of the gospel, and a turning of the grace of our God into wantonness, for any to pretend that they are justified by the merit of Christ, while they are not at the same time concerned to be sanctified by the Spirit of Christ. Sanctification, or freedom from the power and dominion of sin, is a part, and no small part, of that salvation which Christ has purchased by his obedience and death; Titus 2:14 : "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Justification and sanctification go always hand in hand. He who is made of God unto us righteousness, is also made sanctification; we are justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Try yourselves, then, by this, whether you be exalted by this righteousness. Are you delivered from the reigning power of sin? at least, is it so far broken, that it is become your burden, under which you groan, saying, with the apostle, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Use fourth shall be of consolation and encouragement to believers who are exalted in this righteousness. By virtue of it, O believer, thou art entitled to every thing that possibly thou canst stand in need of. Whatever grace or mercy thou wantest, thou shalt have it, if thou do but improve this law-biding righteousness. Dost thou want pardoning grace to take away the guilt of sin? That is one of the gifts of God, through the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith; for "he is set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." Dost thou want to have thy peace with God confirmed? Improve this righteousness by faith; for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Dost thou want "access unto the holiest?" By faith in the blood of Jesus have we access with boldness. Dost thou want medicinal grace for healing of soul plagues? Improve this righteousness by faith; for by his stripes we are healed. Out of the side of our gospel-altar comes forth living water, that healeth the corrupt and dead sea of indwelling corruption, Ezekiel 47:9. This is "the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." Dost thou want a shadow or covering, to shelter thy weary soul from the scorching heat of divine anger, or of temptation from Satan or tribulation from the world? Improve this righteousness, and sit down under the shadow of it; it is "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Dost thou want courage to look the law or justice of God in the face? Here is a fund for it; for under this covering thou mayst look out with confidence, and say, Who can lay any thing to my charge? Dost thou want to have the new covenant confirmed to thy soul? improve this righteousness by faith; for Christ, by his obedience and death, confirmed the covenant with many. His blood is the blood of the New Testament; and when the soul by faith takes hold of it, the covenant of grace is that moment confirmed to it for ever. In a word, by virtue of this righteousness thou mayst come to a communion-table, and to a throne of grace, and ask what thou wilt; our heavenly Father can refuse nothing to the younger brethren, who come to him

in their Elder Brother's garment. By virtue of this righteousness, thou mayst lay claim to every thing, to all the blessings of heaven and eternity. Thou didst, indeed, forfeit thy right in the first Adam; but the forfeiture is recovered, and the right restored to thee upon a better ground, namely, upon the obedience and death of the second Adam; and thou comest in upon his right. May not all this then revive thy drooping spirit, and make thee take up that song in the text, In thy name will I rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness will I be exalted.

S. The Groans Of Believers Under Their Burdens

The Groans Of Believers Under Their Burdens by Ebenezer Erskine "Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee." Psalms 37:9.

"The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Romans 8:26.

"We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." 2 Corinthians 5:4. In the first verse of this chapter, the apostle gives a reason, why he, and others of the saints in his day, endured persecution for the cause of Christ, with such an unshaken constancy, and holy nobility: he tells us, that they had the prospect of better things, the solid and well-grounded hope of a happy immortality to follow upon the dissolution of this clay tabernacle of the body. Ye need not wonder, would he say, though we cheerfully and willingly undergo the sharpest trials for religion: "for we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands; eternal in the heavens." When the poor believer can say with David, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," he will be ready to join together with the same holy man, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Yea, so far is the apostle from being damped or discouraged at the thoughts of death, that he rather invites it to do its office, by striking down this clay tabernacle, that his soul may be at liberty to ascend to these mansions of glory, that his blessed Friend and Elder Brother has prepared for him above: ver. 2: "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." He knew very well, that when he should be stript of his mortal body, he should not be found naked, as it is ver. 3; but clothed with a robe of glory and immortality. And in the verse read, he gives a reason why he was so desirous to change his quarters; and it is drawn from the uneasiness and inconvenience of his present lodging, while cooped up in this clay tabernacle: We that are in this tabernacle, says he, do groan, being burdened. In which words we may briefly notice, 1. The believer's present lodging or habitation; he is in a tabernacle. 2. His melancholy disposition; he is groaning. 3. The cause or reasons of his groans; being burdened.

1. I say, we have an account of the believer's present lodging or habitation; he is in this tabernacle. By the tabernacle, here, we are to understand the body; so called, because it is a weak, moveable sort of habitation; (as we may hear more fully afterwards.) The indweller of this lodging is the noble soul, which is said to be in this tabernacle, while it is in an imbodyed state. So that the meaning is, We that are in this tabernacle; that is, we that are living in the body.

2. We have the melancholy disposition of the poor believer while in this lodging; he groans. The word in the original, *stenazw*, rendered, to groan, we find it taken in a three-fold sense in scripture. 1st, It is an expression of grief: Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, that they may give their account of you, not with grief;" or, as it may be rendered, Not with groans. It is the same word that is here used. There is nothing more ordinary, when a person is weighed and pressed in spirit, than to give vent to the heart in sobs and groans: and thus stands the case with the Lord's people many times, while in the tabernacle of the body. 2dly, It is sometimes an

expression of displeasure: James 5:9: "Grudge not one against another." It is the same word that is here rendered to groan. And so it imports, that the believer is dissatisfied with, or disaffected to, his present quarters; he does not like it, in comparison of the better habitation that he has in view. 3dly, It is sometimes taken as an expression of ardent, passionate, and earnest desire. Thus, the word is taken in the second verse of this chapter: "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." I shall not exclude any of these senses from the apostle's scope in these words.

3. In the words we have the cause or reason of the believer's groans; being burdened. Many a weary weight and heavy load has the believer hanging about him, while passing through this "valley of Baca," which make him to go many times with a bowed-down back. What these weights and burdens are, you may hear more fully afterwards. The observation I offer from the words is this:

DOCTRINE "That believers are many times burdened, even to groaning, while in the clay tabernacle of the body." We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. The method I shall observe, in handling this doctrine, is, to give you some account, I. Of the believer's present lodging; he is in a tabernacle.

II. Of the believer's burdens in this tabernacle.

III. Of his groans under these burdens.

IV. Conclude with some improvement of the whole.

I. The first thing is, to give you some account of the believer's present lodging while in the body. And there are these two or three things that I remark about it, which I find in the text and context.

1. Then, I find it is called a house in the first verse of this chapter. And it is fitly so called, because of its meticulous and exquisite structure and workmanship; Psalms 139:14-15: "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret; and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." The body of man is a awe-inspiring piece of architecture, and the skill and wisdom of the great Creator are awe-inspiringly revealed in it: it is set up, as it were, by line and rule, in such exact order, that the most skilful buildings and structures in the world are but a chaos or mass of confusion, when compared with it. Take a clod of dust, and compare it with the flesh of man, unless we were instructed of it beforehand, we would not imagine it to be one and the same matter, considering the beauty and excellency of the one above the other; which evidently proclaims the being, power, and wisdom of the great Creator, who made us, and not we ourselves, and who can elevate matter above its first original.

2. I remark concerning the believer's present lodging, that however ingenious its structure be, yet it is but a house of earth; therefore called in the first verse, an earthly house. And it is so, especially in a threefold respect.

1st, In respect of its original; it is made of earth. It is true, all the elements meet in the body of man, fire, earth, water, and air; but earth is the predominant. And therefore, from thence he is said to have his rise; Job 4:19: "He dwells in houses of clay, and his foundation is in the dust." Whatever be the beauty, strength, structure, or high pedigree of men; yet as to their bodies, they claim no

higher extract than the dust of the earth.

2dly, It is a house of clay, in respect of the means that support it; it stands upon pillars of dust; for the corn, wine, and oil, wherewith the body of man is maintained, all spring out of the earth. Hosea 2:21-22: God is said to hear the heavens, the heavens to hear the earth, the earth to hear the corn, wine, and oil, and these to hear Jezreel. And if these props be withdrawn, how soon will the clay tabernacle fall to the ground, and return to its original?

3dly, It is a house of earth in respect of its end; it returns thither at its dissolution. Accordingly, see what God said to Adam, Genesis 3:19: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Perhaps there may be some allusion to these three in that passionate exclamation of the prophet Jeremiah to the rebellious Jews, Jeremiah 22:29: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." They were earth in their original, they were earth as to their support, and they would return to earth in the end.

3. I remark concerning the believer's present lodging, that it is at best but a tabernacle. So it is called, ver. 1: "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved;" and again here, We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." Now, a tabernacle or a tent is a moveable or portable kind of habitation, and is peculiar especially to two sorts of men. 1. To travellers or wayfaring men. 2. To soldiers or warfaring men.

1st, I say, tabernacles or tents are peculiar to strangers or wayfaring men. Strangers, especially in the eastern countries, used to carry these portable houses about with them, because of the inconveniences to which they were exposed. Hence, (Hebrews 11:9,) it is said of Abraham, that "by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." They dwelt in tabernacles, because they had no present inheritance; they were only strangers and passengers in the country. To this the apostle probably alludes here. And so this intimates to us, that the saints of God, while in the body, are pilgrims and strangers, not as yet arrived at their own country: "I am a stranger in the earth," says the psalmist, Psalm 119:19; and it is said of the scripture-worthies, (Hebrews 11:13,) that they "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly." O believer, thou art not a resident, but only a passenger through this valley of Baca; and therefore study a disposition of soul suitable to thy present condition.

2dly, Tabernacles were used by strangers and wayfaring men, so by soldiers and warfaring men, who are obliged frequently to convey their camps from one place to another. Believers, while they are in the tabernacle of the body, must act the part of soldiers, fight their way to the promised land, through the very armies of hell. "We wrestle not," says the apostle, "against flesh and blood; but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," Ephesians 6:12. And therefore, as the apostle exhorts, it concerns us to "put on the whole armour of God, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the girdle of truth;" and to be frequently accustoming ourselves to a holy dexterity in wielding and managing "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," that so we may be able to make a courageous stand in the day of battle and at last come off The field in a victorious manner, when Christ the Captain of our salvation shall sound the retreat at death. Thus, the believer's lodging in a tabernacle, shows him to be both a traveller and a soldier.

4. Another thing that I remark concerning the believer's lodging, is, that it is but a tottering and crazy house, that is shortly to be taken down; for, says the apostle, ver. 1: "The earthly house of this tabernacle is" to be "dissolved.-What man is he," says the psalmist, "that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" Psalms 89:48. This king of terrors has erected his trophies of victory over all that ever sprung of Adam. The greatest Ceasars and Alexanders, who "made the world to tremble" with their swords, were all forced at last to yield themselves captives to this grim messenger of the Lord of hosts. "There is no discharge of this warfare;" the tabernacle of the body must dissolve. However, it may be ground of encouragement to the believer, that death is not a destruction or annihilation: no, as the apostle tells, it is only a dissolving, or taking down of the tent or tabernacle; for God designs to set up this tabernacle again at the resurrection, more glorious than ever. It was the faith of this that comforted and encouraged Job under his affliction, Job 19:25-26: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, and though my reins be consumed within me," says he, "yet in my flesh shall I see God." So much for the first thing in the method.

II. The second thing proposed was, to speak a little of the believer's burdens while in this tabernacle. This earthly house lies under many servitudes, and the believer, as one says, pays a dear mail or rent for his quarters. For,

1. The clay tabernacle itself is many times a very heavy burden to him. The crazy cottage of the body is liable to innumerable pains and distempers, which makes it lie like a dead weight upon the soul, by which its vivacity and activity are exceedingly marred. When the poor soul would mount up, as upon eagles' wings, the body will not bear part with it. So that the believer feels the truth of Christ's apology verified in his sad experience, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

2. Not only is he burdened with a burden of clay, but also with a burden of sin; I mean indwelling corruption, the secret atheism, enmity, unbelief, ignorance, pride, hypocrisy, and other abominations of his heart. O but this is a heavy burden, which many times is like to dispirit the poor believer, and press him through the very ground. David (though a man according to God's own heart,) yet cries out under this burden, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults," Psalms 19:12. And the apostle Paul never complained so much of any burden as of this, Romans 7:24: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" To be rid of this burden, the poor believer many times would be content that this clay tabernacle were broken into shivers.

3. He is burdened many times with a sense of much actual guilt, which he has contracted through the untenderness of his way and walk. Conscience, that deputy of the Lord of hosts (being supported by the authority of the law,) frequently brings in a heavy indictment against the poor soul, and tells it, Thus and thus thou hast sinned, and trampled upon the authority of God the great Lawgiver. In this case the believer cannot but take with the charge, and own, with David, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me," Psalms 38:4, and Psalms 40:12: "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me."

4. He is sometimes sadly burdened with the temptations of Satan. The devil, that cunning "archer, shoots at him, and sore wounds and grieves him." Sometimes whole showers of fiery darts, dipt in hell, are made to fly about his ears. God, for holy and wise ends, suffers the believer to be winnowed, sifted, and buffeted by this enemy. And O how much is the believer burdened in this case! Sometimes he is ready to conclude with David, One day or other I shall fall by this roaring lion, that goes about seeking to devour me; sometimes he is brought to his wit's end, saying, with Jehoshaphat in great extremity, when surrounded by enemies, "I know not what to do, but mine eyes are towards thee." But let not the believer think strangely of this, seeing Christ himself was not exempted from the molestations of this enemy.

5. Sometimes the believer is burdened with the burden of ill company. The society of the wicked, which perhaps is unavoidable, is a great incumbrance to him, and tends mightily to mar and hinder him in his work and warfare. Hence David utters that mournful and melancholy complaint, Psalms 120:5-6: "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar," &c. The believer is of Jacob's disposition, with reference to the wicked, Gen. 49:6: "O my soul, come not thou unto their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." And truly, sirs, if the company and society of the wicked be not your burden, it is a sign you are of their society.

6. Sometimes the believer is sadly burdened, not only with his own sins, but with the abounding sins and abominations of the day and place in which he lives. "I beheld the transgressors," says David, "and was grieved. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes: because they keep not thy law," Psalms 119:136, Psalms 119:158. O what a heart-breaking thing is it to the poor soul, to see sinners dashing themselves to pieces upon the thick bosses of God's buckler, and, as it were, upon the rock of salvation, running headlong to their own everlasting ruin, without ever reflecting upon their ways! His very bowels yearn with pity towards them, who will not pity themselves. Upon this account believers are frequently designated the "mourners in Zion: they sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of Jerusalem," Ezekiel 9:4.

7. The believer is many times, while in this tabernacle, burdened with the public concerns of Christ. He is a person of a very grateful and public spirit. Christ took a lift of him while he was in a low state; and therefore he cannot but be concerned for the concerns of his kingdom and glory, especially when he sees them suffering in the world. When he beholds the boar out of the wood, or the wild beast of the forest, open and avowed enemies, wasting and devouring the church of God; when he sees the foxes spoiling the tender vines, and the watchmen wounding, smiting, or taking away the veil of the spouse of Christ, Song of Solomon 5:7; when he sees the privileges of the church of Christ invaded, her doctrine and worship corrupted, her ordinary meals retrenched by the stewards of the house: these things, I say, are sinking and oppressing to his spirit; he then hangs his harp upon the willows, when he remembers Zion. In this case he is "sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of it is his burden," Zephaniah 3:18.

8. The poor believer has many times the burden of great crosses and afflictions lying upon him, and these both of a bodily and spiritual nature, and deep many times calleth unto deep; the deep of external trouble calls to the deep of inward distress; and these, like two seas meeting together, break upon him with such violence, that the waters are like to come in unto his very soul. Sometimes, I say, he has a burden of outward troubles upon him; perhaps a burden of sickness and pain upon his body, by which the crazy tabernacle of clay is sorely shattered: "There is no

soundness in my flesh," says David, "because of my sin," Psalms 38:3. Sometimes he is burdened with poverty, and want of the external necessities of life, which needs be no strange thing, considering that the Son of God, the heir of all things, became poor; and so poor, that, as he himself declares, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Sometimes he is burdened with infamy and reproach, malice and envy striking at his reputation, and wounding his name. "False witnesses," says David, "rose up against me; they laid to my charge things that I knew not," Psalms 35:11. Sometimes he is burdened in his relations, as by their miscarriages. It was a grief of heart to Rebekah, when Esau married the daughter of Beerli the Hittite, Genesis 26:34-35. And no doubt David had many a sad heart for the miscarriages of his children, particularly of Amnon and Absalom. Sometimes he is burdened with the death of near relations. It is breaking to him when the Lord takes away the desire of his eyes with a stroke. I might here tell you also of many trials and distresses of a more spiritual nature, that the believer is exercised with, besides those already named. Sometimes he has the burden of much weighty work lying on his hand, and his heart is like to faint at the prospect of it, through the sense of his own utter inability to manage it, either to God's glory, or his own comfort, or the edification of others; such as, the work of his station, relation, and generation, and the great work of his salvation. This lies heavy upon him, till the Lord say to him, as he said to Paul in another case, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Sometimes the believer in this tabernacle is under the burden of much darkness. Sometimes he is in darkness as to his state; he "walks in darkness, and has no light," insomuch that he is ready to raze the foundation, and to cry, "I am cast out of thy sight: the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," Isaiah 49:14. Sometimes he is in darkness as to his duty, whether he should do or forbear; many a perplexing thought rolls in his breast, till the Lord, by his word and Spirit, say to him, "This is the way, walk ye in it," Isaiah 30:21. Sometimes he is burdened with distance from his God, who seems to have withdrawn from him behind the mountains; and in this case he cries, with the church, "For these things I weep, mine eye, mine eye, runneth down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul, is far from me," Lamentations 1:16. And sometimes it is a burden to him to think, that he is at such a distance from his own country and inheritance; and in this case he longs to be over Jordan, at the promised land, saying, "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ; which is best of all," Php 1:23. Sometimes, again, he is under the burden of fear, particularly the fear of death. Hebrews 2:15, we read of some who are held in bondage all their life through fear of death: and yet, glory to God, such have had a safe landing at last.

Thus I have told you of some of these things with which the believer is burdened, while in the tabernacle of this body.

III. The third thing in the method was, to speak of the believer's groaning under his burden: for (says the apostle,) We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened. Upon this head I shall only suggest two or three considerations.

1. Consider, that the working of the believer's heart, under the pressures of these burdens, vents itself variously. Sometimes he is said to be in heaviness: 1 Pet. 1:6: "If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Sometimes he is said to sigh under his burdens, and to sigh to the breaking of his loins: he is said to fetch his sighs from the bottom of his heart: "My sighing cometh before I eat," says Job. Sometimes his burdens make him to cry. Sometimes he cries to his God, Psalms 130:1: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." Sometimes he

cries to by-standers and on-lookers, as Job did to his friends, "Have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me," Job 12:21; or, with the church, Lamentations 1:12: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger." Sometimes he is said to roar under his burden: "My roarings," says Job, "are poured out like the water." "I have roared all the day long," says David, "by reason of the disquietness of my heart." Sometimes he is at the very point of fainting under his burden: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Sometimes his spirits are quite overset and overwhelmed: Psalms 61:2: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Sometimes again he is as it were distracted, distracted and put out of his wits, through the weight of his burdens, especially when under the weight of divine terrors. Thus it was with holy Heman, Psalms 88:15: "While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." Yea, sometimes the matter is carried so far, that it goes to the drinking up of the very spirits, and a drying and withering of the bones; as you see in the case of Job; "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit." O the heavy tossings of the believer's heart under his burdens! the apostle here expresses it by a groaning: We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.

2. For clearing this, you would know, that there are three sorts of groans that we read of in scripture: 1st, Groans of nature. 2dly, Groans of reason. 3dly, Groans of grace.

1st, I say, we read of groans of nature. Romans 8:22: "We know," says the apostle, "that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now." Man, by his sin, brought a curse upon the good creatures of God; "Cursed is the ground for thy sake," Genesis 3:17. And the very earth upon which we tread groans, like a woman in travail, under the weight of that curse and vanity, that it is subjected to through the sin of man; and it longs, as it were, to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God, at the day of their manifestation.

2dly, We read of groans of reason, or of the reasonable creatures under their affliction. Thus, we are told, that the children of Israel groaned under the weight of their affliction in Egypt, by reason of the heavy tasks that were imposed upon them: Exodus 6:5: "I have heard," says the Lord, "the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage."

3dly, We read of groans of grace, or of spiritual groans, Romans 8:26: The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And of this kind, we conceive, are these groans which the apostle speaks of in our text; they are not natural, neither are they merely rational groans, though even these are not to be excluded, but they are gracious and supernatural, being the fruit of some saving work of the Spirit of God upon the soul. And, therefore,

3. A third remark I offer is this, that these groans of the gracious soul here spoken of, seem to imply, as was hinted at in the explication of the words, (1.) A great deal of grief and sorrow of spirit on account of sin, and the sad and melancholy effects of it on the believer, while in this embodied state. (2.) It implies a displeasure, or dissatisfaction in the believer, with his present burdened state; he cannot find rest for the sole of his foot here; he finds that this is not his resting place. And, (3.) It implies a breathing and panting of soul after a better state, even the immediate enjoyment of

God in glory, (ver. 1,) he groans with an "earnest desire to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven."

IV. But I proceed to the fourth thing in the method, which was the application of the doctrine. And the first use shall be of information.

1. Hence we may see the vast difference between heaven and earth. O what vast odds is there betwixt the present and future state of the believer! between his present earthly lodging, and his heavenly mansion! This world is but at best a "weary land:" but there is no wearying in heaven: no; "They shall serve him day and night in his holy temple." This world is a land of darkness, where thou goest many a time "mourning without the sun;" but when once thou comest to thine own country, "the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." This world is a land of distance; but in heaven thou shalt be at home: when "absent from the body," thou shalt be "present with the Lord." This world is a "den of lions," and a "mountain of leopards;" but there is no lion or leopard there: "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain" above. This world is a land of thorns: many pricking briars of affliction grow here; but no pricking brier or grieving thorn is to be found in all that country above. This world is a polluted land, it is defiled with sin; but "there can in no wise enter into" the land of glory "any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." In a word, there is nothing but matter of groaning, for the most part, here; but all reasons for groaning cease for ever there.

2. See hence, a consideration that may contribute to stay or allay our griefs, sobs, and groans, for the death of godly relatives; for while in this tabernacle they "groan, being burdened:" but now their groans are turned into songs, and their mourning into hallelujahs; for "the ransomed of the Lord," when they "return," or "come to Zion," at death or the resurrection, it is "with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing flee away," Isaiah 35:10. And therefore, let us "not sorrow as them that have no hope." If our godly friends that are departed, could tell us all their hearts, they would be ready to say to us, as Christ said to the daughters of Jerusalem, O "weep not for us, but weep for yourselves;" for we would not exchange conditions with you for ten thousand worlds: ye are yet groaning in your clay tabernacle, oppressed with your many burdens; but as for us, the day of our complete redemption is come, our heads are lifted up above all our burdens, under which, once in a day, we groaned while we were with you.

3. See hence, that they are not always the happiest who have the merriest life of it in the world. Indeed, if we look only to things present, the wicked would seem to have the best of it, for, instead of groaning, "they take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth" and ease, Job 21:12-13. But, O, sirs, remember, that it is the evening that crowns the day. "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment:" whereas the groanings of the righteous are but short, and their jubilee and triumph shall be everlasting. "Mark the perfect man," says David, "and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together, the end of the wicked shall be cut off" Psalms 37:37. I will read you a word that will show the vast difference betwixt the godly and the wicked, and discover the strange alteration of the scene betwixt them in the life to come: Isaiah 65:13-14: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be

ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit."

4. See hence, that death need not be a terror to the believer. Why? Because, by taking down this tabernacle it takes off all his burdens, and puts a final end point to all his groans. Death, to a believer, is like the fiery chariot to Elijah; it makes him drop the mantle of his body with all its filthiness: but it transports his soul, his better part, into the mansions of glory, "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The second use of the doctrine may be of reproof to two sorts of persons.

1. It reproves those who are at home while in this tabernacle. Their great concern is about this clay tabernacle, how to gratify it, how to beautify and adorn it; their language is, "Who will show us any good? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But they have no thought or concern about the immortal soul which inhabits the tabernacle, which must be happy or miserable for ever. O, sirs! Remember, that whatever care you take about this clay tabernacle, it will drop down to dust ere long, and the noisome grave will be its habitation, where worms and corruption will prey upon the fairest face, and purest complexion. Where will be your beauty, strength, or fine attire, when the curtains of the grave are drawn about you?

2. This doctrine serves to reprove those who add to the burdens and groans of the Lord's people, as if they were not burdened enough already. Remember that it is a dreadful thing to vex or occasion the grief of those whom the Lord has wounded: they that do so, counteract the commission of Christ from the Father, who was "sent to comfort them that mourn in Zion, to give them the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." But, on the contrary, they study to give a heavy spirit, and to strip and rob them of their garments of praise. Remember that Christ is very tender of his burdened saints; and if any offer to lay a load above their burden, by grieving or offending them, the Lord Jesus will not pass it without a severe reproof; and "it were better for such that a millstone were hanged about their neck, and that they were drowned in the depth of the sea. A third use shall be of lamentation and humiliation. Let us lament, that the Lord's saints and people should have so much matter of groaning at this day and time wherein we live. And here I will tell you of several things that are a burden to the spirits of the Lords people, and help on their groaning, and make them sad hearts.

1. The abounding profanity and immorality of all sorts that are to be found among us. O how rampant is atheism and profanity; and impiety, like an impetuous torrent, carrying all before it! It is become fashionable among some to be impious and profane. Religion, which is the ornament of a nation, is faced down by bold and petulant wits: It is reckoned, by some, a genteel accomplishment to break a jest upon the Bible, and to play upon things religious and Sacred. O what cursing and swearing! O what lying and cheating! What abominable drunkenness, murders, and uncleanness! With what perjury and blasphemy is the land defiled! We may apply that word, Hosea 4:3: "For these things the land mourns." The land groans at this day under these and the like abominations. And, therefore, no wonder that the hearts of those that regard the glory of God do groan under them also, and cry with the prophet, Jeremiah 9:1-2: "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them: for they be all adulterous, an assembly of treacherous

men."

2. The universal barrenness that is to be found among us at this day, is matter of groaning to the Lord's people. God has been at great pains with us both by ordinances and providences: he has planted us in a fruitful soil; he has given us a standing under the means of grace; he has given us "line upon line, precept upon precept:" and yet, alas! may not the Lord say of us, as he said of his vineyard, Isaiah 5:2: "I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." And, as for the fruit of providences, alas! Where is it? Mercies are lost on us; for when God feeds us to the full, when he gives peace and plenty, then, Jeshurun like, we wax fat, and kick against him, Deuteronomy 32:15. And as mercies, so rods and afflictions are lost upon us likewise: God has "stricken us, but we have not grieved;" he has "consumed us, but we have refused to receive correction," Jeremiah 5:3.

3. The lamentable divisions that are in our Reuben, occasion great thoughts of heart, and heaviness to the Lord's people at this day. Court and country, church and state, are divided: ministers divided from their people, and people from their ministers; and both ministers and people are divided among themselves; and every party and faction turning over the blame upon the other: than which there cannot be a greater evidence of God's anger, or of approaching ruin and desolation; for "a city or kingdom divided against itself cannot stand," Matthew 12:25.

4. The innumerable defections and backslidings of our day are a great burden to the Lord's people, and make their hearts to groan within them. The charge which the Lord advances against the church of Ephesus, may too justly be laid to our door, that we are fallen from our first love. There is but little love to God or his people, little zeal for his way and work, to be found among us; the power of godliness, and life of religion, are dwindled away into an empty form with the most part.

I might here take occasion to tell you of many public defections and backslidings that we stand guilty of before the Lord; particularly, of the breach of our solemn national engagements. It was once the glory of our land to be "married unto the Lord," by solemn covenant, in a national capacity; but, to our eternal infamy and reproach, it has been both broken and burnt by public authority in this very city. Perhaps, indeed, some may ridicule me for making mention of the breach of our solemn engagements; but I must blow the trumpet, as God's herald, "whether ye will hear or forbear." And you who ridicule these things now, will perhaps laugh at leisure, if God shall send a bloody sword, or raging pestilence, to "avenge the quarrel of his covenant." But some may say, Ye talk of breach of solemn national engagements; but wherein does the truth of such a charge appear? For answer, I shall instance in a few particulars. It is fit that we not only know wherein our fathers have broken this covenant; but wherein ourselves, this present generation, stands guilty.

1. Then, in our national covenant we swear, that we will endeavour to be humbled for our own sins, and for the sins of the kingdom. But, alas! Public days of fasting and humiliation for the sins of the land are but rare, and thinly sown at this day. Where are the mourners of our Zion? How few are they whose hearts are bleeding for the abounding wickedness of the day! If God should give a commission to the men with the slaughter weapons to go through Scotland, and "slay utterly old and young, only come not near any that sigh and cry;" O what a depopulated country would it be! How few inhabitants would be left in the land!

2. In that covenant we are bound to go before one another in the example of a real reformation. But, alas! Who makes conscience of this part of the oath of God? How little personal reformation is there! How little care to have the heart purified from lusts and uncleanness! So that the Lord may well say to us, as he said to Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness: how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" How little reformation of life! what a scandalous latitude do many professors of religion take to themselves, cursing, swearing, lying, drinking, cheating, and over-reaching others in their dealings, whereby the way of religion comes to be evil spoken of?

3. By the covenant we engage, not only to reform ourselves, but our families. But alas! How little of this is to be found? How little care is taken by many parents and masters, to have their children and servants, after the example of Abraham, instructed in the good ways of the Lord! Every head of a family should be a priest in his family, for maintaining the worship of God in it: but, alas! how many are there who either perform the duty in a superficial manner, or else live in the total neglect of it! Go through many noble-men and gentlemen's families in the kingdom, and you shall find as little of the worship of God in them, as if they were Turks and Pagans, and perhaps, less. Yea, atheism is become so common among people of higher rank, that, with some, he is not reckoned a man of any spirit, that will bow a knee to God in his family.

4. In our national covenant we swear to endeavour the reformation of England and Ireland from the remains of Roman hierarchy, and ceremonies of man's invention in the worship of God. But how is this article performed, when, by solemn treaty, the representatives of the nation, in a parliamentary capacity, have consented, that episcopacy should continue as the form of worship and government in our neighbouring nation? Again, by the covenant we swear to endeavour the extirpation of popery: and yet how many masses are kept openly in the land, particularly in the northern parts of the kingdom! How many trafficking priests and Jesuits are swarming among us! And how many professed Protestants are there, who have of late shown their good will to sacrifice a protestant interest to the will of a popish Pretender? Again, in our national covenant, we abjure prelacy and tyranny in our church-government: but though prelatic tyranny be not established, yet there is too much of a prelatic spirit venting itself among us at this day, while many are laying claim to a negative voice in radical judicatories, over those whose offices give them equal interest in the government of the church with themselves. And there is but too much tyranny exercised over the Lord's people by many judicatories of the church, while men are thrust in upon them, to take the charge of their souls, contrary to their own free choice and election. Christ's little ones are but too little regarded, if the world's great ones be gratified. On which account many of the Lord's people are crying at this day with the church, Cant. 5:7: "The watchmen that went about the city, found me, they smote me, they took away my veil from me." Again; in our covenant, we abjure superstition in worship; and yet, to the scandal of our holy religion, it is not only tolerated by public authority, but greedily gone after by many in our land. Heresy and error are abjured by the covenant, every doctrine inconsistent with the word of God, and our Confession of Faith; and yet all sorts of errors are tolerated, except rank popery, and blasphemy against the Trinity. It is true, the standard of our doctrine (blessed be God) remains pure; but it is to be lamented, there is not so much zeal discovered in curbing error, as our covenant vows do engage us to. Again; in our covenant, we abjure malignants; that is to say, enemies to a covenanted work of reformation, as being no members of our church, and, consequently, as having no right to the privileges of it; and

yet malignant lords and lairds are the men who are generally gratified in the affair of planting churches, in opposition to them that fear God, and who, on all occasions, discover their love and regard for a covenanted work of reformation. Again; in the covenant, we swear against a detestable neutrality and indifference in the cause of God and religion; and yet how many Gallios are there among us, who are indifferent whether the interest of Christ sink or swim? And does it not discover too much of a lamentable lukewarmness and indifference of spirit about the way and work of God, when we are beginning to abridge the ordinary number of our sermons at our solemn gospel-festivals, and to diminish the solemnity of it, which has been so remarkably owned of God? What else is this, but a snuffing at his ordinances, and saying, practically, What a weariness is it? Malachi 1:13. Whatever some may think of the matter, yet I know that the hearts of many of the Lord's people are sorrowful, even unto groaning, for the solemn assembly. I shall not say, that what is now transacted of late, with relation to this matter, is a breach of our national covenant; but I say, it seems to be a sad evidence of the lukewarmness of our spirits about the way and work of God. And I find, that a "changing of the ordinances, and a breaking of the everlasting covenant," go together in scripture, Isaiah 24:5. I might have told you of many other things that break and burden the spirits of the Lord's people at this day; particularly, of the removing of the righteous by death; which, as it is a great and heavy judgment in itself, so it is an ordinary forerunner of some heavy calamity approaching: Isaiah 57:1: "Merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." And I suppose there may be many hearing me, whose hearts are inwardly groaning to this day, for the removal of that eminent light (Mr. James Webster,) which shined with such a refreshing lustre from this pulpit among you so many years. It bodes ill to our Zion, when such watchmen are called off from her walls, as, on all occasions, were ready to blow the trumpet upon the approach of any danger from earth or hell. But I pass this use, and go on to, A fourth use of the doctrine, which shall be in a word to two sorts of persons.

First, A word to you who are not burdened in this tabernacle. You never knew what it was to groan, either for your own sins, or for the sins of the land in which you live, or the tokens of God's anger, which are to be found among us; these are things of no account with them, they can go very lightly and easily under them. All I shall say to you, shall be comprised in these two or three words:

1. It seems the adamant and flint-like millstone you carry in your breast, was never to this day broken by the power of regenerating grace. And, therefore, I may say to you, as Peter said to Simon Magus, "Ye are yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity," Acts 8:23. You are under the slavery of Satan, and the curse of the law, and wrath of God; and these are heavy burdens, whether you feel them or not.

2. Know it for a certainty, that, except mercy and repentance interpose, your groaning time is coming. However you make light of sin now, and of things serious and sacred; yet you will find them to be sad and weighty things when death is sitting down upon your eye-lids, when your eye-strings are breaking, and your souls taking their flight into another world. O "what will ye do in the day of visitation? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" Isaiah 10:3. When you are standing trembling as defendants before the awful bar of the great Jehovah, will you make light of sin then? Or will you make light of it, when, with Dives, you are weltering among the flames of hell? O "consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." Whether do ye think it is better to groan awhile in this

tabernacle under the burden of sin, or to groan for ever under the weight of God's vengeance, while an endless eternity endures?

Secondly, A second sort I would speak a word to, are poor, broken, and burdened believers, who are groaning under the weight of these burdens I mentioned. I only offer two or three things for your encouragement, with which I shall close; for we are to "comfort them that mourn in Zion."

1. Know, for thy comfort, poor believer, that thy tender-hearted Father is privy to all thy secret groans; though the world know nothing about them, he hears them. "Lord," says David, "all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee," Psalms 38:9. As he puts thy tears in his bottle, so he marks down thy groans in the book of his remembrance.

2. As the Lord hears thy groans, so he groans with thee under all thy burdens: for "he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and in all our afflictions he is afflicted." He has the bowels of a father to his children: Psalms 103:13: "As a father pitieth his children: so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Yea, his heart is so tender toward thee, that it is compared to the tender affection of a mother to her sucking child. And, therefore,

3. Know, for thy encouragement, that thou art not alone under thy burdens. No: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." He bears thee and thy burdens both: and, therefore, though you may "pass through the fire and water; yet the fire shall not burn thee, the waters of adversity shall not overwhelm thee."

4. Know, for thy comfort, that whatever be thy burden, and however heavy thy groanings be, there is abundant consolation provided for thee in God's covenant. And here I might go through the several burdens of the Lord's people, and offer a word of encouragement to you under each. I shall only touch them passingly.

1st, Art thou burdened with the body of clay? Perhaps thy clay cottage is always like to drop down every day; and this fills thee with heaviness. Well, believer, know, for thy comfort, that, "if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, thou hast a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." There are mansions of glory prepared for thee there, where thou "shalt be for ever with the Lord."

2dly, Art thou burdened with a burden of sin, crying, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Well, here is comfort, believer; thy "old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed." Ere long he will present thee to his Father, "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

3dly, Art thou burdened with the sense of much actual guilt? Art thou crying, with David, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me?" Well, but consider, believer, "God is faithful to forgive thee:" for he has said, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

4thly, Art thou burdened with the temptations and fiery darts of Satan? Well, but consider, believer, Christ, thy glorious head, the true seed of the woman, has bruised the head of the old serpent; "through death he has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." And, as he overcame him in his own person, so he will make thee to overcome him in thy person ere long: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

5thly, Is the society of the wicked thy burden? Art thou crying, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech?" Why, consider, that thou shalt get other company ere long; when thou puttest off this clay tabernacle, thou shalt enter in among "the spirits of just men made perfect." Only stand thy ground, and be not conformed to the world.

6thly, Art thou burdened with the abounding sins and backslidings of the day and generation wherein thou livest? Well, be comforted, God's mark is upon thee as one of the mourners in Zion; and, in the day when the man with the slaughter-weapon shall go through, God will give a charge not to come near any upon whom his mark is found: "Thou shalt be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

7thly, Art thou burdened with the concerns of Christ, with the interests of his kingdom and glory? Is thy heart, with Eli's, "trembling for fear of the ark of the Lord," lest it get a wrong touch? Know, for thy encouragement, that "the Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations;" and that, though "clouds and darkness be round about him," yet justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, and mercy and truth shall go before his face." Though his way be in the whirlwind, and his footsteps in the great waters, yet he carries on the designs of his glory, and his church's good. And as for thee that art "sorrowful for the solemn assembly, to whom the reproach of it is a burden," God will gather thee unto himself; he will gather thee unto the "general assembly, and church of the first-born."

8thly, Art thou burdened with manifold afflictions in thy body, in thy estate, in thy name, in thy relations? Know, for thy comfort, God is carrying on a design of love to thee in all these things: "Thy light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work for thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." See a sweet prophecy for thy comfort, Isaiah 54:11-12.

9thly, Art thou burdened with much weighty work? Perhaps thou knowest not how to manage this and the other duty; how to adventure to a communion-table, or the like. Well, for thy encouragement, poor soul, the Lord "sends none a warfare upon their own charges." And, therefore, look to him, that he may bear thy charges out of the stock that is in thy Elder Brother's hand; and "go in his strength, making mention of his righteousness."

10thly, Art thou, under the burden of much darkness, crying with Job, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him?" &c. Job 23:8. —Well, be comforted; for "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. Unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." And therefore say thou with the church, Micah 7:9: "He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." —

Again;

11thly, Art thou burdened with the Lord's distance from thy soul, "because the Comforter that should relieve thy soul, is far from thee?" Lamentations 1:16: Well, be comforted, "He will not contend for ever," he has promised to return, Isaiah 54:7-8. The Lord cannot keep up himself long from the poor soul that is weeping and groaning after him; as we see in Ephraim, Jeremiah 31:18, &c. Again;

12thly, Art thou burdened with the fear of death? Know, for thy comfort, the sting of death is gone, and it cannot hurt thee: Hosea 13:14: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will

redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

Lastly, Art thou burdened with the death of the righteous, particularly with the loss of faithful ministers? Well, be encouraged, that though the Lord take away an Elijah, yet the Lord God of Elijah lives, and the residue of the Spirit is still with him. And therefore take up David's song, and sing, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted."

S. The Humble Soul the Particular Favourite of Heaven

"When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person." —Job 22:29.

"Be ye clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."—1 Peter 5:5-6.

"Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off." —Psalms 138:6.

[Preached on a fast-day before the administration of the Lord's supper, at Orwell, July 27, 1721.

"The Whole Works of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine: Consisting of Sermons and Discourses. To which is Added, an enlarged memoir of the Author, by the Rev. D. Fraser," Volume 1 (of 3). Philadelphia: Wm. S. & A. Young, 1836. Pages 81 to 105]

It is not material to inquire when, or upon what occasion, this psalm was penned. In the beginning of the psalm, the psalmist enters upon a firm resolution to praise the Lord; and he lays down several excellent grounds of praise and thanks-giving through the body of the psalm. As,

1. He resolves to praise God for the experience he had of his love and faithfulness, in the accomplishment of his gracious word of promise to him, Psalms 138:2 : "I will praise thy name for thy loving kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." God has a greater regard to the words of his mouth, than to the works of his hand: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of what he hath spoken shall never fall to the ground. —Some understand this of Christ, the essential Word, in whom he has set his name, and whom he has so highly exalted, that he has given him a name above every name.

2. David resolves to praise God for the experience he had of God's goodness in hearing his prayers, Psalms 138:3 : "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me: and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." God granted him a speedy answer; for it was in the very day that he cried that he was heard: and it was a spiritual answer; he was strengthened with strength in his soul. Would you have soul-strength for the work you have in view? Then cry unto him who is the strength of Israel for it; for "he giveth power to the faint, and he increaseth strength to them that have no might."

3. He resolves to praise God for the calling of the Gentiles, which he foresaw by the spirit of prophecy, Psalms 138:4-5. The prosperity and enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, is what fills the believer's mouth with hallelujahs of praise.

4. He resolves to bless God for his different ways of dealing with the humble and the proud, for his grace to the one, and his contempt and rejection of the other, in the words which I have read: Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.

It is the first part of the Psalms 138:1 design to insist upon. —Where we may notice,

1. The character of the gracious soul; he is a lowly person, one that is emptied, and abased in his own eyes. He sees nothing in himself, either to recommend him to God or man: on which account he is sometimes called poor in spirit, Matthew 5:3. He has got something of the mind and spirit of Jesus in him and so has learned of him who is meek and lowly, Matthew 11:29.

2. We have here God's transcendent greatness; he is the high Lord or Jehovah. He is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and who dwells in the high and holy place, to which no man can approach." Who can think or speak of his highness in a suitable manner? It dazzles the eyes of sinful mortal worms, to behold "the place where his honour dwells." O how infinite is the distance between him and us! "There are none among the sons of the mighty that can be compared unto him." Yea, "the inhabitants of the earth are before him as a drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance." He is not only high above men, but above angels: cherubims and seraphims are his ministering spirits. He is "high above the heavens;" for "the heaven," yea, "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him." And "he humbleth himself" when "he beholds the things that are in heaven." O, sirs, study to entertain high and admiring thoughts and apprehensions of the glorious majesty of God: for "honour and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary."

3. You have the amazing grace of this High God: though the distance between him and us be infinite, yet he hath a regard to the lowly. The apostle Peter expresses this by "giving grace to the humble," 1 Peter 5:5 : God is "good to all;" he distributes the effects of his common bounty to the good and bad, to the just and unjust: but he reserves his special grace and favour for the meek and lowly soul. What farther is needful for explication, will occur in the sequel of the discourse.

Observe that the lowly and humble soul is the particular favourite of the high God. Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly. This truth is so evidently founded on the text, that I shall not consume time in adducing other texts of scripture to confirm it. Many that I might name will fall in, in the prosecution of the doctrine; which I shall attempt, through grace, in the following method.

I. I shall give some account of this lowliness and humility, and show in what it consists.

II. Prove, that the humble and lowly soul is the particular favourite of heaven.

III. Why God has such respect to the lowly.

IV. Lay before you some marks or characters of the lowly and humble soul.

V. Offer some motives pressing you to seek after it.

VI. Offer a few directions or advices how it may be attained.

I. The first thing proposed is, to give some account of this lowliness and humility, that you may know in what it consists.—Now, lowliness being a relative grace, we must consider it in a threefold view. Either, 1. As it has a respect to ourselves. Or, 2. As it has a respect to others. Or, 3. As it has a respect to God.

First, I say, it may be considered with respect to ourselves. And so it implies,

1. Low and under-rating thoughts of ourselves. The humble soul has low thoughts of his own person; as David, "I am a worm, and no man." "I am less than the least of thy mercies," says Jacob. He has low thoughts of his pedigree: he is not like the princes of Zoan, who valued themselves on this, that they were the offspring of ancient kings. Some think there is none like them, because they are of such a clan, and such a family, they have such lords and lairds for their relations. But the humble soul makes little account of all these: "Who am I," says David, "and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" He considered himself as "the degenerate plant of a strange vine;" as a rotten branch of the corrupted and fallen family of Adam he views "the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged," saying as in Psalms 51:5 : "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Again; the man has low thoughts of his own abilities for any work or service he is called to perform in his generation. O, says the lowly soul, I see I am nothing, I can do nothing; I cannot of myself think a good thought. "I am not sufficient of myself to think anything as of myself," says Paul. I cannot read, hear, pray, communicate, meditate, or examine myself: I see such sin and imperfection attending every duty I set about, as may justly provoke a holy God to cast it back like dung upon my face: I am sure "my goodness extendeth not to him." I see I cannot subdue one corruption, or resist the least temptation, when left to myself; I fall before it, and must needs be carried down the stream like a dead fish, unless the Lord's grace be sufficient for me. Again; the man has low thoughts of his attainments, whether moral or evangelical. "O," says Agur, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy." And Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, did not reckon that he had attained, or that he was already perfect; but he forgets those things which were behind, reaching forth unto things that were before, Php 3:12-13.

2. This lowliness and humility with respect to ourselves, has in it a self-abhorrence; which is yet a degree beyond the former. The man sees so much sin and guilt, so much emptiness, poverty, and vileness about himself, that, with holy Job, he cries out, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Agreeably to which is that text, Ezekiel 36:31 : "Ye shall remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations."

3. It has in it a singleness of heart in the discharge of duty, without vain-glory, or Pharisaical ostentation. It argues a proud hypocritical spirit, to pray, or give alms, or do any duty, to be seen of men, that we may procure a name to ourselves, or the approbation of others. I am afraid, there are many that attend sermons, and sacraments, with a design to maintain their credit and reputation among their neighbours. Verily, such "have their reward;" but a sorry one it is, when they have got it: the day comes, when this fig-leaf covering shall be torn, and your nakedness, emptiness, and hypocrisy, exposed before men and angels. The humble and lowly Christian will make conscience of duty, although none in the world should see him; yea, the more retired he is, he loves it the better: he cares not though, in things of this nature, his left hand know not what his right hand doth.

Secondly, This lowliness and humility, considered with respect to others, has these things in it:—

1. A preferring of others above or before ourselves. Agreeably to this is the apostolical command, Php 2:3 : "Let nothing be done through strife, or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Not that a child of God should think a profane reprobate in a better

state than himself; but every true child of God will see so much in himself, as will make him ready to think the worst reprobate as good, or rather better than he is by nature; and he will see, that the least of saints have something in which they excel him. This was the disposition of the great apostle, he looked on himself as the chief of sinners, and the least of the saints.

2. A looking upon the gifts and graces of others without a grudge. He will not say, This or that man darkens me: no; he rejoices to see the gifts and graces of God's Spirit abounding towards others: "Would God," says Moses, "that all the Lord's people were prophets." And then he will shun all vain comparison of himself with others: he will not say, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou; "or, with the proud Pharisee, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican." No, he rather sinks in his own esteem, when he looks on others, as Agur did, Proverbs 30:2.

3. It has in it an affable, courteous carriage toward all, 1 Peter 3:8. Religion does not countenance a sullen, morose, and haughty carriage; no, on the contrary, we are expressly commanded to be "gentle, showing all meekness unto all men."

Thirdly, This lowliness and humility of soul may be considered with reference to God. And so it implies these things following: —

1. High and admiring thoughts of the majesty of God. When God discovers himself, the man sinks into nothing in his own esteem. "O," will the humble soul say, with Moses, (Exodus 15:11,) "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

2. A holy fear and dread of God always on his spirit; especially in his immediate approaches unto the presence of God, in the duties of his worship. Says he, The very angels cover their faces with their wings before him, crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts;" how then shall I, "a man of polluted lips," take his holy name into my mouth? This makes him, with the publican, to smite upon his breast; to stand afar off; crying "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is the language of the humble soul, which you have, Psalms 15:1 : "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? and, Psalms 24:3 : Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?"

3. It has in it an admiring of every expression of the divine bounty and goodness toward men in general, and toward himself in particular. "O," says he, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? and, Who am I, that thou hast brought me hitherto? Is this the manner of men, O Lord God? And what can I say more?" as David. And what more can be said! for "praise is silent for thee, O God, in Zion." A silent admiration of the grace and condescension of the great Jehovah, is the highest degree of praise we can win at in this life, while our harps are so mistuned by sin.

4. It has in it a giving God the glory of all that we are helped to do in his service. When the man succeeds in discharging duty in any measure comfortably, he will not sacrifice to his own net, nor burn incense to his own dragnet: he will not, like proud Jehu, say, "Come, and see my zeal for the Lord." No, that is not the way of the humble soul; he knows that he has all from the Lord, and therefore he will give all the glory to him, saying, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory. I laboured," says Paul, "more abundantly than all" the rest of the apostles; "yet not I,

but the grace of God, which was with me. —By the grace of God I am what I am."

5. It has in it a silent resignation to the will of God, and an acquiescence in the disposals of his providence, let dispensations be ever so cross to the inclinations of flesh and blood. "Here am I," will the poor soul say, with David; "let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." The man sees awful sovereignty in dispensation, which makes him to say, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" He sees, that his furnace is not by the ten thousandth part so hot as his sins deserve; and therefore silences his soul, with the church, saying, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve." He sees, that the cup put into his hand, is far from the bitterness of that cup that was put into the hand of Christ; and this makes him to say, "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done to" such a withered stick as I am? and therefore I will even be dumb with silence before him, not opening the mouth, because it is the Lord that doth it.

6. Although all these things I have named be the ingredients and concomitants of true humility; yet I think the very soul and essence of gospel-humiliation lies in the soul's renunciation of itself, and going out of itself, and going in to, and accepting of the Lord Jesus Christ, as its everlasting all; as the all of its light, life, strength, righteousness, and salvation. And I think, that a man never passes the verge of moral humility, till self-righteousness be dethroned, till the high and towering imaginations of the man's own righteousness by the law be levelled by the mighty weapons of the gospel, and he brought to submit to the righteousness of God for justification, which is, in the gospel revealed "from faith to faith." In a word, the humble and lowly believer is content to be nothing that Christ may he all in all to him: content to be a fool, that Christ may be his only wisdom; content to be, as he really is in himself a guilty condemned criminal, that Christ may he his only righteousness; content to be stript of his filthy rags, that he may be clothed with a borrowed robe. O says the humble soul, "Surely in the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength: in him will I be justified, and in him alone will I glory," Isaiah 45:24-25 : "Yea, doubtless," says humble Paul, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Php 3:8-9. And so much for the first general head, namely, the nature of this lowliness.

II. The second thing proposed was to show that the lowly and humble soul is the particular favourite of Heaven. This will be abundantly evident, if we consider,

1. That when the Son of God was here in our nature, he showed a particular regard to such. You have a clear instance of this in the centurion, Matthew 8:8. The centurion there addresses Christ in behalf of his servant, who was grievously tormented of the palsy: Christ, in Matthew 8:7, promises to come to his house and heal him. Well, see the lowliness of the man's spirit, Matthew 8:8 : "Lord," says he, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." And what a large commendation Christ gives to the man, you see in Matthew 8:10 : "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And (Matthew 8:13,) he grants him all that he asked, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." The same we see in the Syrophenician woman, Matthew 15:27. The lowliness and humility of her spirit made her to submit to all the repulses she met with.

When Christ calls her a dog, she takes with it, saying, "Truth, Lord," I am a dog, and shall be content if I may but have a crumb, the dog's portion. And what follows on this? "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Thus, I say, Christ in the days of his flesh, discovered the greatest regard to the humble; and he is the same now in a state of exaltation that he was in a state of humiliation.

2. When God gives the grace of humiliation, it is a sign that he intends more grace or that soul: 1 Peter 5:5. he giveth grace to the humble. You know men use to lay up their richest wines in their lowest cellars; so God lays up the richest treasures of his grace in the heart of the humble and lowly. And hence it comes, that the humble Christian is ordinarily the most thriving and growing Christian. The humble valleys laugh with fatness, when the high mountains are barren; so the humble Christian is made fat with the influences of Heaven, when lofty towering professors are, like the mountains of Gilboa, withered and dry, because the dew and rain of the graces and influences of the Spirit are suspended from them.

3. Honour, exaltation, and preferment is intended for the humble soul: "Before honour is humility," says Solomon. Psalms 113:7-8 : "He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." They shall be as it were his ministers of state, that shall attend his throne, and have place among them that stand by.

4. God's eyes are upon the humble. Indeed, the eye of his omniscience beholds all the children of men; but his countenance beholds the humble and upright soul: Isaiah 66:1-2 : "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? for all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." The humble soul is the object of his particular love and care: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in their behalf."

5. Not only God's eye, but his ear is toward the lowly soul: Psalms 10:17. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: —thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." Would you have preparation for a communion-table? Would you be brought to God's seat, and have a hearing there? Then come with lowliness and humility of soul.

6. The great Jehovah, the infinite God, dwells in and with the humble: Isaiah 57:15: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God has a two-fold palace where he dwells; the one is in heaven, the other is in the heart of the humble Christian. He says of the humble soul, as he said of Zion, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it." And for what end will he dwell in the heart of the humble? it is to revive and comfort them. The new wine of the consolations of God, which are not small, shall be poured into the heart of the lowly soul. He will "comfort them that mourn in Zion, he will give them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

7. As God dwells with the humble, so the humble shall dwell with God in glory for ever: Matthew 5:3 : "Blessed are the poor in spirit," (which is the same with the lowly spirit,) "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." They shall sit not only at his by-table here below, but be admitted to sit down at the high table of glory, and to eat and drink with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yea, with the King of glory himself. It is the humble that surround the throne above, as you see, Revelation 4:1-11; they take their crowns off their heads, and cast them down before the Lamb, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power." Thus, you see that the humble soul is the particular favourite of the high God.

III. The third thing in the method was, to inquire why God has such a respect to the lowly.

Ans. 1. God has such a respect to the lowly, not as if this frame of soul were meritorious of any good at his hand, but because this is a disposition that best serves God's great design of lifting up and glorifying his free grace. What think you, sirs, was God's design in election, in redemption, in the whole of a gospel-dispensation, and in all the ordinances of it? His grand design in all was to rear up a glorious high throne, from which he might display the riches of his free and sovereign grace: this is that which he will have magnified through eternity above all his other name. Now, this lowliness and humility of spirit best suits God's design of exalting the freedom of his grace. It is not the legalist, or proud Pharisee, but the poor humble publican who is smiting on his breast, and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," that submits to the revelation of grace. And truly I never think a man truly humbled till he be brought so far off his law-foundation, on which he stands by nature, as to lie down like a worm at the feet of sovereign grace, heartily content to be indebted to free grace for life, righteousness, pardon, and salvation.

2. God has such respect to the humble soul because it is a fruit of his own Spirit inhabiting the soul, and an evidence of the soul's union with the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone we are accepted.

3. This is a disposition that makes the soul like Christ; and the more a person resembles Christ, the more God loves him. We are told, that Christ was meek and lowly; he did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets: though he was the brightness of his Father's glory, yet he was content to appear in the form of a servant; though he was rich, yet he was content to become poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. Now, the humble soul, being the image of Christ, who is the express image of his Father, God cannot but have regard to him.

IV. The fourth thing in the method was, to lay before you some marks by which you might try, whether you be among the humble and lowly, to whom God has such a regard. You have especial need to try this now, when you are to make a solemn approach to God at his table. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." If you want this lowly frame of spirit, you cannot be welcome guests at the supper of the great King.

Now, for your trial, I shall suggest these things following.

1. The lowly soul is one that is many times ashamed to look up to heaven under a sense of his own vileness and unworthiness; as we see in the poor publican, and in David, Psalms 40:12 : "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." Indeed, when by faith he looks to his cautioner, and his everlasting righteousness, his mediator

and intercession, he has boldness to enter into the holy of holies, and can come with boldness to the throne of grace: I say, when he looks to Christ he is not ashamed, Psalms 34:5. But when he looks to himself, as he is in himself, he is even "ashamed and confounded" before the Lord, and ready to cry out with the prophet, Isaiah 6:5 : "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips:" how shall I speak unto the King, the Lord of hosts? Or how shall I appear before him?

2. He is one that is many times put to wonder that God has not destroyed him. He wonders that God has kept him out of hell so long, or that he has not let loose his hand, and made an utter end of him: and therefore he is much in adoring mercy, and long-suffering patience, with the church, Lamentations 3:22: "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

3. He is one that is most abased under the receipt of the greatest mercies and sweetest manifestations. We see this in the instance of David; when God promised to build him a sure house, and gave him a promise of the Messiah to spring of his loins, the man is not lifted up, but on the contrary, is filled with wonder that God should stoop so far toward the like of him: "Who am I," says he, "that thou hast brought me hitherto?" The nearer that the humble soul is admitted to God, the higher that he is lifted up the mount of enjoyments, he falls lower and lower in his own esteem. When Abraham was admitted to plead with God on the behalf of Sodom, Genesis 18:1-33. How does he sink into nothing in his own eyes? "Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes."

4. He is one that renounces the law as a covenant, and disclaims all pretensions to righteousness from that quarter: "I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." O, says the man, when he looks upon the law of God in its spirituality and extent, what can I expect from that quarter but wrath and ruin? Yea, I am condemned already by the law; and if God mark iniquity, according to the tenor of it, I am undone for ever: Psalms 130:3 : "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand?" So, then, try yourselves by this: Has a discovery of the law of God, in its spirituality, made you to own and acknowledge that all your own righteousness is but as filthy rags, dung and loss?

5. He is one that has high, raised, and admiring thoughts of Christ, and of his law-biding righteousness. As for the person of Christ, O how the humble soul admires that: the lower he falls in his own esteem, the higher does Christ rise in his esteem. In Psalms 73:1-28 : David is laid so low in his own eyes, that he cries, (Psalms 73:22,) "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." Well, while it is thus with him, what are his thoughts of Christ? See it, Psalms 73:25-26 : "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." And as for the righteousness of Christ, O how does his soul admire that, and clasp about it! O, says he, I have no works, no righteousness of mine own, to commend me to God, or with whom to stand before him: but he is "the Lord my righteousness; and I will go on in his strength, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only."

I might give you several other marks of this lowliness of soul. I shall only name these two or three farther. As,

1. He is one that looks on sin as his greatest burden, saying, with David, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." And particularly indwelling corruption, the fountain of sin; O how does he mourn and groan under that, saying, with Paul, Romans 7:24: "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

2. He is one that values himself least, when others value him most. O, says he, others see only my outside; but if they saw the swarms of abominations, that I see and feel in my own heart, I would be a terror to them. When the multitude is crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David, he is riding, meek and lowly, upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

3. He is one that is not puffed up with the falls of others, like some, 1 Corinthians 5:2; but rather the falls of others contribute to humble and empty him the more of himself. He sees, from the out-breakings of [sin in] others, what is in his own heart, how much he is obliged to God for restraining grace: for if the bridle were but laid on my neck, will the humble soul say, I would be soon carried into the same excess of riot with others.

4. The humble soul is one that is thankful for little; he will not despise the day of small things: like the woman of Canaan, he is content with the crumbs that fall from the children's table. The humble soul is content with a bare word from the Lord. "O," says David, "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice." He thinks much of a single word from the Lord's mouth, and waits for it, as the servants of Benhadad, that caught at every word that dropped from the mouth of the King of Israel.

5. The humble soul is content and desirous to know what is God's will, that he may do it. Paul is no sooner humbled, but he cries, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Give grace to obey, and command what thou wilt.

V. The fifth thing in the method was, to offer some motives to press and recommend this lowliness and humility of spirit. My first motive shall be drawn from the excellency of the grace of humility; and its excellency especially appears in two things:

1. It assimilates the soul to Christ. Men are inclined to imitate the example of the great ones of the earth; but here is the most noble pattern that ever was, even an incarnate Deity, saying, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly."

2. It is the distinguishing character of a Christian. The people of God are ordinarily called the humble and meek of the earth. A proud Christian is a contradiction; for pride is just an antipode to true religion. O what a difference did it put between the Pharisee and the publican! The proud Pharisee brags to God, as it were, of his good works; "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." But the poor publican stands afar off, as if the Majesty of Heaven were about to strike him dead; and yet the publican goes home to his house justified, while the other is rejected.

Mot. 2d, Consider how reasonable this lowliness and humility of soul is. Whatever way we view ourselves, we shall find it highly reasonable. It is highly reasonable, whether we look to ourselves in particular, or the evils of the land and day in which we live.

1. I say, take a view of thyself, man, woman, and thou shalt find ground of humiliation. For,

1st, Thou art a creature sprung of earth, whose "foundation is in the dust," and cannot pretend to a higher extract than the very earth under thy feet. Hence is the exhortation of the prophet Jeremiah, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Earth in thy original, earth as to the supports of nature, and shall return unto the earth in the end.

2dly, Thou art not only a creature, but a frail creature whose breath is in thy nostrils. Thou standest continually upon the brink of an endless eternity. And as there have but a few years passed over our heads since we arose out of the dust; so, ere it be long, death will sweep us off the stage; and then all our beauty, strength, stature, and other bodily excellencies, will be covered with rottenness. In Isaiah 40:6-8, you see it is the cry both of heaven and earth, that all flesh is grass. Solomon, giving a description of the life of man, sums it all up in two short words "There is a time to be born, and a time to die." He leaps over the intermediate distance between man's birth and his burial, as a thing that was not worthy of his notice. He is born, and then he dies. The moment of time between the womb and the tomb is so short, might he say, that it does not deserve to be named.

3dly, Thou art not only a frail, but a sinful creature, wholly overrun with that loathsome leprosy, "from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot." O sirs, what reason have we to be humble, who have defaced the image of God, cast dirt on all the divine attributes, trampled his law and authority under our feet. The sinner has swallowed a cup of deadly poison, which will infallibly destroy him, if infinite mercy and free grace prevent not. What ground has he then to be proud? "O," says the prodigal, "I have sinned against heaven, and therefore am no more worthy to be called thy son," or to have the room of a hired servant in the family.

4thly, Thou art not only a sinful creature, but an impotent creature, that can do nothing in order to thy own help and relief. If God had not "laid help upon one that is mighty," we had been all of us this day sinking under the fiery mountains of eternal vengeance and wrath. Such an impotent creature is sinful man, that, as to natural things, he cannot make one hair of his head white or black, or add one cubit to his stature. And so helpless is he, as to spiritual and eternal concerns, that he can no more change the wicked habits of his heart, or the wicked ways of his life, than the Ethiopian can change his colour, or the leopard his spots.

5thly, Thou art a variable, changeable, and inconstant creature; liable to many alterations, both as to thy outward lot, and thy inward frame. The man that is in greatest esteem to-day, may have his reputation ruined by the invenomed tongue of calumny to-morrow. In a word, thy health may soon be changed into sickness, thy riches into poverty, thy strength into weakness, thy beauty into ugly deformity. And as for thee, believer, though thy state be firm like the mountains, yet thy frame is but a changeable thing. Perhaps thou mayest be saying with David one day, "By thy favour my mountain stands strong;" and the next day crying out, "I am troubled with the hiding of his countenance." Although, perhaps, the candle of the Lord may be shining on thy tabernacle, yet in a little thou mayest be going "mourning without the sun."

2. This lowly frame of spirit is highly reasonable, if we look abroad in the world, and particularly the land in which we live. O what great cause of deep humiliation have we this day before the Lord, when we take a view of the abounding profanity of our day! All ranks have "corrupted their way;" a flood of atheism and wickedness, Jordan like, has broken down all its banks. Have we not reason to be humbled for the universal barrenness that is to be found amongst us, under the drops of the

glorious gospel? May not the Lord say to us, as he said of his vineyard, Isaiah 5:1-30. "I planted thee in a fruitful soil;" I took all imaginable pains upon thee, by ordinances, by the rod, by mercies and crosses; yet, after all, "when I looked that they should bring forth grapes, behold, they brought forth wild grapes?" Again; have we not reason to be humbled for the lamentable divisions that are to be found among us? "Ephraim against Manasseh, Manasseh against Ephraim, and both they together against Israel." Because of the divisions of Reuben, there are great thoughts of heart. Church and state are divided. And, among other divisions that have been of late, we are like to have a new division in point of doctrine.

There is a handful of ministers, who have lately put in a petition to our National Assembly, in favour of some of the pure and precious truths of the gospel, which they conceive to be injured by an act of Assembly. There is a mighty cry raised against them, both in pulpits and in common conversation, as if they were the troublers of Israel, New-schemers, Antinomians, and what not. Many strange errors are fathered upon them, of which they never once thought. I shall be far from bringing a railing accusation against them who study to wound their reputation, and to mar the success of their ministry: for I look on many of them as great and good men. But if they be helped to bear reproach for the name of Christ, and for the cause of his truths, with humility and lowliness of mind, the Lord in his own time will find out a way to bring them forth to the light, so as they shall behold his righteousness. And although their reputation should sink for ever in the world, under a load of calumny that is cast upon them, I hope they think it but a small sacrifice for the least truth of God, which is of more worth than heaven and earth. However, I say, this, among other things, is ground and cause of humiliation in our day, that any of the precious truths of Christ should be under a cloud, and that we should be divided in our sentiments respecting them. Have we not reason to be deeply humbled for our woeful defections and backslidings, which are the ground of our divisions? We are departed from the Lord, and the Lord is in a great measure departed from us. What a woeful withering wind has blown upon God's vineyard in the land! We are "fallen from our first love," our former zeal for God and his precious truths, and the royalties of our Redeemer's crown. And is there not a lamentable decay as to the power and life of godliness, which has dwindled away into an empty form with the most? To conclude, it is not with the nobles, gentry, ministers, or people, in Scotland, as once it has been; and the worst of it is, that though it be so, though gray hairs are here and there upon us, yet we do not perceive it: we "make our faces harder than a rock, and refuse to return" to the Lord. But I haste to a close.

Mot. 3d, Take a view of the noble patterns of humility that are set before us for our imitation. The saints militant are patterns of it. Abraham, the father of the faithful, in the forecited 18th of Genesis, with what humility does he address himself to God! "Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes." And his grandson, Jacob, follows his footsteps herein, "I am less," says he, "than the least of thy mercies." In a word, Job, David, Isaiah, Paul, and all the "cloud of witnesses," have cast us a copy of humility. Again; the saints triumphant cast us a copy of this grace: they take their crowns off their heads, and cast them down at the Mediator's feet, ascribing the glory of all to him, saying, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Again; angels are patterns of it: they do not look on it as a disparagement to be ministering spirits to the heirs of glory. With what humility do they cover their faces with their wings in the presence of God! Isaiah 6:1-13. Again; Christ is a blessed pattern of

this grace: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly:" he has left us an example, that we should follow his steps therein. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the 'death of the cross." Though he was the high God, yet he "took upon him the form of a servant." And therefore "let the same mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus," Php 2:5. In a word, the infinite Jehovah, the eternal God, casts us a copy of humility: for "he humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth;" and, as you see in my text, though he be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly. And are not all these patterns worthy of our highest imitation? And if all this will not prevail, I offer, A fourth motive, Consider the evil and danger of the sin of pride, that lies directly opposite to it.

1. It is loathsome in the sight of God; he cannot endure to look on it; he beholds it afar off. In Proverbs 6:16, it is set in the very front of these things that the Lord hates:

"These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination to him:" and the first of them is a proud look. God hates every sin, but he proclaims open war and hostility against the proud.

2. The evil of it appears, in that it is a sign of a rotten heart within: Habakkuk 2:4 : "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." As humility and sincerity, so pride and hypocrisy go hand in hand.

3. It is the fertile womb of many other evils. It is the spring of division: Proverbs 13:10 : "Only by pride cometh contention." As I was saying just now, there are a great many divisions amongst us at this day. Church and state is divided, congregations and families are divided, ministers and people are divided; What is the matter? Pride lies at the bottom. If our proud hearts were but so far humbled, as to confess our faults one to another, our divisions would soon come to an end. Again; pride is the mother of error and heresy: a root of bitterness that is troubling our Israel at this day. When men, especially clergymen, who have all a conceit of infallibility with them; have asserted any thing that is amiss in point of doctrine, their pride will not allow them to retract. Truth itself must rather fall a sacrifice, than their reputation sink. Pride of reason is the very soul of the Socinian, and pride of will the soul of Arminian errors, and pride of self-righteousness is the source of that legal spirit which so much prevails in our day. Again; pride is the spring and root of apostacy; for, says Solomon, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Peter's pride was the immediate forerunner of his denying his Lord and Master. But, again, consider that God has a particular quarrel with the sin of pride: he has threatened to "scatter the proud, in the imagination of their own hearts." You may read a lecture of God's controversy with the proud, Isaiah 2:11 - Isaiah 2:13, &c. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down. —The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." And, ver. 17: The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." O what ruin has the sin of pride brought along with it!

1st, It turned angels into devils, and threw them from heaven into hell; "being lifted up with pride, they fell into condemnation," as the apostle insinuates. God could not endure pride to dwell so near him; and therefore he tumbled them down from heaven, and laid them "under chains of eternal darkness."

2dly. It was pride that has wrecked all mankind, when it crept out of the higher into the lower Paradise. "Ye shall be as gods," said the serpent; and immediately the bait was caught at; though, in the event, it made them more like the devil than God.

3dly, We might trace the story of what ruins it hath brought with it upon the ungodly world. Pharaoh refuses to bow so far to the command of God, as to let Israel go; saying, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" And therefore he and his host shall "sink like lead in the mighty waters." Haman's pride brought him to an ignominious end: though he was his prince's greatest favourite to-day, yet he was hanged to-morrow on the gallows which he had set up for poor Mordecai. Nebuchadnezzar proudly vaunts himself of his royal palace. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" and immediately he is turned out from the society of men, and made to eat grass with the oxen. Herod, after his fine oration, receives that applause from the people without any check, "It is the voice of a God, and not of a man; and immediately the angel of the Lord smites him, and he is eaten of worms."

4thly, As God has punished it in the wicked, so he has shown his resentment against it in his own children. And pass who will, they shall not miss a stroke, if their hearts be lifted up within them "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." David's pride prompted him to number Israel, that he might make his boast that he was king over so many thousands; and thereupon a raging pestilence, in three days' time, sweeps away seventy thousand of Israel. Hezekiah's pride made him to show his treasure of precious things to the king of Babylon's ambassadors; and therefore his posterity and his treasures must be carried away to Babylon out of their native land. In a word, though you were as the signet on God's right hand, you shall not escape a stroke of fatherly wrath and anger, if you allow pride to lodge in your hearts. That threatening shall surely take place, both among friends and enemies, Proverbs 29:23 : "A man's pride shall bring him low." And if it miss his person, it shall fall heavily on his family: Proverbs 15:25 : "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud."

VI. The sixth and last thing I proposed was, to offer a few advices, in order to your attaining this lowly frame and temper of soul which the high God doth so much regard.

1. Go to the law as a schoolmaster; read the ten commandments, and Christ's spiritual commentary upon them, Matthew 5:1-48. View the law of God in its utmost extent and spirituality; for it is exceeding broad. This would make the proudest heart to lie in the dust: Romans 7:9 : "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The feathers of his pride and legal righteousness soon fell, when the law in its spirituality was set before his eyes.

2. Get Christ to dwell in your heart by faith; for the reigning power of this evil is never broken, till Christ come by the power of his Spirit, bringing down the towering imaginations of the heart, and erect his throne there. The more of Christ, the more humility; and the less of Christ, the more pride. When the Spirit of Christ enters into the heart, he stamps the likeness and image of Christ there. O then, if you would have this humility and lowliness of spirit, "lift up the everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in:" he brings a glorious retinue of graces with him, of which this is one of the first.

3. Be much [employed] in viewing the glorious perfections of the Majesty of heaven, as they are displayed in the works of creation and providence; but especially as they shine in the face of Jesus Christ, and the glorious work of redemption through him. When the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple, he cries out, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." See Job 42:5-6. "I have heard of thee," says he, "by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

4. Be much in viewing "the rock whence ye were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence ye were digged;" I mean your original corruption and degeneration; how you are "conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity." And O how much of this cleaves even to believers themselves, while they are on this side of eternity! There is a law in the members continually warring against the law of the mind. This laid the great apostle Paul in the dust, notwithstanding his high attainments.

5. Be much in viewing the vanity of the creature, and all things below. "Vanity and vexation of spirit" is written in legible characters upon all things under the sun. "The fashion of this world is passing away." Be much in viewing the bed of the grave, where you must lie down shortly, and where rottenness and corruption shall cover you: let this make you say, with Job, "to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." View an awful tribunal, and endless eternity, that is to follow on the back of death, where you and I shortly shall stand panels and receive a sentence from the righteous Judge, which shall determine our state for ever.

6. Lastly, Be much in eyeing those patterns of lowliness and humility which I already mentioned. God, angels, and saints, have cast you a copy of it. But especially be much in viewing the humility and humiliation of the Son of God, which is proposed as the great pattern, Php 2:5-8 : "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

S. The King Held In The Galleries

The King Held In The Galleries by Rev. Ebenezer Erskine "The king is held in the galleries" Song of Solomon 7:5 Our Blessed Lord Jesus, who is represented under the picture of a Bridegroom in this book, from the fourth verse of the preceding chapter, breaks out in commendation of his spouse and bride, expressing the love of his heart toward her in many warm and heart-felt expressions; and his discourse is continued to Song of Solomon 7:10; where we find him overflowing in commendation of his church in several particulars. He commends her from her spiritual birth and pedigree, calling her a prince's daughter, Song of Solomon 7:1. The saints of God are royally descended; by their second birth they are sprung of "the Ancient of days;" "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Again; he commends her for the beauty of holiness shining in her walk and conversation: "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" Holiness is the attire of the bride of Christ; "She is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints." But time will not allow me to explain the several particulars of her commendation. The words of my text are an abrupt sentence; in which he expresses the wonderful complacency which he took in her society, and the overpowering influence that her faith and his faithfulness, his love, and her loveliness, had to make him stay and abide in her company: The King is held in the galleries. In which words we may notice these particulars: —

1. Christ's character and office; he is a person of royal dignity, no less than a king, and the King by way of eminency. The church of God acknowledges no other king but Christ; for it is he whom God the Father has set to rule upon the holy hill of Zion: and it is a manifest usurpation of Christ's prerogative, for pope, prelate, or potentate, to usurp a sovereignty and headship over the church of Christ; an indignity which he will not suffer to pass without suitable punishment. He here claims himself to be the King of Zion, and will maintain the dignity of his crown against all that dare invade it. 2. In these words we have the place of converse between Christ and his blessed spouse and bride; it is in the galleries. It is the same word in the original which we have, Song of Solomon 1:17: "The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters, or galleries, of fir." Where, by galleries, in both places, according to the judicious Durham, we are to understand the ordinances of the gospel, in which Christ and his people to tryst and keep company one with another. Why gospel ordinances are thus signified, I may show more particularly afterwards. 3. We have the sweet constraint that this royal Bridegroom was under to tarry in the galleries with his spouse: he here owns that he was held, or bound, as the word signifies, in the galleries. Her faith and love laid him under a voluntary arrest to tarry with her; like the disciples going to Emmaus, Luke 24:29 : "She constrained him to abide with her." An expression much like this we have, Song of Solomon 3:4. After a weary night of desertion, and much wearisome inquiry, she at length meets her beloved, and therupon she cries out, "I held him, and would not let him go."

OBSERVE, "That Christ, the blessed King of Zion, condescends sometimes to be held and detained by his people in the galleries of gospel ordinances. The King is held in the galleries."

I. I will give some account of this royal King.

II. Of the galleries of the King.

III. Of this holding of the King in the galleries.

IV. Apply.

I. The first thing proposed is, to give some account of this royal King. But alas! "Who can declare his generation?" All I shall do, is only 1. To prove that he is a King. 2. That he is the King by way of eminence and excellence.

First, that he is a King, appears from these particulars: —

1. From the Father's designation and ordination. From all eternity the Father designed and ordained this dignity for him as our Mediator: for I do not now speak of his natural and essential, but of his dispensatory or mediatory kingdom: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion," Psalms 2:6; and Psalms 89:27 : "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth."

2. It appears from the prophecies that went of him before his actual manifestation in our nature. It was prophesied that the sceptre of Judah should terminate in him, Genesis 49:10; that he should succeed David, and sit upon the throne, Luke 1:32-33, compared with Psalms 132:11 : "The Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end;" Isaiah 9:6; and "the government shall be upon his shoulder."

3. It appears from the types and shadows that prefigured him. He was typified by Melchizedek, who is called "the King of righteousness, and the King of peace." He was typified by David, and frequently called by the name of David in the psalms and prophets: Hosea 3:5 : "The children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king." He was typified by Solomon, and by his name he is commonly called in this book of the Song.

4. It appears from the princely titles that are given him in scripture. He is called "the Prince of peace, the King of righteousness, and the King of kings and Lord of lords;" and it is God the Father's will, that "every one should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord."

5. It appears from the princely prerogatives and royalties that are assigned him by his Father. He has anointed him to be King with an incomparable oil, even "with the oil of gladness; I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him," Psalms 89:20. He has installed him in the government with the solemnity of an open proclamation from heaven, by "the voice which came from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." He has put a sceptre of righteousness, and a rod of iron, in his hand, by which he is enabled to defend his subjects, destroy his enemies, and "break them in pieces as a potter's vessel." He has given him ambassadors to negotiate the affairs of his kingdom: "He gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." He has given him vast territories, even "the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession: his dominion reaches from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." It extends not only to the outward, but likewise to the inward man. He has a legislative authority, he can make and

explain, and abrogate laws at his pleasure. And when his laws are broken, he has the power of acquitting or condemning committed to him: "For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Thus, you see he is a King.

Secondly, As he is a King, so he is the King by way of eminence and excellence. And this will be abundantly clear, if we consider,

1. That he is the King eternal, 1 Timothy 1:17 : "the everlasting Father," or, "the Father of eternity," Isaiah 9:6. Other kings are but of yesterday, mere upstarts, and, like a gourd, their glory withers in a night. But here is a King that is "from everlasting to everlasting," the true "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending." Micah 5:2. This "ruler in Israel, his goings forth were from of old, from everlasting." And his throne is so firmly established, that it shall stand through all periods of time, yea, through the endless years of eternity: Psalms 45:6 : "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

2. He is called the King immortal, 1 Timothy 1:17. In the last chapter of the same epistle, "He only hath immortality." The potentates of the earth are but kings of clay; they and their thrones have their "foundations in the dust, and to dust they shall return." Death, the king of terrors, has raised his trophies of victory over the most renowned potentates: they who made the world to tremble with their sword, have been at last vanquished by death. But here is a King that never dies. It is true, death did once, by his own consent, obtain a seeming victory over him; but in that victory death itself was plagued, and the grave destroyed, Hosea 13:14. Yea, "it was not possible that he should be held in the bonds of death:" no, he vanquished death in his own territories, and returned carrying the spoil of his enemy along with him, making open proclamation of the victory which he had gained to all his friends for their encouragement: Revelation 1:18 : "I am he that was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death."

3. He is the King invisible. Some eastern princes were seldom seen by their subjects, to beget the greater reverence and estimation among their subjects. But this was only an affectation of grandeur. Christ, the King of Zion, is indeed visible to the eye of faith by the saints militant, and visible to the eye of sense by the saints triumphant; however, the thousand thousandth part of his divine glory can never be seen or searched out by any created understanding; for "he dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see," 1 Timothy 6:16. He is an unseen and unknown Christ by the greatest part of the world, as to his worth and excellency. And as to his corporeal presence, he is invisible by us in this state of mortality: for the heaven must contain him, "until the times of restitution of all things;" and then, indeed, "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him."

4. He is the only blessed and happy King, 1 Timothy 6:15 : "the blessed and only Potentate." The crowns of other princes have their thorns, which make them to sit uneasy upon their heads; and the toil and trouble of government is sometimes so great, that the very beggar on the dunghill is happier in some respects than the king upon the throne. But Zion's King is in every respect happy and blessed. He is the darling of heaven and earth, the delight of his Father, and "the Desire of all nations." His crown does not totter, his subjects do not rebel; he is happy in them, and they in him: "Men shall be blessed in him; and all nations shall call him blessed."

5. He is the absolute and universal King. His kingdom is universal in respect of all persons; the highest potentate, as well as the meanest beggar, are the subjects of his empire. This is his royal

"name written on his vesture, and on his thigh, the King of kings, and Lord of lords," Revelation 19:16. Whenever he will, he casts the mighty out of their seats, and advances them of low degree; sets the beggar on the throne, and causes the king to sit on the dunghill: "He cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth." Again; his government is universal in respect of all places. We read of several potentates who have grasped at universal monarchy: but never any of them attained it, though, indeed, they extended their dominions far and wide. But here is a King whose empire reaches to heaven, earth, and hell. Again; it is universal in respect of all times: "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

I might tell you farther, to illustrate the eminency of this King, that he is the King of glory, the almighty King, the King of saints, the King of nations. But from what has been said, we may see that he is a King of incomparable excellence, and what an honour it is to be with him, and to holy him in the galleries. But I go on to,

II. The second thing proposed, which was to speak a little of the galleries in which this royal King trusts and keeps company with his people. We read, Song of Solomon 1:4, of the chambers of the King; and, Song of Solomon 2:4, of the King's banqueting-house, or cellars of wine, into which the spouse had been brought: the same is called here the galleries of the King. That is to say, these ordinances in which the Lord Jesus reveals himself to his people in the house of their pilgrimage. Here I only, 1. Mention a few of these galleries. 2. Inquire why ordinances are compared to galleries.

First, I will only mention these few galleries.

1. There is the secret gallery of meditation, in which David found God's "loving kindness to be better than life," and had his "soul satisfied as with marrow and fatness."
2. There is the gallery of prayer, in which Jacob wrestled with the angel of the covenant, and, like a prince, prevailed for the blessing.
3. There is a gallery of reading of the scriptures, in which the Ethiopian eunuch got such a discovery of the promised Messiah, as made him "go on his way rejoicing."
4. There is a gallery of Christian converse about soul-matters; in which the disciples going to Emmaus had such a meetin gwith Christ, as made "their hearts burn within them."
5. There is the gallery of preaching, or of hearing of the word preached; "by the foolishness of which God saveth them that believed." Here it was that Lydia's heart was opened. And,
6. The sacraments of the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's supper, are galleries in which Zion's King displays his glory before his people. The last of these is, by way of eminence, called the communion; not only because in it the people of God have communion one with another, but because in it they have "fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ."

Secondly, As to the second thing here, why are these ordinances compared to galleries? I answer,

1. Galleries are magnificent apartments of royal and stately buildings. So there is a divine magnificence in the ordinances of the gospel, when countenanced with the presence of the great Master of assemblies. It is true, they appear mean and contemptible in the eyes of a profane

world, who are strangers to the power of godliness; but the man "who has his senses spiritually exercised to discern good and evil," sees a divine greatness and magnificence in them, suitable to the state and royalty of "the Prince of the kings of the earth." And when the man is admitted to see the power and glory of God in them, he cannot but agree with Jacob, saying, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven," Genesis 28:17.

2. Galleries are lightsome and pleasant apartments. O how pleasant and lightsome are ordinances to a gracious soul! Let a child of God be where he will, he reckons it but "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is," if he be not admitted to the galleries of ordinances, Psalms 63:1-2. See how the same holy man expresses his delight in ordinances, Psalms 84:1 : "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" I am sure this will be the language of every soul that has been in the galleries with the King this day.

3. Galleries are places of walk and converse, as is plain from Ezekiel 41:15. When a king, or great man designs to be familiar with his friend, he will take a turn with him in the galleries. So it is in gospel-ordinances that Christ walks, and converses with his people. Here it is that he gives them audience, allows them to be free and familiar with him, draws aside the veil, communicates the secrets of his covenant, and mysteries of his kingdom, which are hid from the wise and prudent of the world.

4. Galleries are places of public feasting and entertainment of friends. So it is in the mount of gospel-ordinances that the Lord has provided for his people, "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." Here it is that Christ says to his people, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Thus, I have given you some account of the galleries of the King.

III. The third thing proposed was, to speak of the holding of the King in the Galatians 1:1-24eries; which is what I had principally in view. And here I will show what this holding of Christ supposes and implies, both on the believer's part and on Christ's part.

First, What does it suppose and imply on the believer's part?

1. It necessarily supposes a meeting with Christ in the galleries; for no person can hold that which they never had. To you that never knew what it was to enjoy communion with Christ in his ordinances, this doctrine is a hidden mystery.

2. It supposes a high esteem of Christ, a love to, and liking of his company. We are at no pains to hold those for whose company we care not; but when we are pressing with a friend to stay with us, it says that we value his company. Sirs, there are various opinions about Christ among the hearers of the gospel. The profane world look upon him as a severe and tyrannical master, and therefore "they will not have this man to reign over them." They say unto the Almighty, "Depart from us." Again; carnal, lukewarm professors, "see no form nor comeliness in him, why he should be desired:" and therefore they are ready to say with the daughters of Jerusalem, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" They cannot see any engaging excellency in the King of Zion. But it is otherwise with the believer: the glory and beauty of Christ darken all created excellency in his eye; his language is, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." He is the apple-tree among the trees of the wood; the standard-bearer among ten thousand.

3. On the believer's part, this holding of Christ supposes a fear of losing him, or of being deprived of his company. The soul that has met with Christ, is afraid of a parting. It is true, the believer has no ground to fear the loss of Christ's real and gracious presence; for the union between Christ and him is indissoluble; that promise can never fail, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." But as for his conscious and comfortable presence, they both may, and frequently do lose it; the child of light many times walks in darkness. Now, it is the loss of this presence of Christ that the soul fears, when it is concerned to hold or bind the King in the galleries. Neither is this a fear of despondency, but a fear of activity and diligence.

4. It supposes a seeming willingness in Christ to withdraw from his people after their sweetest enjoyments. Many times Christ's carriage in his dispensations towards his people seems to have a language much like that to Jacob, when he said to him, Let me go; or like his carriage towards the two disciples going to Emmaus, he made as if he would leave their company, and go on in his way. And his carriage seems to have this language, especially when he challenges them for bad treatment they have formerly given him, when he lets loose the tempter to buffet them after signal warnings, or when he tries them with sharp troubles and afflictions, in all these cases he seems as it were to be turning about the face of his throne from them.

5. It implies a holy solicitude, and earnest desire of soul, to have his presence continued. When Christ is hiding, there is nothing the believer desires more than his return: "O that I knew where I might find him!" And when they have found him, there is nothing they desire more than to keep his company, or that he would not be any more to them "as a stranger, or way-faring man." O says the soul, when it gets a meeting with the Lord Jesus, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts," Song of Solomon 1:13. As if she had said, 'If he will stay with me, I will deny him nothing I can afford; I will entertain him with the highest evidences of cordial affection.'

6. It implies an ardent breathing of soul after more and more nearness to Christ and farther discoveries of him. There is not such a high discovery of Christ attainable in this life, but there is always a step beyond it. The believer would always have more of Christ, Song of Solomon 2:5. The spouse there is brought into the banqueting-house, and allowed to feast and feed liberally upon the Redeemer's love, and to sit down under his displayed banner: and yet at that very instant she cries out, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." As if he had said, 'Let me lie down among these comforts; let me roll myself perpetually among the blessed apples of the tree of life.' They who have got so much of Christ as to be tired of his company, never knew what his presence was.

7. It implies a firm resolution not to part with his company: "I held him," says the spouse, "and would not let him go," Song, 3:4. The like we see in Jacob, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;" that is, I am resolved, that thou and I shall not part, cost what it will.

8. It implies a cleaving or attaching oneself to Christ with the whole strength and vigour of the soul.

Quest. How, or in what does the soul put forth its strength in cleaving to Christ? I answer, it does it by these three especially.

1st, By the lively exercise of faith. Hence faith is called a laying hold of Christ, and a cleaving to him, as Barnabas exhorts the Christians at Antioch to "cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of

heart." The poor soul says to Christ in this case, as Ruth did to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." An instance of this cleaving to Christ we have in the Canaanitish woman; she, as it were, clasps about him, and will by no means let go her hold, notwithstanding all repulses.

2dly, The soul binds or holds Christ in the galleries by sincere and ardent love. Love is a very uniting affection; by this one soul cleaves to another. As Shechem's soul did cleave to Dinah, and Jonathan's to David; so by love the soul cleaves to Christ: and this is a cord that cannot be easily broken; Song of Solomon 8:7: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." See for this also, Romans 8:35: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" &c.

3dly, The soul cleaves to Christ by fervent and ardent prayer, Jacob held the Angel of the covenant, and would not let him go: Hosea 12:3-4 : "By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: for he wept and made supplication unto him. -The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man" has a strange prevalence with Christ; it offers a holy kind of violence to him; and so binds him in the galleries that he cannot depart. Thus, you see what it implies on the believer's part.

Secondly, What does it imply on Christ's part, The King is held in the galleries?

1. It implies amazing grace and condescension toward the work of his own hands: "He humbleth himself," even when he "beholds the things that are in heaven:" much more when he bows the heavens, and walks with his people in the galleries of ordinances; and yet more when he is held by them in the galleries. This is such strange condescension, that Solomon, the greatest of kings, and the wisest of men, wondered at it; and wise men do not wonder at trifles: "Will God," saith he, "in very deed dwell with men on the earth?"

2. It implies Christ's great delight in the society of his people. He loves to be among them; where two or three of them are met in his name, he will be in the midst of them: "He rejoiced," from all eternity, "in the habitable part of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men," Proverbs 8:31.

3. It implies, that there are certain cords which have a constraining power, to retain him in his people's company: and they must be strong cords, indeed, with which Omnipotence is bound. I mention two or three.

1st, He is bound by the cord of his own faithfulness, which he has pledged in the promise. He has promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" and he will not deny his word, "his covenant he will not break." This was the prevailing argument with which Moses detained him in the camp of Israel, when he was threatening utterly to consume that wicked people, Exodus 32:10, Exodus 32:13 : "Let me alone," saith the Lord to Moses, "that I may consume them. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven." He binds him with his own covenant, ratified with the solemnity of an oath.

2dly, He is bound in the galleries by the cord of his own love. As a compassionate mother cannot leave her child, when it cleaves to her, and clasps about her: so Christ's compassionate heart will not let him leave his people; his love to them surpasses the love of the most compassionate mother or tender-hearted parent: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me," Isaiah 49:15-16.

3dly, He is bound to them by the bond of marriage: "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name: he has betrothed them to himself in righteousness, judgment, loving kindness, and mercies; and he rejoiceth over them, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride:" and because of this he will not, he cannot leave them.

IV. The fourth thing was, the application of the doctrine: and the first use is for information. Is it so that Zion's King is sometimes held in the galleries of gospel ordinances? Then,

1. See hence the happiness and dignity of the saints of God, beyond the rest of the world. We reckon that person highly honoured, who is admitted to the King's presence-chamber, and to walk with him in his galleries. "This honour have all the saints," either in a greater or less degree: Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." And therefore I may infer, that they are "the excellent ones in the earth, and more excellent than their neighbour. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable."

2. See hence why the saints put such a value and estimate on gospel-ordinances. David everywhere declares his esteem of them; "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. He would "rather be a door-keeper in the house of his God, than dwell in the tents of sin." Why, what is the matter? The plain matter is this: they are the galleries where Zion's King doth walk, and manifest his glory to his subjects: Psalms 27:4 : "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord." I pass other uses, and go to a

Second use of this doctrine, and that is by way of trial and examination. My friends, you have been in the galleries of the King of Zion; but that is not enough: and therefore let me ask, Have you been in the galleries with the King? And have you been holding the King in the galleries? There are many poor ignorant creatures, who, if they get a token, and win to a communion-table, think all is right and clear between God and them; like the harlot, Proverbs 7:14 : "Peace-offerings are with me; this day have I paid my vows" But, Oh, sirs, remember, folk may win in to the outer galleries of ordinances, and never win in to the inner gallery of communion with the Lord Jesus. For your trial as to this matter, I shall only propose a few questions to you.

Quest. 1. What did you hear in the galleries? What said the King to you? For, as I told you, the galleries of ordinances are the places of audience, where the King of Zion converses with his people. And readily, if he has spoken with you, you will remember what he said; for he "speaks as never man spake; he has the tongue of the learned, and his words are as goads, and as nails fastened in a sure place." The spouse, we find, had been in the chamber of presence, and in the banqueting-house; she tells that the King spake with her, and she remembers what he said, Song of Solomon 2:10 : "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come

away." So then, did the King speak with you in the galleries? Did he speak a word of conviction, or a word of comfort, a word of peace, or a word of consolation? Or whatever it be. Quest. How shall I know that it was his voice, and not the voice of a stranger? Answ. The sheep of Christ have a natural instinct by which they know his voice; it has a different sound from the voice of a stranger; and if you be the sheep of Christ, you will know it better than I can tell you it by words, When he speaks, he makes the heart to burn; and you will be ready to say with the disciples, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us" in the galleries? His words have kindled a flame of love that "many waters cannot quench;" a flame of zeal for his glory; a flame of holy joy, so that you will be ready to say with David, "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice." When he speaks, he makes the soul to speak, whose lips were formerly closed; for his voice "makes the lips of those that are asleep, to speak." If he has said, "Seek ye my face;" — your souls have echoed, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." If he has said, "Come;" thy soul has answered, "Behold, I come unto thee; for thou art the Lord my God." If he has spoken peace to you this day in the galleries, you will be concerned not to return again to folly; you have been made to say, with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Quest. 2. I ask, What did you see in the galleries? Many sights are to be seen in the galleries of ordinances and particularly of the Lord's supper. Here the Lamb of God is to be seen, "which taketh away the sin of the world;" and in a crucified Christ, who is evidently set forth in that ordinance, all the divine attributes and perfections shine with a greater lustre, than in the large volume of the creation. Here we might see the seemingly different claims of mercy and justice, with respect to fallen man, sweetly reconciled: the healing overture is, that the surety shall die in the room of the sinner; and thus justice shall be satisfied, and mercy for ever magnified. Here you might see the holiness and equity of God's nature sparkling in flames of wrath against him who "was made sin" for you; the sword awakened, even "against the man that is God's fellow," wounds and bruises him for your iniquities. There you might see the power of God spoiling principalities and powers, shaking the foundation of the devil's kingdom, and laying the foundation of a happy eternity for an elect world, in the death and blood of the eternal Son. In this ordinance you might have seen him writing his love in characters of blood; love which has neither brim, bottom, nor boundaries. Here he was to be seen as the "Amen, the faithful and true witness," girt with the golden girdle of faithfulness, sealing the covenant, and confirming it with many. Now, I say, have you seen any thing of this? Are you saying, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father?" Did any of these divine rays of Zion's King break forth upon your soul? If so, then I am sure it has had something of a transforming efficacy with it; according to what we have, 2 Corinthians 3:18 : "All we with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Jacob's cattle, you know, by the very working of fancy in the conception, by beholding the pilled rods, brought forth their young speckled and spotted. Now, if fancy could work such a resemblance, what must the eye of faith do, when it beholds the glory of God in the face of Christ, who is "the express image of his person?" John 1:14, John 1:16 : "The word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." It is remarkable, that by beholding his glory, we receive grace for grace. As the wax receives letter for letter from the seal, or as the child receives limb for limb from the parent; so, by beholding Christ, we receive grace for grace from him: so as there is never a grace in Christ, when it is seen by faith, but it works something of a parallel grace on the soul. So

then, try yourselves by this, and you may know whether you have been indeed in the galleries with the King.

Quest 3. I ask, What have you tasted in the galleries? For, as you heard, galleries are for feasting and entertainment of friends. Now, did the King say to you, or is he yet saying it, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved?" Did he make you to "eat of the fatness of his house," and to "drink of the rivers of his pleasures?" "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," then I am sure you will, "as new-born babes, desire and thirst after the sincere milk of the word:" you will be saying, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples;" let me have more and more of this delicious fare. If you have been feasted with the King in the galleries, the world, and all the pleasures of it, will be as nothing in your eye, in comparison of Christ and the intimations of his love. O, says David, when his soul was "satisfied as with marrow and fatness," "Thy loving kindness is better than life," and all the comforts of life; they are but loss and dung when laid in the balance with him. If you have been feasting in the galleries, you will be desirous that others may share of the meal you have gotten; and, with David, be ready to say, "O taste and see that God is good." You will proclaim the praises of his goodness, as you have occasion, to them that fear him: "Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." And readily it will be the desire of your soul to abide in his presence, and to dwell, as it were, in the galleries of ordinances. O! "It is good for us to be here! Let us build tabernacles here," said Peter, on the mount of transfiguration. That will be the language of thy soul, Psalms 27:4 : "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." So much for a use of trial.

Use third may be in a short word directed to two or three sorts of persons. 1. To you who know nothing of this doctrine, never met with the King in the galleries. 2. To you who have had a comfortable meeting with him. 3. To those who perhaps are complaining, "I sought him, but I found him not."

First, To you who never yet knew what it was to have a meeting with Zion's King in the galleries of gospel-ordinances; and perhaps, Gallio-like, you "care for none of these things." To you I shall only say,

1. Your condition is truly sad and lamentable, beyond expression or imagination. You are "aliens to Israel's commonwealth, strangers to the covenant of promise, without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world. You are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity;" under the curse of God, and condemnation of the law, and absolute power of Satan, "who rules in the children of disobedience." You are lying within the sea-mark of God's wrath; and if you die in this condition, you will drink the dregs of the cup of his indignation through all eternity.

2. If you have in this case adventured to the galleries of a communion-table, you have run a very dreadful risk. You have adventured to the King's presence without his warrant, and without the wedding-garment of imputed righteousness, or of inherent holiness; and therefore have run the risk of being bound, hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness: you have been "eating and drinking judgment" to your own souls, and are "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And therefore,

3. For the Lord's sake, let me beseech you to repent of your wickedness. Flee out of your lost and miserable condition, flee to "the horns of the altar." We declare to you, that there is yet "hope in Israel concerning" you. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isaiah 55:7.

Secondly, A second sort of persons are those who have this day had a meeting with Zion's King in the galleries of ordinances. I shall only offer a word of exhortation to you, and of advice.

I. A word of exhortation. Have you met with the King in the galleries? O then be exhorted to hold him, and bind him in the galleries; take him with you from the more open and solemn galleries of public ordinances, to the more private and secret galleries of prayer, meditation, conference, and the like: follow the spouse's practice when she found him; "she held him, and would not let him go, until she had brought him into her mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived her." To engage you to hold him, take these motives:

Mot. 1. Consider his invaluable worth and excellency: The tongues of angels, let be of men, do but falter and stammer when they speak of him. His worth is best known by the character he gives of himself in his word. View him absolutely in himself; he is "the only begotten or the Father, the mighty God, the Prince of peace." View him comparatively; he is "fairer than the children of men, as the apple tree among the trees of the wood; the standard-bearer among ten thousand." View him in his relations; he is thy Head, thy Husband, thy Friend, thy Father, thy elder Brother, thy Surety, Shepherd, and Redeemer; and, in a word, he is all and in all. And should not this make you to hold him?

Mot. 2. Consider, that thy happiness, believer, lies in the enjoyment of him. What is it, do you think, that constitutes the happiness of heaven through eternity? It is Christ's presence, a Mediator, the King of Zion, manifesting his heart-charming beauty to saints and angels through eternity. And what is it that raises the poor soul to the very suburbs of glory while in the wilderness? It is Christ manifesting himself in a sensible way to the soul: O this, this it is that fills the soul with "Joy unspeakable, and full of glory!" The advantages that attend his presence with the soul are great and glorious. A cabinet of counsel attends his presence: he brings light with him; and no wonder, for he is "the Sun of righteousness:" "the veil and face of the covering" is rent when Christ comes, and darkness is turned into light. His presence has a mighty influence upon the believer's work in the wilderness; the believer then "rides upon the high places of the earth, and is fed with the heritage of Jacob;" he runs swiftly "like the chariots of Amminadib." His presence inspires with courage and strength: it makes "the feeble soul as David, and David as the angel of God; it gives power to the faint, and increases strength to them that have no might." The soldier fights with courage when his captain is at hand. The poor believer is not afraid to encounter the king of terrors himself, when he is holding Christ in the arms of faith: Psalms 23:4 : "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." So, let this encourage you to hold him.

Mot. 3. Consider at what a high price this privilege was purchased for thee. Before Christ could pay thy soul a visit in the galleries, he behooved to swim a river and ocean of blood, to tread the wine-press of his Father's wrath. Justice had rolled insuperable mountains in his way, and these mountains he must pass, and make as a plain, before he could show himself in the galleries to thy

soul. Does not this oblige you to entertain him, and give him welcome when come?

Mot. 4. If you let go your holds of him and suffer him to depart, it may cost you a high price before you get another meeting with him. It is true, "his kindness shall never depart from thee, the covenant of his peace shall never be removed." His gracious presence can never be lost; but his quickening, comforting, strengthening, and upholding presence may be lost: and even this may be of very dreadful consequence. As his presence is a heaven upon earth, so sometimes a hell upon earth follows his absence. Job, through his hiding, is made to "go mourning without the sun;" yea, to such a pass is he brought, through the frowns of God's countenance, that he is made to cry, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." And see to what a pass Heman is brought under desertion, Psalms 88:6-7 : "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me; and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves." And again, ver. 15: "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted." Let all these considerations, and many others I might name, quicken your diligence in holding the King in the Galatians 1:1-24eries.

2. I come to offer you a few counsels, in order to your holding the King in the galleries, and maintaining his presence with you.

1st, See that you keep his lodging clean, and beware of the practice of the spouse after she had obtained a meeting with Christ, Song of Solomon 3:5 : "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." Particularly, there are two or three evils that you would carefully guard against. Beware of security. If you were paying a visit to your relation, you would think him tired of your company, if he would fall asleep beside you. Has Christ paid a visit to thy soul, and wilt thou fall asleep in his very presence and company? This is very provoking to the Lord Jesus. Song of Solomon 5:3 : the spouse there entertains Christ's visit with sloth; "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" But what comes of it? Christ withdrew, Song of Solomon 5:6 : "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." Beware of turning proud of your attainments. Pride of gifts, pride of grace, pride of attainments, is what Christ cannot abide with: he "gives grace to the humble, but he resisteth the proud, and beholdeth them afar off." Beware of worldly-mindedness or suffering your hearts to go out immoderately after the things of time; for this is displeasing to the Lord, and intercepts the light of his countenance; Isaiah 57:17 : "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me and was wroth. The friendship of this world is enmity with God." Beware of unbelief, the root of all other evils, and particularly the root and source of distance and estrangement between Christ and the soul; for "an evil heart of unbelief causes to depart from the living God." In a word, keep a strict watch and guard against every thing that may defile the lodging of Christ in thy soul. Under the law, God appointed porters to keep watch at the doors of the temple, that nothing might enter in to defile that house which was the dwelling-place of his name. Thy soul and body is the temple in which Christ dwells by his Holy Spirit: and therefore guard against every thing that may defile it, and provoke him to depart; for "if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are," 1 Corinthians 3:17.

2dly, if you would hold the King in the galleries, it is necessary that grace be kept in lively exercise; for these are the spikenard and spices that send forth a pleasant smell in his nostrils. Let faith be kept in exercise; let this eye be continually on him: he is exceedingly taken with the looks of faith: Song of Solomon 4:9 : "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." Keep the fire of love burning upon the altar of thy heart; for Christ loves to dwell in a warm heart: 1 John 4:16 : "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Maintain a holy and evangelical tenderness and melting of heart for sin; for "the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." And let hope be kept up in opposition to a sinking despondency. Christ does not love to see his friends drooping in his company: No, no; "he takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."

3dly, If you would have Christ staying with you in the galleries. you must put much work in his hand; for Christ does not love to stay where he gets no work. Hast thou any strong corruption to be subdued? Tell him of it; for this is one part of his work, to subdue the iniquities of his people. Hast thou no sin to be pardoned, the guilt of which has many times stared thee in the face? Tell him of it; for "his name is Jesus, because he saves his people from their sin." Hast thou no need to be supplied? Tell him of it; for there is all fulness in him, fulness of merit and Spirit, fulness of grace and truth: he has a liberal heart, and he devises liberal things. Hast thou no doubts or difficulties to be resolved: Tell him your doubts; for he is "an Interpreter among a thousand." Employ him not only for yourselves, but for others. Employ him for your mother church; entreat him to come unto your "mother's house, and to the chambers of her that conceived" you; that he would break these heavy yokes that are wreathed about her neck at this day; that he may "build up the walls of his Jerusalem, make her a peaceable habitation, and the praise of the whole earth;" that he may "take the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines," I mean, such teachers and preachers as are troubling the peace of the church, and obstructing the progress of the gospel, with their new-fangled opinions. But I must not dwell on this.

Thirdly, A third sort of persons I proposed to speak to, were these who are perhaps complaining; that they have been attending in the galleries of ordinances, and particularly at a communion-table; yet they cannot say, dare not say, that they were privileged to see the King's face. Alas! May some poor soul be saying, I thought to have got a meeting with Zion's King, but hitherto I have missed my errand: "The Comforter that should relieve my soul, is far from me; and I, whither shall I go?" Answ. I shall only suggest a word of encouragement and advice to such of the Lord's people as may be in this case.

1. A word of encouragement.

1st, Then, do not think thy case unprecedented. Poor soul, what thinkest thou of David, Asaph, Heman, yea, of Christ himself?

2dly, Although Zion's King may bide himself for a little, yet he will not always hide, "lest the spirits should fail before him:" Psalms 30:4-5 : "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment: in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Isaiah 54:7-8 : "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the

Lord thy Redeemer.

3dly, Perhaps the King has been in the galleries with thy soul, when yet thou wast not aware that it was he. He was with Jacob at Bethel, and he "wist it not;" he was with the disciples going to Emmaus, and yet they mistook him. Quest. How shall I know whether the King has been in the galleries with my soul? For answer,

(1.) Art thou mourning and sorrowing over thy apparent loss? Does it grieve thee at the very heart to think, that thou shouldst be at Jerusalem, and not see the King's face; at the King's table, and not have the King's company? If this be real matter of exercise to thee, thou dost not lack his gracious presence, though thou art not aware; for "he is ever nigh unto them that are of a broken heart." Christ is at Mary's hand when she is drowned in tears for the absence of his company, and saying, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

(2.) Hast thou got a greater understanding of thine own emptiness, poverty, and nakedness? and is thy soul abased and laid in the dust on this account? This says, Christ has been present; for he comes in a work of humiliation, as well as in a work of consolation. Perhaps the devil is condemning, the law is condemning, conscience is condemning thee, and thou art condemning thyself as fast as any: be not discouraged Christ is not far away, Psalms 109:31 : "He stands at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul."

(3.) Art thou justifying the Lord, and laying the blame of thy punishment upon thyself, as David, Psalms 22:1-3 : "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest me not? and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

(4.) Is thy hunger and thirst after Christ increased by thy apprehended want of his gracious presence? This says that he has been really present, for his blessing is upon thee: Matthew 5:6 : "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." And know for thy comfort, that "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with good things."

(5.) Art thou resolved to wait on him and keep his way, although he hide his face and withdraw his perceptible presence? Christ has not been altogether a stranger; no, "he is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him; and is really nigh unto all that call upon him in truth."

2. A word of advice, and only in so many words.

1st, Give not way to despondency; argue against it, as David, Psalms 42:5 : "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

2dly, See that you justify God, and beware of charging him foolishly. See what was David's practice, (and herein he was a type of Christ himself,) Psalms 22:1-31. He is under hidings, ver. 1: "My God, why hast thou forsaken me," &c. What follows? Psalms 22:3 : "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

3dly, Trust in a hiding God, as Job did: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," Job 13:15. This the Lord calls his people to under darkness, Isaiah 1:10 : "Who is among you that feareth the Lord,

that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

4thly, and lastly, Wait on him in the galleries of ordinances; hang about the posts of his door. And when you do not find him in public, seek him in private, and in the retired galleries of secret prayer, meditation, and conference: and go a little farther, like the spouse, above and beyond all duties and ordinances, to himself: "He is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." The spouse did so, and at length she found him whom her soul loved: Song of Solomon 3:4 : "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go." The Lord bless his word.

S. The Necessity And Profitableness Of Good Works Asserted

The Necessity And Profitableness Of Good Works Asserted by Ebenezer Erskine

"Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Corinthians 7:1.

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John 7:17.

Preface THE following discourse is one of those for which I am become a debtor to the public, on the occasion mentioned in the preface of that upon Revelation 3:4. Although I am abundantly aware of my poor management of this important subject; yet I am not conscious of swerving, in any one point of doctrine, from the word of God, and the approved standards of this church: and, if in the least jot I have departed from them, either in this or any other of these sermons charged with heterodoxy, I am so far from pretending to infallibility, that I hope I shall never be ashamed publicly to retract what, upon conviction, shall be found to be amiss.

I look upon it as one of the most difficult things that belongs to us ministers, in the dispensation of the everlasting gospel, so to divide the word of truth, as to deliver it in the order and connexion in which God has laid it in the new covenant. Indistinct views here cannot miss to lead both ourselves and hearers into a maze and labyrinth of confusion, and exceedingly mar the sweetness of divine truth, with the success of the gospel. Every truth of God, even in itself; and abstractly considered, is precious; but the beauty, lustre, and sweetness of divine truth is never seen or felt, until the truth be known "as it is in Jesus." All the truths of divine revelation meet in him, as the beams in the sun, or as the spokes of a wheel in their centre; insomuch, that, if any truth of God be handled, or any duty of the law inculcated, abstractly from him, it is taken out of its proper place where God has set it, and, consequently, cannot miss to lose its savour and beauty: and, therefore, it was not without ground the apostle expressed himself; as we have it, 1 Corinthians 2:2 : "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He is the glorious "foundation laid in Zion," and "another foundation can no man lay;" and if in building, we do not keep our eyes continually on this chief corner stone, we cannot avoid making very confused and irregular work. In a particular manner, when we inculcate good works upon our hearers, if we do not lead them, in the first place, to work that great work of God, namely, to "believe on him whom he hath sent," we do but encourage them to build castles in the air, which fall down as fast as they are reared up. All our works will be found to be but empty ciphers in the day of the Lord, if this foundation be not first laid. The root on which they grow, namely, that of the old Adam, being rottenness, the blossom cannot miss to go up as the dust.

It is the ruin of thousands in the visible church, that whenever the law of God has pricked or wounded their hearts, and brought them under any concern for salvation; that, being "married to

the law," as a husband, they run to it for relief. Hence it is the ordinary dialect of awakened sinners, before the revelation of the remedy, "What shall we do?" or, "What good thing shall we do to inherit eternal life?" And, accordingly, they fall to doing and working; and there they rest; by which means, these very duties, which should lead them to Christ, prove a bar and hindrance of their coming to him. But, since the fall of Adam, the law was never given to man with a design that he should rest or stay in it, but, that man, by the law, might be carried forth to him, who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." I acknowledge, that they who rest in the law and its works, may find some sort of peace and ease for awhile; but true, solid, and lasting peace, can never be found on this side of Christ.

We do not read of any plaster that the stung Israelites were to make use of for their healing, but only looking to the brazen serpent. If they had made a confection of the best herbs in the wilderness, or a plaster of all the most efficacious ingredients in the world, and with it heaped up mountains of prayers, or poured out seas of tears, all would not have helped, if they had not looked to the brazen serpent. God had appointed that as the only way of relief; and, therefore, nothing else could perform the cure. So, here, God hath set up his Christ, as the only way of life; he hath lifted him up upon the pole of the gospel, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And though we should spend our whole time and strength, in praying, mourning, and other acts of obedience, all would be of no avail, unless we made use of God's remedy, in a way of believing, and that is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Isaiah 45:22.

But, say you, by this means we may lay aside praying, reading, hearing, and other duties of obedience, altogether. I answer, By no means. I do not advise you to leave off duties, but only as a plaster for healing your wounds, or as a ground of acceptance. Duties, indeed, are subservient to the cure, but they themselves are not the cure. For instance, prayer is a seeking of the cure, but not the cure itself: in reading and hearing, we are directed how to come at the cure, but these are not the cure. We would reckon it a piece of prodigious folly, for one in distress to reckon himself healed, merely upon his seeking and getting a physician's advice, though he never apply the remedy prescribed. By our works of obedience, before conversion, like the man lying at the pool, we only study to have a deportment suitable to those who wait for divine mercy; and by our obedience, after conversion, we only express our gratitude for the cure, which he, in his sovereign grace has wrought, by the Spirit's application of the blood of Jesus: but still these works of obedience, whether before or after conversion, are not the cure. It is a known maxim among sound divines, That, being justified, we work, but we do not work that we may be justified. So, then, let us never put our duties in the room of Christ. The man that rests in any thing on this side of Christ, will at last rest on this side of heaven. All our duties and works of obedience will be but as ropes of sand, or chains of glass, too brittle to draw our souls up to glory.

It is very observable, that the order and connexion betwixt duty and privilege is quite inverted in the Covenant of grace, from what it was under Adam's covenant. In the last of these, duty was the foundation of privilege; but, in the first, namely, the new covenant, privilege received by faith is the foundation of duty. In Adam's covenant, man was first to do his duty; and on that ground, in a way of pactional debt, he might expect and plead the reward of life. But now, man having forfeited life by the breach of that covenant, God will have him to take life as a free gift through Christ; and thus to set his seal to his record, "that he hath given to us eternal life, in his Son Jesus Christ;" and

thereupon, as a fruit and evidence of life received, he will have us perform the duties of his law.

It is pleasant to observe, that, when God published the law at Mount Sinai, he ushered it in with the great new covenant grant, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Here is the object and foundation of their faith; and upon this he founds their obedience to the precepts of the moral law. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," &c. If the commandments of the moral law had been set first, and God had said, "Do these things, and I will be your God;" this had been a pure covenant of works, indeed. But, first, he reveals himself as their God in Christ, a reconciled God and Redeemer; and, upon this footing, presses obedience to his commandments. So that, I say, the order of doctrine laid in the dispensation of the gospel, is first to lead the sinner by faith to Christ, and to God in him; and upon this to inculcate obedience to the law as a rule of duty. This order of doctrine I find accurately observed by the Westminster Assembly, in compiling our excellent Confession of Faith and Catechisms; where they tell us first what we are to believe, and then the duties which God requires of man. The same method we find the apostle Paul observes in most of his epistles. So that this is no new scheme, but the good old way. And if this order of doctrine be inverted, we disturb the comely order which infinite wisdom has laid in the dispensation of the new covenant, and infallibly return back to an old covenant of works. This is the order I have aimed at in the following discourse: whether I have hit it right, or not, I leave it to others to judge. I do freely admit that, ever since I knew any thing of Christianity, I never found greater difficulty in any thing, than to bring my heart to fall in with this order of the new covenant. And even after the soul, as to the main, is brought to acquiesce in this new method of salvation; yet there is so much of the old Adam, I mean of a legal spirit, in us, as is still leading us insensibly back to Adam's covenant, namely, to expect mercy, grace, and glory, on the score of something wrought in us, or done by us. And our words, who are ministers, do many times betray the legality of our hearts: which I speak in a way of regret, from my own sad experience, not in a way of reflection upon others. And I make no doubt, but such as have a true taste of the gospel, may find something of this in the following discourse, though I have endeavoured to shun it as much as I could.

If by the publication of these imperfect scraps, any shall be provoked to handle this, or any of the other subjects, with more accuracy, which may be easily done, I shall heartily rejoice. And if either the church of God, or any particular soul, shall be edified by reading this, or any other of the quarrelled sermons, he owes no thanks to me, but only to that God, who, by his overruling providence, "makes the wrath of man to praise him:" and, for my own part, I desire to believe, "that the remainder of his wrath he will restrain."

E. E.

PORTMOAK,

June 6, 1726.

"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men." Titus 3:8. The apostle having, in the preceding part of this chapter, particularly from the

4th verse, and downwards, given a brief summary or epitome of the doctrine of the gospel, and of the free grace of God towards sinners, through the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ; he proceeds, in this 8th verse, to conclude the whole with a serious advice to Titus, what use to make of the doctrine of grace among his hearers; namely, upon that footing, to urge them to the study of practical godliness as great gain: This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, &c. Where these things are worthy of consideration.

1. We have the apostle's epilogue, or conclusion, with which he shuts up that grave and weighty subject, which he had been treating in the preceding verses, This is a faithful saying. Some, indeed, understand this as a preface to what follows; but I find the generality of interpreters rather connect this solemn affirmation with what went before, and particularly with what the apostle had asserted in the verse immediately preceding; to wit, "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;" and then immediately adds, This is a faithful saying. The apostle foresaw, by the spirit of prophecy, that the doctrine of grace would meet with unaccountable opposition in after ages of the world; and that opposition was already begun in his own day, as appears from his epistle to the Galatians; and therefore ratifies it with the greater solemnity, This is a faithful saying. From whence I observe, by and by, That us ministers of Christ are to declare the whole counsel of God, so there are some truths that need to be more vouched and dwelt upon than others; particularly truths that are more fundamental, and most controverted by gainsayers. Hence we find, there is sometimes an call for attention, or a watchword, added to some truths, requiring our more diligent attention, and serious entertainment. Thus the apostle here, considering the opposition the doctrine of grace would meet with from men of legal spirits, adds this word of attention to the close of it, This is a faithful saying. Ministers are watchmen, and set for the defence of the truth; and therefore, when any truth of God is in danger, they are to double their guard, and to support these truths that are most attacked by the enemy, that so they may not "fall in the streets." And if it be the duty of ministers to teach, inculcate, and support those truths that are controverted or contradicted; surely it is also the duty of people to study these truths, and the arguments that support them, that so they may be in a capacity to distinguish between truth and error, and "to give a reason of the" faith and "hope that is in them." The Bereans have a high commendation given them; they are called men of noble and excellent spirits, on this account, that they would not swallow down, by an implicit faith, the doctrines taught even by the apostles themselves: no, but they tried even the apostolic doctrine by the standard of the law and testimony. And this is a thing not only commanded and commended in the scriptures of truth, but most agreeable, likewise, to the dictates of right reason. How is it possible that people can obey the command of "contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints," if they do not understand the doctrine of faith, particularly these doctrines that are in danger of being wrested from them? Ministers are called "stewards in the house of God, and stewards of the mysteries of God." Now, you know it is very much the interest of the house or family, to see that their steward feed them with sound and wholesome food, otherwise they may come to swallow a stone instead of bread, or a scorpion instead of a fish. We call you to examine and try our doctrines at the bar of the word; and if they will not abide the trial there, let them sink and perish for ever. There is always reason to suspect any set of men who decline or shun any fair trial of their doctrines; for "he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." But,

2. In the words we have an apostolic command given to Titus, and in him to all ministers of the gospel: These things I will that thou affirm constantly. The word in the original rendered affirm, is borrowed from the practice of those who, when they buy or sell a thing, oblige themselves to maintain the claim and title against all law-suits or entanglements. Titus, and other ministers, are not only to teach the doctrines of the gospel, but to confirm and make them good against all the cavils or questions that may be moved about them.

3. In the words we have a particular doctrine which the apostle recommends to be taught by Titus, namely; "That they who have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good works." Where notice the foundation of all good works, and that is believing in God; to wit, in God as he is manifested in Christ, "God reconciling the world to himself;" for out of Christ he cannot be the object of faith, but of terror, to a guilty sinner. Now, this believing in God is the very foundation of all good works: for "without faith it is impossible to please God:" and they that have believed, are enjoined to maintain good works. The word in the original is borrowed from the military, particularly such as set themselves at the front of the battle, and march forward to encourage the whole army to follow them. "Believers," would the apostle say, "must not only do good works, but must be patterns and examples thereof to others;" according to that injunction of Christ; "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." But the significance of this you may meet with more fully afterwards.

4. We have a very cogent and weighty reason why believers are to maintain good works; why, says he, "These things are good and profitable unto men." The apostle, in the 5th verse, had secluded good works from any causality or influence on our justification or eternal salvation: "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us." Now lest any should allege, that, in that case, good works were altogether useless, he adds this as a caveat, and says, "Do not mistake it, for although your good works be not profitable for justification, yet they are good and profitable to men on many other accounts:" of which we may hear likewise afterward. The doctrine I notice from the words is this: —

DOCT. "That as faith, or believing, is the source of good works; so these good works, which are the fruit of believing, are good and profitable to men." Or, take it thus: "That they who have truly believed, are to be careful to maintain good works, these being good and profitable unto men." The foundation of this doctrine from the words is obvious. In speaking to it, I shall, through divine assistance, observe the method following:

I. I would speak a little of those good works, which they who have believed in God are called to maintain.

II. Of that believing in God, which is the source and fountain of good works.

III. Show that these good works, flowing from faith, are "good and profitable unto men."

IV. Apply the whole.

I. I say, I would speak a little of good works. Where I would show, 1. What works they are that may be called good works.

2. What is meant by maintaining good works.

First, What sort of works they are that may be called good works. In general, then, you would know, that, considering the law as a covenant, or an abstract rule of righteousness, as contradistinct from the gospel, there are no works done by men that can be called good works; for "there is none that doth good" (in this respect,) "no not one: In many things we offend all." The most blameless and perfect actions of the most consummate believer that ever drew breath in God's air, while in this state of sin and imperfection, cannot perform a work legally good, because of the mixture of sin that attends his best performances. And hence it is, that we find the saints in scripture claiming, that they could not stand, if God should mark iniquity; that all their righteousness is as filthy rags; that their goodness extendeth not to him. O sirs, if God should "lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet," we, and all our good works, would be for ever rejected, like reprobate silver. And therefore we have little reason to think or imagine, that God is a debtor to us for any thing we do, or that our good works do procure the favour of God, his acceptance, or a title to life. But our works are called good works, as having a respect to the law, considered as a rule of duty, in the sweet hand of a Mediator. He makes his "yoke easy, and his burden light," to his people, by accepting of their weak efforts and endeavours through his perfect obedience and satisfaction, as good, though attended with manifold imperfections. Now, to constitute in action good in an evangelical sense, there are several things requisite.

1. To make a work a good work it must be done by a good and holy person, renewed by the Spirit of Christ and justified by his merit. It is beyond all dispute and controversy, that the person must first be accepted of God, and reconciled to him in Christ, before the work can be accepted. Abel's person was accepted of God, and then his offering. And hence it is, that "the sacrifices of the wicked" are said to be "an abomination to the Lord." The very "ploughing of the wicked is sin." The matter is this: God is angry with their persons, and he hates and loathes them while out of Christ; and therefore nothing that comes from them, or that is done by them, can be acceptable. And therefore, I say, to make works good and acceptable to God, they must be done by a person that is in a gracious and reconciled state.

2. To make a work a good work it must be a thing required and called for by the law of God. The reason of this is plain, because it is God's will that makes any thing sin or duty; and if it be not agreeable to his revealed will, he may say unto us, "Who hath required this at your hand?" Hence Christ confronts the Pharisees, saying, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." And therefore, if you would do any work acceptable to God, you must take care, that the thing you do be required and commanded of God. Indeed, there are some actions that are of an indifferent nature; that is, God has left men at a perfect liberty, whether to do them or not. But then it should be remembered, that these actions, in the case of offence or edification, cease to be indifferent, and fall under some commandment of the moral law. In which case Paul says, (1 Corinthians 8:13,) "if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth." It was a thing indifferent, whether Paul did eat flesh or not; but when offence was likely to follow his eating, he would abstain from it as much as though it were expressly forbidden in the law of God, because, in that case, it became a breach of the law of love and charity.

3. To make a work a good work it must be done out of a right principle. It must be done out of a principle of faith, as was already hinted; for no work can be acceptable without this, Hebrews 11:6. And there is a twofold faith requisite in a good action. (1.) A general faith of persuasion, that the

thing we do may be done lawfully. And of this the apostle speaks when he says, "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin," Romans 14:23. And, (2.) A particular justifying faith, believing the acceptance of what we do, only through the Lord Jesus Christ, and his merit and mediation. Again; a good work must be done out of regard to the authority of God commanding: and that not simply with a respect to the authority of a God the Creator; for thus a Heathen, or a Mahometan, may obey God, and do good actions; but out of a respect to the authority of a God in Christ. We must eye the authority of the Creator in our obedience, as coming in this blessed channel, otherwise it is not a true Christian obedience: for we Christians are "under the law to Christ;" and when we are so, we are "not without law to God," seeing God hath commanded us to "hear his voice," and to "obey him," as our "Lord, King," and "Lawgiver." And "whatsoever we do in word or deed," we are to "do all in the name" and authority "of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God by him." And, farther, good works must be done with simplicity and godly sincerity, avoiding hypocritical and Pharisical ostentation in the discharge of duty: for "his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him," Habakkuk 2:4.

4. To make a work a good work, it must be done to a right end. It must be done to the glory and honour of God, this being the principal and ultimate end of our being, according to that direction of the apostle, 1 Corinthians 10:31 : "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." It must be done as a declaration of our gratitude to God for redeeming love. We are "bought with a price;" therefore we are to "glorify him in our bodies and spirits, which are his." They must be done, also, with a view to the edification of others, Matthew 5:16. But these, and many other things to this purpose, will fall in to be spoken to more particularly, when we come to the fourth general head proposed in the prosecution of the doctrine.

Secondly, I come to inquire what may be the significance of that phrase of being careful to maintain good works? To this I answer briefly in the following particulars.

1. It implies a diligent attendance to the rule of the word; according to that of David, Psalms 119:9: "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?. By taking heed thereto according to thy word." The man makes God's statutes "the man of his counsel." And when he is called to this or that piece of service, he takes advice of his counsellors, whether he may do or forbear. They are "a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path." As Israel looked to the pillar of cloud, and of fire, in all their motions and travels, for direction through the wilderness; so the gracious soul looks to the law or testimony in every step of his way towards the Canaan that is above.

2. It implies an anxiety or solicitude of soul, to have his actions managed and ordered according to that rule. It is the very desire of his soul, to be found in the Lord's way; as it was with David, Psalms 119:5 : "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" he desires not only to have his outward walk, but the inward frame of his very soul, all the thoughts of it, moulded in an agreeableness to the law of God: Psalms 119:80 : "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed." Such is his concern for this, that he lays up the law of God in the very cabinet of his heart, as an antidote against sin: Psalms 119:11 : "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

3. It implies a holy watchfulness against all the temptations, motions, or occasions of sin, either in thought, word, or action. "I said, I will take heed to my ways," says David. The man sets a watch over his heart, according to that command, "Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the

issues of life." He sets a watch over his eyes, and makes a covenant with them; and over his lips, lest sin should either enter, or go forth by that door.

4. It implies an embracing of every opportunity for doing good works that God puts into his hands, and improving the same. When God puts the opportunity or talent in his hand, he studies to lay it out for the Master's use, and his own and others' profit and advantage; according to that direction of Solomon, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

5. It implies a going on, or progress in the duties of obedience, without returning back again to the old trade of sin. The Christian is not like the "dog returning to his vomit," or "the sow that was washed to wallow in the mire;" no, but "the righteous holdeth on his way;" he "maintains good works;" he "waxes stronger and stronger;" he "forgets the things that are behind, and reacheth forth unto things that are before."

6. The word here, as I hinted in the explication, implies an exciting or influencing of others to the study of good works. The word, as I said, is borrowed from captains or commanders, who go in front of the battle, encouraging the soldiers of the army to follow their example. The believer studies to exhibit a good copy, and to recommend holiness and good works to others, by his practice; so that others, seeing his good works, may be encouraged to do the like.

7. Lastly, This maintaining of good works must needs depend upon doing all by faith, and improving the strength of Christ: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." But this leads me to the second general head.

II. The second general thing proposed in the method, was, to give some account of this believing in God, which is given as the character of those who maintain good works. Here I would, 1. Show what believing in God implies. 2. Give some of the qualities of this believing. 3. Show the influence that it has upon good works.

First, What believing in God implies.

1. It implies the knowledge of God, in a suitableness to the relation which he has made of himself to us, through Christ, in the gospel. I acknowledge, that the very Heathens may know his eternal power, by the things that are seen; but there is no saving knowledge of God by a guilty sinner, but as he is in Christ: 2 Corinthians 4:6 : "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." And whatever fine notions or speculations people may have of God, and of his excellencies, as discoverable in the works of creation and providence; yet, if their notions of him be not regulated by the gospel-revelation, and if this revelation of a God in Christ be not opened by the Spirit of wisdom, rending the veil of ignorance and unbelief that is upon the mind by nature, there can be no saving, satisfying, or sanctifying knowledge of God, and consequently no true faith, or believing. Indeed, a rational knowledge may produce a rational faith, and an historical knowledge may produce an historical faith; but it is only a saving illumination of the mind with the knowledge of a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself that can produce a saving faith. And this knowledge is so essential to faith, or believing, that we find it frequently in scripture called by the name of knowledge: "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

2. To believe in God, implies a firm and steady assent to the truth and veracity of God speaking in his word. It is to believe and credit what he says, on his own testimony. This is called a "receiving the record of God, a setting to the seal that God is true, a believing of the report of the gospel." When the man hears "the word of the truth of the gospel," he is ready to cry out, with the apostle, "It is a faithful saying." This word is established in the heavens; yea, "heaven and earth shall pass away," but this word of God "endureth for ever."

3. To believe in God is to trust that this word of a reconciled God in Christ is not only true in the general, but that it shall be true to me in particular, that it shall be made good to me. He takes up God in Christ as a promising God, promising peace and pardon, grace and glory, in Christ; and he takes up the promise, as coming to him in the offer of the gospel, as the immediate ground and foundation of his faith: Acts 2:39 : "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off; even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Now, I say, the man taking up the word of grace and promise in this way, trusts the promiser for the performing thereof to his own soul: he takes it as a sufficient security for all promised good, saying, "Here is my substance: This is all my salvation." Hence faith acted upon the promise of God is called "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Hebrews 11:1. And this is what many notable divines, both abroad and at home, call the assurance of faith, or the appropriating persuasion of faith; because there is not only a persuasion of the truth of the promise, but a persuasion of it, with application and appropriation of it to the man himself in particular. And this is all I say at present about the ingredients of faith in God. I come, Secondly, To give some of the properties and qualities of it. And there are these few following that I mention:—

1. It is a staying, quieting, or composing grace. It will settle the mind under the greatest storms and disorders: Isaiah 26:3 : "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." Hence the believer, under clouds of desertion, temptation, and affliction, is directed to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God," Isaiah 1:10.

2. It is a receptive or a taking grace. It gives nothing to God, as other graces do; but only takes or receives from the Lord: it does not come to give but to get. Hence it is expressed by a taking; Revelation 22:17 : "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely;" or, which is the same thing, a receiving, John 1:12 : "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Faith is, in scripture, sometimes compared to the eye: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Isaiah 45:22. You know the eye, when it beholds external objects, does not give any thing to what it beholds, but only takes in the image or impression of what it sees, and conveys that to the mind: so, faith does not add or give any thing to God; it only beholds him, and the discoveries he has made of his grace, and glory, and love, and faithfulness, in Christ, and impresses the soul with them. Hence we, by "beholding his glory as in a glass," are said to be "changed into the same image," 2 Corinthians 3:18.

3. Although it be only a receptive grace with respect to its object, yet, where implanted, it is a mighty operative grace with respect to its subject: for, as you may hear afterward, it influences every good word and work; and therefore all true obedience is called "the obedience of faith." So that an idle or inactive faith is but dead, like the body without the soul.

4. It is a radical or rooting grace. It roots the soul, as it were, in the root of Jesse, the plant of renown. And itself is the root of the other graces of the Spirit, by which they are made to grow and blossom. As the tree strikes its roots into the ground, and from thence draws fatness, sap, and moisture, conveying a digested nourishment to the several branches, by which they are made to bud and flourish, and bring forth fruit; so, faith ingrafts and unites the soul to Christ, deriving spiritual sap, and moisture, and fatness, by which every other habit of grace is drawn forth to a lively exercise.

5. It is a most humble and lowly grace. It carries the man quite out of himself into Christ for all. Hence it is called a "submitting unto the righteousness of God," Romans 10:3. A very strange expression! Shall it be reckoned submission for a condemned criminal to receive a pardon? Is it submission for a naked beggar to receive a robe? Yet thus it is: the pride of our hearts will not stoop so low, as to be obliged to the Son of God for righteousness, pardon, and life. And this is the very thing that makes faith, or believing, so difficult. What difficulty is there for a naked man to receive a garment to cover him? What difficulty for a poor man to receive a gift? What difficulty for a weary man to sit down and rest? But the thing that makes this difficult is the pride of our hearts, together with our ignorance both of our malady and remedy. Now, I say, faith breaks the pride of the heart, and submits, or lies down, as it were, at the foot of sovereign grace, heartily content to be indebted to Christ for all. The man is content to be a fool, that Christ may be his wisdom; content to be a criminal, in the eyes of law, and justice, and conscience, that Christ may be his righteousness; content to own himself a polluted filthy sinner, that in him he may be sanctified; content to own himself a slave, that he may be a free man in Christ and share of his redemption. This is true gospel-humility, indeed, and what the high and lofty One regards: Isaiah 57:15 : "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." "Though God be high yet hath he regard to such as are" thus "lowly."

6. It is an elevating and ennobling grace. Though it be an humbling grace, yet it is a most exalting grace; it elevates the soul above this lower world, it looks down on it as a dunghill, and mounts up with wings toward the land that is very far off; it enters within the veil, and takes a view of things invisible and particularly of an unseen Christ, and triumphs in him: "Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." it mounts so high, that it will even dare to sit down upon the throne with Christ in glory: hence we are said to "sit together with him" by faith "in heavenly places."

7. It is a cheering and a comforting grace. We are "filled with all joy and peace in believing. I had fainted," says David, "unless I had believed."

8. It is a bold and confident grace. Hence we read frequently of the "boldness of faith," and the "assurance of faith," Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 10:22. It is disputed at this day, whether assurance be of the essence of faith. I incline not to call it by the name of assurance, because some frivolously object to that word; but I choose rather to call it by the name of the certainty of faith. I do not design to enter much upon that controversy at present: all I say of it is only this; that there cannot miss to be a certainty in faith, because doubts and fears vanish before it. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" How faith can fill the soul with "joy and peace," yea, with "joy unspeakable, and full of glory," if it have no certainty in it as to these things in which it rejoices, is what I think no man is able to account for. How a man can rest on Christ, and apply him and his

salvation to himself in particular, and yet not believe "that he shall be saved through the grace of Christ," to me appears a paradox. I do not say, that faith excludes doubts out of the believer; but I say that faith excludes doubting out of its own nature. Light excludes darkness out of its nature; and yet there may be much darkness in a room where there is some light. Certainty may be of the nature of faith, although there be much darkness and doubting in the believer, through the prevalence of ignorance and unbelief that remains in him, and will remain, while he is clogged with a body of death. So, in like manner, love excludes enmity out of the nature of it; and yet, in the believer, who loves Christ, there is much remaining enmity, by which his love is exceedingly weakened: so the certainty of faith is weakened through the remaining unbelief that is still in the believer's heart. But now here it would be remembered, that, although there be a certainty in the nature of faith, a certainty of trust, rest or confidence in God, grounded on his promise in Christ; yet there is a great difference betwixt this certainty of faith, and the certainty or assurance of sense or reflection, which some call a discursive assurance: for the certainty of sense is built upon the soul's own experience or feeling: but the certainty of faith is built on the promise, and Christ in the promise. The first sort of assurance is not at all in the nature of faith; but the last sort of assurance or certainty, is what is, and has been owned, by all the stream of reformed divines, both at home and abroad, ever since our happy reformation from Popery. I shall only add here, that the difference betwixt the certainty of faith and of sense, is very evident and obvious; for the one has a respect to what the soul feels and sees at present before it: but the other, to wit, the certainty of faith has a respect to things promised which are not seen or felt otherwise but as they lie in the womb of the promise, and in the veracity of the promiser. To give you a few instances: By the certainty of faith, Moses, and the believing Israelites, knew, before they came out of Egypt, that they would have a passage through the Red sea as through dry land; but, by the certainty of sense, they knew it, when they saw the waters file off on every hand, making a lane for Israel to pass on. By faith acted on God's promise, they knew that the walls of Jericho would fall down at the sounding of rams' horns; but by the certainty of sense, they knew it, when they saw them actually fall flat before them. By the assurance of faith Abraham believed, without staggering, that he should have a son, because God had promised it; but, by the assurance of sense, he knew it, when he got Isaac in his arms. By the assurance of faith, Abraham, and the Old Testament worthies, believed that the Messiah was to come in the fullness of time; but, by the assurance of sense, John the Baptist, and others, knew it, when they saw him manifested in the flesh, and beheld his glory, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." By the certainty of faith, we under the New Testament are persuaded and assured, that Christ is to come again the second time; but, by the certainty of sense, we shall know it, when we shall see him descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and trump of God. By faith we are assured of the resurrection of the dead, and of our own resurrection in particular; but, by sense, we shall be assured of it at that day, when the voice shall be heard, commanding the sea to give up its dead, and the earth to give up its dead. Thus, I say, there is a great and visible difference between the certainty of faith, and the certainty of sense. By faith acted upon the promise, I believe the remission of sins, and of my sins, through Christ; but, by the certainty of sense, I am assured of this, when God by his Spirit seals his pardon on my soul with a perceptible smile of his countenance. By faith I believe God to be my God, because he has said it in the covenant, "I will be their God;" but, by the certainty of sense, I believe this, when he reveals and manifests himself to my soul. By faith, grounded on the promise of eternal life in Christ, I believe

my own salvation in particular; but, by the certainty of sense, I believe, because I have believed, or because God has discovered himself to be a saving God to me, by the operation of his Spirit upon my soul. So, I say, faith is a bold and confident grace; it intermeddles with, applies, and appropriates, and makes use of the goods of the testament of Christ as its own, the testament being confirmed in the blood of the Lamb; and this testament it not only pleads, but rejoices in. The language of faith is not properly, May be, or, Peradventure it shall be so; though I grant that a weak faith may many times lurk under a may be: but, I say, let faith be stripped of its incumbrances, or of those things that are opposite to its nature; let it but get a full view of the promise, and faithfulness of the promiser, it will set its foot on unbelief, and all discouragements, saying, It shall be, because God hath said it. Thus you see faith expresses itself; Micah 7:7-10 : I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." And Micah 7:8 : "When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." And, Micah 7:9, at the close: "He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."

9. It is a very quick-sighted grace. It can see relief coming to the soul at a vast distance, saying, "I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." It can look through frowning dispensations, and see love in the heart of God.

10. It is a strengthening and establishing grace: "Except ye believe, ye shall not be established." It is by faith that we are "strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Faith, in a manner, wields the very arm of Omnipotence, and cries with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." To conclude, faith is a patient grace; it waits on the Lord till his time come for the accomplishment of his promise. Unbelief is hasty: "I said, in my haste, All men are liars: but he that believeth, shall not make haste." Its language is, "I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation. The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Thirdly, I now proceed to inquire what influence this faith has upon good works?. Answ. There are several things that are inlaid with the very nature and exercise of faith, which cannot miss to influence, holiness and good works. As,

1. True faith unites the soul to Christ who is the very root and fountain of all holiness. "From me," saith the Lord, "is thy fruit found Except ye abide in me, and I in you, (to wit, by faith,) ye cannot bring forth much fruit." Indeed, a person in a state of nature may bring forth many fruits that are morally and materially good; but, without union with Christ, we can do no work that is spiritually good and acceptable; for, "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." We may as well "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles," as expect works that are spiritually good from a person out of Christ. Why? The reason of it is plain: his "root" is but "rottenness," while he grows upon the old Adam: and therefore his "blossom shall go up as dust." While a man is growing upon the old Adam, he is married to the law as a covenant; and therefore all his works are but dead works: and can ever dead works be acceptable to the living God? We must be "dead to the law by the body of Christ," and "married to that better husband, before we can "bring forth fruit unto God," Romans 7:4.

2. Faith works by love; and "love is the fulfilling of the law." Love to God in Christ is the next and immediate fruit true and saving faith. Now, the heart being oiled with the love of God in Christ, this makes the man to abound in good works: "The love of Christ constrains us," says the apostle.

Love makes a man to keep God's commandments. Love will make a man to run through fire and water for him. "Many waters cannot quench love," &c. Song of Solomon 8:7. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Romans 8:35.

3. Faith is a shield to quench the fiery darts of Satan. When temptation without, and corruption within, are forming a conspiracy against the work of grace in the soul, by which the whole work is endangered, then faith breaks the plot, and countermines it. When Adonijah's conspiracy had carried the whole strength of the kingdom of Israel, it was broken by making application to David: "Hast thou not said, that Solomon shall reign?" So, when temptation and corruption have carried the matter to a great height, the conspiracy is broken by faith's application to Christ: O Lord, hast thou not said that grace shall reign, and that "sin shall not have dominion over me?" And thus the soul is made to go on its way, "rejoicing to work righteousness."

4. Faith applies the promises of the new covenant and fetches grace from thence, for obeying the precepts of the law. So that faith, as it were, travels between the precept and the promise: it carries the man from the precept to the promise and from the promise to the precept. As, for instance, when the law says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;" faith runs to the promise, where God has said, "I will circumcise their hearts to love me." When the law says, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and make him thy dread;" faith, in that case, runs to the promise for the grace of fear: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Does the law say, "Thou shalt know the Lord," and acknowledge him for "thy God?" Well, faith looks to the promise, "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord." Does the law oblige us to "keep all his commandments?" Faith runs to the promise, and applies it "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes."

5. Faith has an influence on good works, as it beholds the authority of a God in Christ interposed in every commandment of the law. The eye of natural reason may see, as was hinted, the authority of a God Creator, as is plain in the case of the Heathens; but it is only the eye of that faith, which is of God's operation, that can behold the authority of a God in Christ, and receive the law out of his hands. In this respect we are told, "that no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." And when the law is received from his mouth, it does not reflect dishonour upon God as a Creator. O! When a God in Christ is viewed by faith, the soul cannot but cry out, "He is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth; His commandments are not grievous His yoke is easy, and his burden is light:" for I see it no more a covenant of works to me, but a rule of obedience, sweetened with redeeming love and grace. Thus, you see what influence faith has upon good works.

III. The third general head proposed in the method was, to inquire in what respect good works are profitable to men.

But, first, I would show you, negatively, in what respects they are not profitable to men.

1. Then, They are not at all profitable to men for justification or acceptance before God: for "by the works of the law," says the apostle, "shall no flesh be justified." Our justification and acceptance, both as to our persons and our works, go upon quite other ground; viz. upon the everlasting righteousness, the obedience and death, of the Son of God, as our surety, apprehended by faith. It is in him "that all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory." Indeed, the generality of

men, that are trained up in a Protestant country, will tell you, that they do not expect to be justified by their own righteousness, but only by the righteousness of Christ. But alas! How few are they that really and actually submit to this righteousness! There is a cursed bias in the heart of man to lean to something in himself. Is not this the language of thy heart many times? O! If I had such an emotional experience, such a melting heart, such love, such a degree of humility and obedience, then I think God would accept of me, and love me, on that account. But, sirs, let me tell you, that it is not on account of any thing wrought in you, or done by you, that God accepts of you, but only on account of the doing and dying of the Son of God. I may say to all legalists, that are looking for acceptance with God on the ground of the law, and their own obedience, as the prophet Isaiah says to a set of men in his day, Isaiah 59:6 : "Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works." So, then, good works are not at all profitable to righteousness and justification. Hence, (Isaiah 57:12) "I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works, for they shall not profit thee."

2. Good works are not at all profitable to found a claim or title to heaven, or yet to any blessing and mercy promised in the whole covenant of grace; for heaven, and all the blessings that lie on this side of it, come to us in the way of a free gift. God gives Christ, his unspeakable gift, and with him he freely gives us these things: "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." I acknowledge, indeed, that in God's covenant of promise there is a connexion and order established, for conferring of these promised blessings to us; so that when God gives one thing, it is a pledge of another thing coming; when he gives grace, to be sure he will give glory; when he gives a mourning heart, it is a sign that comfort is coming, because that is God's method and way, "to give the oil of joy for mourning, and to revive the heart of the humble." But though the tears of gospel-mourning be a sign and evidence of comfort coming, yet they are not the condition for which God bestows comfort. So God has connected faith and salvation together in the covenant; so that "he that believeth, shall be saved:" but it is not our faith that entitles us to salvation; no, but faith unites the soul to Christ, in whom we recover our right to the forfeited inheritance. It is by virtue of the soul's union with Christ by faith that it is entitled to all the promised blessings. Hence all the promises are said to be "in him yea, and in him amen." There is no promise in the Bible, but it is made in the first instance to Christ as the head, and in him to the members of mystical body. Just as it was in the first covenant, to wit, the covenant of works; the promise of life, upon condition of perfect obedience, was made directly to Adam as the covenant head, and, in him, to his posterity: so in the new covenant, of which Christ is the Head, the promise of life, and every thing belonging to it, is first made to him; and, in him, to all his spiritual seed and offspring: and in this respect, all the promises are in him yea and amen. Christ is the first heir of all things; and the title of the younger brethren is only through him, or by virtue of their union with him. Thus, good works, I say, are not profitable to men, in order to found a title to heaven and eternal life.

3. As our good works are not profitable to men in any of these respects, so neither are they profitable to God, as though he had any advantage by them: Job 22:2, Job 22:3: "Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" Hence David acknowledges, that "his goodness extended not to the Lord." Alas! we are ready to think, that God is much indebted to us, when we do this or that. Have we fasted and prayed, mourned and repented, kept the Sabbath, attended ordinances, and performed this or the other duty; and yet will

not God be pleased with all? No, no; do not mistake it; you that bring these things as a price in your hands, to recommend you to God, all your duties are but like the cutting off of a dog's neck, and the offering of swine's blood upon his altar. And, therefore, he will say to you, as he said to Israel, Isaiah 1:11: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me." But now, you may perhaps say to me, By this way of speaking you make good works profitable for nothing at all. What strange doctrine is this? I answer, although they be not at all profitable in any of these respects, but wholly unprofitable and pernicious; yet good works, when done out of a principle of faith, are really profitable on many other accounts. As,

1. They are profitable, as they are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: James 2:18 : "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." And, ver. 22: "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? From whence it is plain, that works are profitable, as the fruits and evidences of true faith. We know that there is sap and life in the tree by the fruits, the leaves, and blossoms, that it puts forth; so we know our faith to be a true faith, by the fruits of holiness and good works. Yea, our good works will be brought forth, at the last day, as the evidence of our faith; and therefore it is said, Revelation 20:12; "They were judged according to their works." Works are not a ground of confidence, but an evidence; they are not the foundation of faith, but the fruits of it: and the believer's comfort may be increased by the sight of good works, though it is not built on them. In a word, they manifest our claim and title to the crown, but do not at all procure or merit the same. We have peace with God, and with conscience, by the righteousness of Christ; and by holiness, or good works, our peace of conscience is maintained and evidenced to us.

2. They are profitable, as they are testimonies and evidences of our gratitude to God for the wonders of his grace and love manifested in and by Jesus Christ. Hence says David, Psalms 116:12, Psalms 116:13: "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." 1 Peter 2:9 : "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." The works of obedience, are, as it were, thank-offerings to God for the benefits bestowed on us; and when men have not a conversation suitable to their mercies, they despise the goodness of God. Hence is it that the Lord complains of such, saying, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise."

3. They are profitable and needful for strengthening our assurance: 1 John 2:3 : "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." And, 1 John 2:5 : "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." 2 Peter 1:5-10. From all which you see, that assurance is strengthened and confirmed by the fruits of holiness and good works. We read, that "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:" and it is well, when, with the witness of the Spirit, we have that of water, that is, sanctification and purity of heart and life.

4. They are profitable, as they are edifying to others: Matthew 5:16 : "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Christ does not there encourage vain-glory and boasting, but proposes the true end of our visible or external

holiness, namely; that others may have matter of praise to God for his grace abounding toward us; and that they may be also engaged to the study of holiness and practical religion by our example. It was a saying of Jerome, "That he loved Christ, dwelling in Augustine." We ought so to walk, as others may love Christ dwelling in us. It is an exhortation to believing wives, 1 Peter 3:1, so to walk, that their husbands may be won to the Lord. So that, I say, good works are edifying to others.

5. They are profitable, as they serve to adorn the profession of the gospel: 1 Timothy 6:1 : "Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour; that the name of God, and his doctrine be not blasphemed." Titus 2:5, Titus 2:9-12. Thus, they serve to adorn religion. The church is the Lord's garden; and you know the fruitfulness of the trees of the garden serve exceedingly to adorn it; whereas barrenness, or bad fruit, is a disgrace, and makes the garden to be ill spoken of. When men, professing godliness, have not a suitable walk and conversation, it makes enemies and strangers to conclude, that all religion is but a fraud or cheat, and that there is no reality in it; whereas, a fruitful conversation stops the mouths of the enemies of religion: 1 Peter 2:15 : "So is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

6. They are profitable, as they manifest our implantation or ingrafting into Christ: Ephesians 2:10 : "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

7. There is an analogy and proportion between good works and glory: Romans 6:22 : "But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." But I will not continue with this.

IV. I proceed now to the last thing in the method, which was the application.

First, This doctrine may serve for information, in these two or three particulars

1. See hence the right way to attain true morality, or how you may come to do good works to purpose: you must believe in God, and by faith be united to the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle, Romans 7:1-25, tried to do good works by the strength of nature, but it would not do with him; for "the commandment which was ordained to life, he found to be unto death." And I do verily believe, that none shall ever make a better hand of it than he did, try it who will, by the strength of nature. The law, of itself, only irritates corruption. instead of mortifying it: for, says he, "when the commandment came, sin revived." Like a serpent that is dulled with the cold, it lies as if it were dead; but when brought to the heat, it revives and spits venom: so corrupt nature, when brought to the commandment, or the commandment brought to it, it revives and gathers strength, and discovers more malignity than it did before: "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, works in us all manner of concupiscence."

2. See hence, how unjustly ministers, who endeavour to preach the doctrine of the grace of God, or who preach down works in the matter of justification, are attacked as enemies to good works and holiness, or as if they separated between faith and good works. This was a false accusation cast upon Christ himself, which made turn offer that vindication, Matthew 5:17 : "I am not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil the law. This was a charge against the protomartyr Stephen, Acts 6:13, that he "spoke blasphemous words against the holy place, and the law." And

this also was a charge against the apostle Paul and his doctrine: hence it is that he anticipates that objection Romans 3:31 : "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

3. See hence the folly of those who, under a pretext of grace, or of faith in Christ, give way to licentiousness, as many carnal gospellers do. Whatever pretences such may have to faith, yet they are strangers to it, and never felt the effect of divine grace on their own souls; otherwise it would "teach them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." It is no new thing for corrupt nature to abuse the doctrine of the grace of God. This was an evil the apostle complains of in his day; hence he takes notice of some who argued, that they might sin, that grace might abound, Romans 6:1-23. But though the doctrine of grace may be abused, while it lies floating in the head; yet when it gets into the heart, it engages to holiness in "all manner of conversation." In a word, though the doctrine of grace may be abused, the habit and exercise of grace cannot be abused to sin.

Use 2d of exhortation. Is it so, that it is they, and they only who believe, that do and can maintain good works? Then my first exhortation is, O believe in the Son of God. We read of a company, John 6:28, who came to Christ, asking him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Christ's answer is, John 6:29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." This is the great and fundamental precept that lays the foundation of all true obedience; for all true obedience is the obedience of faith. And therefore study to obey that great commandment, John 3:23 : "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." But I will not enlarge upon this use at present. The second exhortation is to them that have believed, that you may "be careful to maintain good works." Time will not allow me to enlarge upon this either: only consider, by way of motive, shortly, that, as every person of the adorable Trinity bears a share, according to their particular economy, in the work of man's redemption; so there is an obligation, arising from every one of them, tying us to the study and maintenance of good works. The Father has elected you from eternity, and loved you with an everlasting love. And why did he elect you? It was to holiness or good works: Ephesians 1:4-5 : "He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." The Son has redeemed us with his blood, not only that we should be liberated from wrath, but that we should be holy, and abound in the fruits thereof: Titus 2:14 : "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The Holy Ghost is our Comforter, and he dwells in us as in a temple; and therefore we are bound and obliged not to grieve him: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." Thus, I say, every person of the adorable Trinity, and their relation to us, obliges us to the study of good works. Again; the covenant of grace, and the promises of it, not only encourage but oblige us to the study of good works: 2 Corinthians 7:1 : "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." But I must of necessity pass other motives, and conclude the whole with a few directions or advices. Take these following:

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1. If you would do good works, take care that your state be right, I mean, take care that you have a station in Christ the second Adam; for, without this, you cannot bring forth fruit, either pleasing to God, or profitable to your own souls. Thou art but a thorn and thistle in God's vineyard, whilst thou art in a state of nature; and therefore there is no good fruit of obedience that can grow upon thee. See that you have the Spirit of Christ within you; and for this end plead that promise, Ezekiel 36:27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." It is the Spirit of the Head that animates all the members of the body: he helps our infirmities in prayer, and in other good works also.

2. In all your works or duties of obedience, keep your eye upon the chief corner-stone that God hath laid in Zion. You know a mason or builder cannot fail to make very irregular work, if he do not keep his eye upon the foundation and corner-stone of the house; his work will be marred. Just so it is here; if we do not keep our eye on Christ by faith, as the foundation laid in Zion, the foundation of acceptance, the foundation of assistance, we can never yield acceptable obedience to God. And when either the merit or Spirit of Christ go out of sight, immediately the heart turns legal, by which all our duties are spoiled and marred.

3. Study always to keep up the lively impression of this awful truth upon your hearts, that God could find matter of condemnation against you, not only from your worst sins, but from the best of your duties. The most holy and heavenly man that ever breathed, durst not adventure the salvation of his soul upon the most heavenly thought that ever he conceived. Due impressions of this will help to keep your hearts right in point of righteousness; so as not to build your acceptance before God upon your good works, but only on the works of the Son of God. The apostle, I find, has a notable word to this purpose, 1 Corinthians 4:4 : "I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified." The apostle's meaning is (I know nothing by myself) as if he had said, 'I am not conscious to myself of any unfaithfulness in my ministry, or trust that God has reposed in me; my conscience does not smite me for neglect of duty, (yet am I not hereby justified.)' As if he should say, 'Though I have laboured more abundantly than all the rest; though I have fought the good fight, finished my course, kept the faith, (yet am I not hereby justified;)' all this will not make a righteousness by which I may expect to be justified or accepted of God. No: he accounted all as dung and loss, in the point of justification, "that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness." So that you see, even in the presence of your best graces, works, and duties of obedience, free grace through imputed righteousness, is to be your only sanctuary and city of refuge.

4. Whenever you are helped to do any thing in obedience to the law, still remember what you do is done in a borrowed strength, and that will keep you humble; for it is a vain spirit that is proud of what is borrowed: 1 Corinthians 4:7 : "who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" And therefore do not "sacrifice to your own net;" for it is not free will, but free grace, to which thou art beholden. "It is God which worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

5. Beware of legal ends and motives in the performing of good works.

Quest. What are these? I answer,

1st, it is a legal end in obedience, when a man obeys, or does good works, to make an atonement for his former sin. Some, when they have fallen into any sin of omission or commission, for which their consciences check and challenge them, will purpose, vow, and resolve, that they will do better in time coming: and thus they think they will make God amends for what injury they have done to him and his holy law. This argues a legal spirit. There is nothing that can atone for the guilt of sin, but the ransom and propitiation that God hath found.

2dly, When a man yields obedience, only to still the clamours of an awakened conscience, or to keep his conscience easy. Alas sirs, though our own righteousness and good works may appease and stop the mouth of conscience; but they will never "purge the conscience from dead works." Nothing less can satisfy conscience, God's deputy, than what satisfies divine justice; and that is the blood of Christ applied by faith. And therefore it must needs argue or discover a man to be of a legal spirit, that licks himself whole with his good works. Good works are not to be neglected: but they are not to be rested in, or upon, as a righteousness.

3dly, When a man yields obedience to the commands of the law, only that he may be kept out of hell. It is true, indeed, there is a filial fear of God as a Father, and of his fatherly displeasure, which is one of the principal springs of gospel obedience, according to what you have, Jeremiah 32:40 : "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." But there is a vast difference between this, and a slavish fear of hell and eternal damnation: there is as great a difference between the one and the other, as between the fear that a loving child has to an affectionate father, and the fear that a condemned criminal or malefactor has of his judge: the one is driven to obedience through terror, but the other is drawn to obedience through love. I do not deny but a child of God, through the prevalence of temptation, desertion, or unbelief, may come to be under such a spirit of bondage; but then it is not his privilege, but his punishment. And in so far as the child of God is actuated in his obedience by a "spirit of bondage unto fear," his obedience is legal: for when he acts like himself, like a believer indeed, he "serves the Lord without fear," without slavish fear of hell and wrath, "in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of his life," Luke 1:74-75.

4thly, When a man performs good works, to procure a right and title to heaven and glory. For, as I was saying, our title comes only by Jesus Christ; Christ is the first heir of eternal life, and we are "joint-heirs with him." But you may say, Are we not told, Revelation 22:14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city?" For making this clear to you, you should know, that there is a twofold right to glory, which is the thing there spoken of, to wit, a legal and evidential right. (1.) I say, there is a legal or a law right. You know the title to life and glory was forfeited by the breach of the law in the first Adam; and it must be recovered again by a perfect obedience to the law: and whose obedience can do this, but the obedience of Christ imputed to us for righteousness? So that, I say, we come to have our law right and title to glory, and other blessings, only recovered in Christ, and by the imputation of his righteousness to us, by which "the law is magnified, and made honourable." But, (2.) There is a right of evidence, by which our right, through Christ, is evidenced, and cleared up to our own souls. And this is the right that I conceive is spoken of in the scripture last mentioned. "They that do his commandments," and yield obedience out of gospel principles and motives, give evidence of their right, through Christ, to heaven and glory; and they shall "enter in through the gates into the city of the new Jerusalem." But to make our own obedience, our own

holiness or good works, the ground and foundation of our claim to the glories of heaven, is grossly legal and Popish. Thus, I say, study to beware of doing good works out of legal motives and principles; for these are like the dead fly, that makes the apothecary's ointment to stink.

6. My last advice is, Study to yield obedience out of gospel principles, ends, and motives, I shall not enlarge upon these, because they were hinted at already. Obey and do good works, with an eye to the glory of God, out of a principle of gratitude to him that has bought you with his blood. And yield obedience, that in this way you may maintain fellowship and communion with God. It is the man "that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully, who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place." The duties of obedience are like wagons or chariots, which bring the soul to Christ, and the embraces of his love, though they be not the procuring or meritorious cause of the least blink of the Lord's countenance. And then, to conclude, study the duties of obedience, not that you may obtain a title to heaven, which is the fruit of the Redeemer's purchase; but that you may attain an aptitude and meetness for partaking of "the inheritance of the saints in light:" for though there be no connexion of merit, yet there is a connexion of congruity and suitableness between begun holiness here, and consummate holiness hereafter. It is among the irreversible decrees of Heaven, that unholy, unsanctified sinners, continuing so, "shall never enter into the kingdom of God." "No unclean thing shall ever enter the gates of the new Jerusalem." And therefore beware of thinking, that when we lead you to Christ, as the only foundation of your title to eternal life, we thus encourage any in a way of sin or unholiness. No; the grace of God, in the gospel, teaches us better things, namely, to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

S. The Throne Of Grace

The Throne Of Grace by Ebenezer Erskine "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne."—Psalms 89:14 This psalm elegantly describes God's covenant of grace made with Christ, and his spiritual seed in him, under the picture of God's covenant of royalty with David and his posterity; as is plain from many passages of the psalm, where are too sublime and lofty to be restrained to David's temporary reign, or to that of his posterity, over the tribes of Israel, which quite expired in the revolution of a few centuries. The words read are a description of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom and administration: Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. Where we may notice, 1. The royal person who is the subject—matter of my text, and of the greatest part of the psalm: he is pointed at in the pronoun thy. This is not other than Christ, the true David, who was to reign the latter days; and in whom David's family and kingdom shall be perpetuated for ever. This is the king who rules in righteousness, and whose seed is to be established for ever, whose throne shall be built up to all generations, Psalms 89:4.

2. We have a badge of royal majesty and sovereignty ascribed to him; a throne. We frequently read in scripture of Christ's throne, Psalms 45:6, compared with Hebrews 1:8 : "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." God's throne is threefold. (1.) His throne of glory; by which I understand the essential glory and majesty of the divine nature. This throne is inaccessible by finite creatures; hence 1 Timothy 6:16, he is said to "dwell in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." The light of glory that breaks forth from this throne of essential glory, is too bright and overwhelming either for men or angels immediately to behold. Hence the Seraphims, Isaiah 6:1-13, are represented as covering their faces with their wings, to veil their eyes from that dazzling glory of divine holiness shining forth from his glorious throne, which is high and lifted up. --O who of Adam's fallen posterity "shall stand in his holy place!" (2.) There is his throne of justice, where he judges sinners according to the tenor of the law or broken covenant of works. At this par, every unbeliever is condemned already; from this throne, their final and irreversible doom will pass at the last day; "Depart from me, ye cursed," &c. Before this throne, no living flesh can be justified: "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Psalms 120:3. (3.) We read of the throne of grace, Hebrews 4:16 : "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." And this is the throne intended in my text, as is plain from the close of the verse, and what follows, "Mercy and truth go before the face" of him that sits on it; a "joyful sound" of peace, pardon, and salvation, issues forth from it to perishing sinners. They walk in the light of the King's countenance, rejoice in his name, and are exalted in "his righteousness, &c. Terror and amazement, death and ruin, are the fruits of God's appearing to sinners from a throne of glory, or justice; and therefore, I say, it must be a throne of grace that is here intended.

3. In the words we have the firm foundation upon which this throne of grace stands; its habitation, or (as in the margin) establishment, is justice and judgment: the firmest foundation upon which any throne can be settled. The thrones of many earthly potentates are reared and built up with violence and oppression; but the throne of God's kingdom of grace is established in righteousness. The

Son of God, as the Surety of sinners, submitter to satisfy justice, and to undergo the judgment and the condemnation of the broken law, by which he brings in everlasting righteousness; and upon this bottom or foundation the throne of grace is established, and upon this basis (as Pool reads it) will it stand for ever. The doctrine I design to prosecute from the words is this: —

DOCTRINE — "That God's administration of grace is founded upon the complete satisfaction of justice by his eternal Son as our Surety." Or take it thus: "That justice satisfied and judgment executed upon Christ as our Surety, is the basis and foundation of a throne of grace. Justice and judgment are the habitations of thy throne."

I only name two other places of holy writ for confirmation of the doctrine. The one we have, Romans 3:24-26, where the apostle tells us, "We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past; —"to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Where it is plain, that the grace of God in pardoning and justifying the ungodly sinner, is founded upon the propitiatory sacrifice of the death of Christ; and grace's administration being built upon this ground, God is just in pardoning the sinner that believes in Jesus. Another clear text to the same purpose we have, Romans 5:21; where grace is said to "reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." The government of grace is founded on righteousness; that is, upon the righteousness of Christ, by which justice was satisfied in the execution of judgment upon the Surety. In handling this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, observe the following method: —

- I. I shall speak a little of this throne.
- II. Of the basis or foundation of this throne.
- III. Notice some pillars with which the throne is surrounded and supported.
- IV. Inquire why God will have justice and judgment for the foundation of his throne of grace.
- V. Apply the whole.
 1. I say, I would take a view of the throne. Where again I shall, 1. Show what this throne is, and why so called. 2. Inquire what comfortable views of God a guilty sinner may have from this throne. 3. Offer a few scriptural remarks concerning it.

First, What is this throne, and why so called? In one word, then, By this throne of grace we are just to understand God manifesting himself in our own nature, and dealing with sinners through Christ according to the grace of the gospel. I take that word of the apostle, 2 Corinthians 5:19-20, to be a just account of what is intended by a throne of grace; "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" issuing forth a word of peace and reconciliation, that sinners might no more continue in their enmity, by dreading God as an implacable judge, or inexorable enemy, but might return to him as a reconciled God and Father. The reason of all which is subjoined, 2 Corinthians 5:21 : "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Now, God's administration of grace toward guilty sinners through Christ, may be called a throne, either,

1. With allusion to the mercy-seat in the typical temple of Jerusalem. Israel was a theocracy; the Holy one of Israel was their King, and the mercy-seat was his throne. It was an important type of Christ, and the most solemn and sacred thing in all that typical administration. God is said to "dwell between the cherubims: Shine forth, O thou that dwelleth between the cherubims:" so God dwelleth in Christ; yea, "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And through him God dwelleth with man upon earth in a way of grace: through him we have entrance into the holiest, as Israel entered in the person of their high priest: in him we make atonement for our sins; and through him we receive the oracles of God, the revelations of the divine will: in him God meets and communes with us, as he did from the mercy-seat in the material temple, Exodus 25:17, Exodus 25:22. Or,

2. It may be called a throne, because of the glorious greatness of the royal majesty of God that shines in this administration of grace through Christ. A throne, you know, is a seat of majesty, peculiar to sovereigns. Let none imagine, that the glory of God is any thing lessened by his sitting upon a throne of grace, or that less reverence is due to him here, than upon a throne of glory or justice. Indeed, the boldness of faith is both allowed and commanded in our approaches to this throne; but this does not diminish, but increase the soul's reverence and holy fear; Psalms 99:1 : "The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth be moved." Every thing in and about God's throne of grace appears great. "For the beauty of his throne, he hath set it in majesty." For instance, take these few particulars

1st, There is royal majesty in the very name of him that sits on the throne. What is his name? O happy they that know it, and by the eye of faith can read it written on his thigh and vesture, "The King of kings, and Lord of lords," Revelation 19:16. His name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace."

2dly, There is majesty in his looks: "Honour and majesty are before his face. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; yea, as the sun shining in his strength." There is such a majestic sweetness in the looks of his reconciled face, as "turns the shadow of death into the morning," and puts more gladness in the heart, than when corn, wine, and oil doth abound.

3dly, There is majesty in his words and voice; and every one that knows it will be ready to say, as in the words following my text, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." "The voice of the Lord," even from a throne of grace, "is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." This voice is "the power of God unto salvation." God's voice in the thunder makes the hinds to calve; but his voice from a throne of grace makes the dead to live, the dumb to sing, the lame man to leap like a hart: and no wonder, for his words are "spirit and life," yea, "words of eternal life." Christ speaks but a word to Mary, calls her by her name, Mary; and immediately her heart flutters with joy, and she cries out, "Rabboni, My Master." Song of Solomon 2:8 : "The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh," &c.

4thly, There is majesty in his vesture. He is "clothed with a garment down to the foot;" a robe of righteousness, a garment of salvation. His whole mystic body, and every the least member is covered with it. When he sits on his throne, "his train," or, as in the margin, Isaiah 6:1, "the skirts"

thereof, filleth the temple. "All" his "garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia; out of the ivory palaces, whereby" the attendants of his throne are "made glad."

5thly, There is majesty in his sceptre. We read of the sceptre of Christ's kingdom, Psalms 45:1-17. called "the rod of his strength," Psalms 110:2; by which we are to understand the gospel accompanied with the efficacy of his Spirit. There is such a majesty in this sceptre, when he sways it from a throne of grace, that it makes a "willing people" come in to him in the day of his armies.

6thly, There is majesty in the acts that are passed at a throne of grace; they are suitable to the nature of the throne. Acts of grace only pass at a throne of grace; acts of mercy at a mercy-seat. What an air of infinite majesty does God display from his throne of grace, when, beyond the expectation of men and angels, he issues forth that royal act of grace declaring rebels exempt from penalty! "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins!" Isaiah 43:25.

7thly, The majesty of this throne appears from the heralds that are employed to announce and proclaim the acts of grace that pass at it. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and all the ministers of Christ, what are they but so many heralds ordained by the King, who sits upon this throne, to intimate and proclaim his will of grace to a lost world? "Go ye into all the world," says he, "and preach the gospel to every creature." As if he had said, 'Go publish the acts of grace that are passed in favour of lost sinners at a throne of grace.'

8thly, There is majesty in the tributes and revenues of this throne. God's administration of grace in Christ brings in a large revenue of glory and praise to the crown of Heaven. Christ's kingdom of grace is wide and large. By his Father's grant "the heathen, and uttermost parts of the earth are given to him for a possession." Psalms 2:1-12. And in all corners of his extended inheritance there is a tribute of glory and praise levied to him: Isaiah 24:16 : "From the uttermost part," or wing, "of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous;" that is, glory to "Jesus Christ the righteous." The church militant will be paying this tribute while the world stands. "Men are blessed in him;" and therefore "all nations," and all generations, "shall call him blessed," saying, "Blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory." Psalms 72:17, Psalms 72:19. The church triumphant in heaven will be paying this tribute of praise to a throne of grace through an endless eternity: Revelation 4:10 : "They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power," &c. Revelation 5:8, Revelation 5:12.

9thly, There is majesty in the gifts and distributions which are made from this throne, and in the manner of his giving them. The gifts are worthy of the giver who sits on the throne. He gives himself, saying, "I will be their God." He gives his Son, John 3:16. He gives his Spirit, Luke 11:13. He gives grace and glory, Psalms 84:11. In a word, he gives all the sure mercies of David. Whatever comes from a throne of grace, must needs come in a way of gift, otherwise it would not suit the nature of the throne. It is below the majesty of the great King, whose name is gracious, to receive money or price from us. What he gives, he gives freely, without regard to any qualifications in us, Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 22:17.

Secondly, I come to inquire what comfortable views of God are to be had by a guilty trembling sinner from this throne of grace. In general, every view of God here is inviting and encouraging.

Unbelief is said to turn us away from the living God, Hebrews 3:12. And the way that it turns us away from him is either by viewing him as upon a throne of absolute mercy; and so it turns us into a presumptuous confidence of safety, in a way of sin; or else it views him as upon a throne of inexorable justice; and so it turns us into the way of despair and makes us fly and shun his presence as a destroying enemy. But faith views God as upon a throne of grace; and there it sees every perfection of the divine nature looking toward the sinner with an encouraging smile. More particularly,

1. God upon a throne of grace is to be seen as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," Ephesians 1:3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 1:3. This is the great New Testament title of God; and O! What amazing grace and sweetness is in it! Christ is "our Lord, our Jesus, our Christ;" for "unto us" this "child is born, unto us" this "son is given:" he is our Goel or "kinsman," our Elder Brother; and he being so near of kin to us, our blood relation, his relation to God descends to us through him, insomuch that his God is our God and his Father is our Father. Hence, Christ directs Mary, John 20:17, to go to his "brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." O what can be more encouraging! He is "your Father," because he is "my Father;" and "your God," because he is "my God." There is a rich mine of grace here, which angels desire to pry into. And it is some view of God in this relation to Christ, and to us through Christ, that first influences the sinner to turn to God. "I will arise," says the prodigal, and go to my Father," Luke 15:18. "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God," Jeremiah 3:22. And a law-condemned sinner can never view him as his God and Father, but only as he is upon a throne of grace, or as he reveals himself in Christ.

2. From a throne of grace, God is to be seen as a God of love: yea, as love itself: 1 John 4:16: "God is love." Ver. 10: "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." So John 3:16 : "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. This love of God to lost sinners lay hid under a veil of wrath and justice, till the veil was rent by the satisfaction of Christ; and then indeed the love and kindness of God toward man appeared, venting itself in a most glorious and triumphant manner. O how encouraging is this view of God, to come to his throne, with the confidence of faith, for grace and mercy to help! It was this view that made David to cry, Psalms 36:7, "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings."

3. From a throne of grace, a guilty sinner may view him as a God of peace: Hebrews 13:20 : "Now, the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus," &c. God's anger and fury began to burn against Adam, and all his descendants, immediately after the fall; and if a stop had not been put to it, it had consumed the earth with its increase, and burnt into the lowest hell: but no sooner did he receive the atonement, either in the promise, or actual payment of it, from our blessed Surety, but the flaming sword of justice is put up in its scabbard, and a gracious declaration issued forth, that "fury is not in him." Indeed, if sinners will still deal with him as upon a throne of justice or according to the terms of the law-covenant, they will find him to be "a consuming fire," But, oh! Who will be so mad as to set briars and thorns in battle against devouring flames? If they do, he "will go through them, and consume them together." Shall we not rather turn toward him as upon a throne of grace, where we shall hear him saying to the rebellious sinner, "Or

let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me?" Isaiah 27:4-5.

4. From a throne of grace God is to be seen as a God with us: Matthew 1:23, compared with Isaiah 7:14 : "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us." In Christ he is God with us, to avenge our quarrel upon the serpent, by bruising his head. "The day of vengeance is in mine heart." With us, to save from law, justice, the world, and all them that would condemn our souls, Psalms 109:31. With us, to strengthen, help, and uphold us in all difficulties and dangers, with the right hand of his righteousness. And, oh! "if God be with us, who can be against us?" Hence is that triumphant song of the church, Psalms 46:1-11. "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea," &c.

5. Again, let us view him from a throne of grace, and we shall see him to be a promising God. The absolute God is to a sinner a threatening God. Nothing is to be heard from a throne of justice, but curses against every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. But, O sirs, come to a throne of grace, to God in Christ, and you shall see a promising God. 2 Corinthians 1:20, we are told, "all the promises of God are in Christ, and in him yea and amen." Wherever we meet with any promise of God in the scriptures of truth, be it a promise of pardon, of peace, of counsel, of grace, or glory, for this life, or that which is to come; we should still remember, that they come from a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Christ, having fulfilled the proper condition of the promise by his obedience unto death, all the promises are his in the first instance; he is the first heir of them all: and in him, and through him, they are given out to us in the word as the immediate ground and foundation of our faith, with that intimation and advertisement, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as" lie within the compass of the gospel call, Acts 2:39. O sirs, here is good news from a throne of grace, if you can but receive and credit it, with application to your own souls. As all threatenings of the word are spoken to the sinner in particular from a throne of justice, as if he were spoken to by name and surname; so all the promises of the word are directed to you in particular from a throne of grace, as though you were expressed in them by name. There is not a son of Adam, but has as much concern with that promise, Genesis 3:15 : "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpents head," as Adam himself had, in whose hearing it was uttered. Thus, I say, God from a throne of grace is to be seen as a promising God.

6. View God upon his throne, and you shall see him to be a God matching with our family. There is a twofold match that the great Jehovah makes with the family of Adam. (1.) He matches with our nature, joining it to himself by a hypostatical union in the person of his eternal Son; and thus, by marrying our nature into a personal union; he becomes related to the whole family of Adam, Jew and gentile. And this is "good tidings of great joy unto all people, that unto us," not to fallen angels, "is born in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," Luke 2:10-11. (2.) God; having married our nature, and, as it were, come upon a level with us, that the inequality of the parties might be no stop, he proclaims his purpose of marriage with our very persons in the dispensation of the gospel. This proposal and proclamation of marriage coming forth from the throne of grace, is made to all without exception in the call of the gospel, Matthew 22:4. Yea, all the members of the visible church are in some sense married to the Son of God, Jeremiah 3:14. And if it were not so,

they could not be charged with adultery, or playing the harlot with other lovers as they are, ver. 1. But besides all this, in a day of power he determines the poor soul whom he hath loved with an everlasting love, to give its hearty assent and consent to the promise and proposal of marriage made by Christ in the gospel, saying, "I am the Lord's," Isaiah 44:5.

Thus he fulfils his promise, Isaiah 54:5 : "Thy Maker is thine Husband, (the Lord of hosts is his name;) and thy Redeemer the holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called." See also Hosea 2:19-20 : "I will betroth thee unto me for ever."

7. God from a throne of grace is to be viewed as a pardoning God, issuing forth indemnities to guilty rebels, who have violated his laws, and trampled upon his authority. From a throne of justice he can only be viewed as a condemning God, pronouncing and executing the righteous sentence of a broken law upon sinners who have transgressed it; and when the holiest of saints that ever breathed come to deal with God upon this footing, they are made to cry out, "O Lord, who shall stand?" Nothing but "tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, to every soul of man that doeth evil." But O glory to God in the highest, that by the reign of grace, through the righteousness of Christ, he appears in quite another view, namely, as a "God forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin;" yea, glorying in it as his prerogative, Isaiah 43:25; offering and bestowing his pardons upon the guiltiest of criminals, Isaiah 1:18 : "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

8. From a throne of grace God appears to us as a God of infinite bounty and liberality. And O what a pleasant view is this to the poor and needy! James 1:5 : "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." From a throne of grace he "gives," and gives "liberally," and gives "without upbraiding." O sirs, grace is not for holding in, but for giving out; grace could not be grace if it were otherwise. Never was there a throne like this throne of grace, which has its very nature and standing by liberality. How soon would it spend the substance of the greatest and richest kings upon earth, to give to every one that had a mind to ask! If they kept open doors and open treasures for all, and made every one welcome to come and take whatever they pleased, how soon would their treasures be emptied. But, the treasures of this throne are not only inexhaustible, but they are not in the least impaired by giving out: however much grace has been given out from this throne to the sons of men, (and the distributions already have been very large,) yet there is as much grace behind as ever. Yea, the very glory, riches, and splendour of this throne, lie in the large, free, and liberal distributions that are made to poor and needy sinners, who come to it for grace and mercy; and the King makes all welcome without exception: Isaiah 55:1 : "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c.

9. He is to be viewed from a throne of grace as a prayer-hearing God: Psalms 65:2 : "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." He sits upon this throne encouraging all who have any business with him to come forward with boldness, and present their petitions to him, assuring them that their bills of request shall not be cast over bar: Matthew 7:7 : "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The prayer of faith is the stated means of God's appointment for drawing forth promised mercy and grace: Ezekiel 36:37 : "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

So open-hearted is the King, that his heart opens his ear to hear, and his hand to give. When we have asked great things of him, he chides us, because we have not asked more and greater things: and bids us ask, and we shall "receive, that our joy may be full." The voice of prayer makes a sweet and melodious sound at this throne: Song of Solomon 2:14 : "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

10. Lastly, View him upon a throne of grace and you shall see him as your own God. Wherever we find God in all the word appearing from a throne of grace to sinners, we shall still find him asserting himself to be their God in Christ. Upon this throne he appears to Abraham: and what says he to him? Genesis 17:7 : "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." When this covenant was renewed, or of new published at Mount Sinai, he says, "I am the Lord thy God." This is the ordinary style of the covenant of grace which issues from a throne of grace; "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Now, what can be God's design in appearing to us sinners after such a manner, but that we, who had forfeited all claim to him by the breach of the first covenant may claim him as our God, even our own God, upon the footing of free grace. There is so much sweetness, grace, mercy, love, and salvation in God manifesting himself from a throne of grace, that the soul, whenever it views him by faith, is laid under an invincible (though sweet) necessity, to claim him as its own God in Christ, saying with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." He that is my God, is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. And faith having once fixed the soul's claim to God in Christ upon the covenant ground and grant, it will maintain its claim to him upon the same ground, even when clouds and darkness are round about him; as the church does, Isaiah 49:14 : "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Thus you see what amiable views of the divine Majesty are to be had from a throne of grace, or from God manifesting himself in the flesh, dealing with sinners according to gospel-grace.

I come, in the third place, to offer a few scriptural remarks respecting this throne.

1. I remark, that this throne is called "the throne of God, and of the Lamb," Revelation 22:1. By which expression we are taught, that both Father and Son are equally glorified in this administration of grace; there is no disjoining of them, either as to their essence, interests, glory, or administration. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," says Christ. As they act by a joint power in the kingdom of providence; so they act in the same manner in the kingdom of grace. And it is the will of God "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; and every tongue must confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." If the throne were only called, "The throne of God," it were enough to scare a guilty sinner from ever looking towards it: but when it is called, "The throne of God, and of the Lamb," this furnishes our souls with a more amiable view of the divine Majesty, and declares him to be a God of peace, and that he is like a meek lamb to every soul that comes to him in the way of his own ordination: his terror needs not make us afraid.

2. I remark, that "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of" this throne, Revelation 22:1. By which I know some (and I was once of their mind) understand only those "rivers of pleasures," and that "fulness of joy," which the saints in glory are possessed of in the immediate vision and fruition of God for evermore: I do not exclude this meaning. But to me it is clear, from Revelation 22:17, that the river of water of life, spoken of in the 1st verse, has a respect

even to the church militant here upon earth; because, Revelation 22:17, there is an invitation by the Spirit and the bride given to all to come, and take of these waters of life freely, which proceed, Revelation 22:1, from the throne of God, and of the Lamb; and therefore I do think that, by this river issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, we are to understand the Holy Spirit of God, which proceeds from the Father and the Son, with his quickening, cleansing, and comforting influences. This is compared frequently to a river or flood in scripture, Isaiah 35:6, Isaiah 35:7, and Isaiah 44:3. Not a rivulet or brook, but a river, to signify the plentiful, free, and liberal communications of the Spirit and grace of God that should follow upon Christ's exaltation to the throne in our nature. And this is not a muddy pool, but a "pure" river: the Spirit of Christ is a Holy Spirit, and purifies the soul from the filth of sin. It is a river of "water of life," because he has life in himself, and quickens the soul that is dead in trespasses and sins. It is said to be "clear as crystal," because he is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and opens the eye-sight of the blinded understanding to know the things that are freely given us of God."

3. I remark, that the Lamb is said to be "in the midst of the throne," Revelation 5:6, and Revelation 7:17; which not only signifies the glory of his exalted state, having all power in heaven and in earth, but more especially I judge this expression designed for the encouragement of faith, that we may "come with boldness to the throne, for grace and mercy to help in time of need." Why, the meek and mild Lamb is "in the midst of the throne," ready to take us by the hand, to hear and plead our cause. He is a ready and diligent Advocate; he is never out of the way, or absent when our cause is brought forward for consideration, as other advocates and friends many times are, when we have most need of them, and of their mediation and interest. "We have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." We have him as our Advocate with the Father, continually appearing in the presence of God for us.

4. I remark, that "the seven Spirits are before the throne," Revelation 1:4. So Revelation 5:6 : "The seven Spirits are sent forth from the Lamb as it were slain, in the midst of the throne, into all the earth." By which is signified the particular office of the Holy Ghost in the application of the redemption purchased by Christ; called "seven," because of the variety of his influences and operations. These are said to be "before the throne" to show how ready the Spirit of God is to execute all the acts of grace that are emitted from the throne of grace, and to make them effectual by his infinite energy and power. And these seven spirits of God are said to be "sent forth from the Lamb as it were slain," to let us know, that the sending, or down-pouring of the Spirit, and of his influences, is the fruit and effect of the atoning sacrifice of Christ's death, and of his prevalent intercession, grounded upon his propitiation.

5. I remark, that this throne "standeth on mount Zion," Revelation 14:1. The Lamb stands there, and where the Lamb stands, there must the throne stand also, for he is always in the midst of it. By "mount Zion," which is an Old Testament expression, I understand the church of God, which is partly militant on earth, and partly triumphant in heaven. They are all surrounding the same throne; like Jacob's ladder, the foot of it stood in Bethel upon earth, but the top of it reached the heavens. So this throne of grace stands upon the earth in Bethel, the house of the living God, though indeed the top of it is high and lifted up above the height of the highest heavens: and all believers are come to it, whether they be in heaven or earth, though some be a step higher than others, the glory of saints militant and triumphant differing only in degrees. Let a believer be in what part of the world he will, still he will by faith make his way to a throne of grace, that is, to a reconciled God in

Christ, who is every where present, and a very present help in the time of need.

6. I remark, that this throne is surrounded with a "rainbow:" Revelation 4:3 : "There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." Which I pass at present, because I intend a discourse upon it apart.

7. I remark, that this throne is crowded with innumerable attendants in the church militant and triumphant, who are all paying the tribute of worship and homage to him that sits upon it: Revelation 5:11-13 : "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature, which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Where you see all the saints in heaven and earth are surrounding this glorious throne of which we now speak. O blessed are they whom he chooses and causes to approach to him among this numerous company.

8. I remark, that the basis and foundation of this throne is "the righteousness of Christ." It is laid in justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Son of God. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." But this leads to,

II. The second thing proposed in the method, which is to speak of the foundation of this throne, and that is justice and judgment. For clearing of this, 1. Take a few propositions. 2. A few properties of this foundation.

First, Take a few propositions.

1. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death.

2. Man, by the breach of this covenant, has incurred the penalty thereof, 'whereby all mankind have lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.'

3. God, in his amazing grace and love both admitted of a Surety, and provided one, even his eternal Son, who voluntarily undertook our redemption, and was actually substituted in our room. He laid on him the iniquity of us all.

4. The Son of God, in consequence of his undertaking as our Surety, having assumed our nature, and put himself in our law-place, a cry was made in heaven by justice, 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow: smite the shepherd, make thyself drunk with his royal blood; do not spare him, exact the debt of him to the utmost farthing.' He endured the curse in our room, being made a curse for us.

5. Whatever justice demanded of the Surety, it was executed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Did justice demand that the one standing in our place should be of one common nature with the sinner? This accordingly is executed; for "the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" he was

made of a woman, and took part of the children's flesh; he became our kinsman, that the right of redemption might belong to him. Did justice demand that the honour of the holy law should be repaired by a perfect obedience? This accordingly is executed by the Surety; for he "fulfilled all righteousness, he magnified the law, and made it honourable." Did justice demand that the curse and penalty of the law should be endured? This is accordingly executed; for he "was made a curse for us," that he might "redeem us from the curse of the law." Did justice demand that the head of the old serpent should be bruised, and that vengeance should be executed upon the grand enemy of God's glory, and of man's good and happiness? This accordingly is done; for he "spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in his cross." Did justice demand that sin, the first-born of the devil, should be put out of the way? This accordingly is done; for he "finished transgression, and made an end of sin: he condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us."

6. Justice being satisfied, and the law magnified, and the Lord well pleased for the righteousness sake of the glorious Surety, God thereupon rears up a throne of grace, and proclaims himself to be "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and sin," &c.; and accordingly passes acts of grace from this throne, saying, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness: I will sprinkle them with clean water;" and the like. And thus you see upon what basis or foundation the throne of grace is reared.

Secondly, I shall give you a few qualities or properties of the foundation of this throne, where grace reigns through righteousness.

1. It is an ancient foundation; for Christ was "set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was;" he is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And upon the credit of his promise to satisfy justice in the fulness of time, all the Old Testament saints were saved.

2. It is a foundation of God's own laying; "Behold, I lay in Zion a foundation." He had pleasure in laying it. When he laid it decretively from all eternity, he did it with pleasure: "I have found a ransom:" he speaks of it with a kind of glorying and boasting: "I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have found David my servant." When he laid it actually in his incarnation, he did it with pleasure: "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." When he laid this foundation doctrinally in Zion, he did it with pleasure, Isaiah 28:16, he proclaims to the world, declaring, that "whosoever builds upon it, shall not be ashamed."

3. It is a firm foundation upon which God has built his throne of grace; it is the surest foundation on which a throne can be built. The throne of iniquity, or the throne that is founded upon injustice, shall surely be overturned: but here is a throne built upon justice and judgment. Christ is called a rock, "Upon this rock I will build my church;" and the church and the throne of grace have the same bottom.

4. It is a tried foundation. Justice tested it, and found it firm and stable; when mountains of wrath and vengeance were rolled upon it, it bore up under all. The powers of hell tried to overturn this foundation; but their kingdom and power was broken in pieces in the enterprise; the little stone cut out of the mountain, broke the head of the great Goliath. The saints have all tried this foundation, and proclaim it sufficient to bear their weight; yea, it is sufficient to bear the weight of all mankind, yea, of millions of worlds, if they existed, and would venture upon it; "He is able to save to the

uttermost, all that come unto God by him."

5. It is a precious foundation: "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The gold and silver cannot equal it; the topaz of Ethiopia is not to be named in one day with it; it is more glorious and excellent by far than all the mountains of prey.

6. It is a most beautiful foundation. What God says of his church, Isaiah 54:11, is much more true of the throne of grace, "Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires." There is such a beauty in this foundation of the throne of grace, that it reflects a beauty upon every one that approaches it; so that they come away from it "like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

7. To crown all, it is a perpetual, durable, and everlasting foundation: and hence comes the perpetuity of the throne itself, Psalms 89:4 : "Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." So Psalms 72:17 : "His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun." The priesthood of Christ is the foundation of the throne of grace; and this priesthood is to continue, by the oath of God: Psalms 60:4 : "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." I proceed now to,

III. The third general head in the method. Having viewed the foundation, let us next take a view of some pillars with which this throne, this royal administration of grace, is supported, and which contribute not a little to its stability. And, not to enlarge upon particulars, the foundation of this throne being laid in the satisfaction of justice, all the other perfections, or attributes of the divine nature, fall in for the support of the reign and administration of grace. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace kiss each other;" they sweetly join hands in promoting this glorious design, as you see in the context. O, says infinite wisdom, all my immense treasures shall dwell bodily in the man Christ Jesus, he shall be "the wisdom of God in a mystery," that so he may be in a capacity to hold the reins, and manage all things in heaven and earth, for the advancement of the glory of free grace, reigning through righteousness to eternal life. O, says infinite power, "with him my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him" in his undertaking. "I will beat down his foes before his face, and greatly plague them that hate him." O, says holiness, although I be "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," yet I plainly see, that justice being satisfied for the guilt of sin in the death of the Son of God, the filth of it shall be hid out of my sight, and his blood shall be a laver to wash it away, that I be not offended: and therefore I am so far from hindering this administration of grace through Christ, that I lay myself in pledge to promote and carry on the glorious design: "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David." O, says mercy, I am so related to grace, that I cannot shun to give my vote, that the throne of grace should go on apace," My mercy will I keep for him for evermore. My mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted." O, says the faithfulness and veracity of God, whatever promises grace has made, in a covenant of grace, I bind and oblige myself to make them good: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle" of God's word of grace shall never fall to the ground. "I will not take my love from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." And thus I have given you a short view of these glorious pillars which contribute to the establishment of the throne of grace, upon the foundation of justice and judgment.

IV. The fourth thing is, to inquire how it is God will have justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Surety, to be the foundation of his throne of grace?

I shall not multiply reasons for this, but shall only touch upon one for all, which the apostle gives, Romans 5:31; namely, "That grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." So that, if it be asked, Why will God have it so, that justice satisfied, and judgment executed on the Surety, should be the foundation of the throne of grace? The answer is, "That grace might reign through righteousness;" that the glory of grace might be displayed in consistency with the honour of divine justice.

Here a question arises, How does grace reign, or how is the glory of grace displayed in and by the righteousness of a surety?

Answ. 1. Grace reigns and is displayed in the arrangement of this righteousness according to God's plan; for it is the plan of infinite wisdom, animated and inspired by free grace. When man had fallen under the sentence of the law, justice was ready to execute judgment upon him: but grace cries, Stop, and stay thy hand, for "I have found a ransom." 2 Samuel 14:14 : "God doth devise means, that his banished be not expelled." Our first parents provoked God to drive them out of Paradise, and accordingly they were actually driven out of his presence; but infinite wisdom, actuated and animated by the bowels of mercy, contrives a way in which banished man may be brought home again in consistency with justice, and that is by the righteousness of the Messiah.

2. Grace reigns and is displayed in the acceptation of this righteousness. What but infinite love and grace could prevail with inexorable justice, so far to dispense with the rigour of the law, as to admit of a surety's righteousness in the room of the sinner! But this I touched upon already. And therefore,

3. Grace reigns in the impetration of this righteousness; for "God," in his amazing grace, "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." That righteousness by which we are justified, is the very righteousness of God in our nature; he wrought it by his doing and dying. O, how does grace reign here! Faith's views of this may fill us all with wonder, and make us cry with the church, Isaiah 63:1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?"

4. Grace reigns in the revelation of this righteousness. Grace was not content to contrive and bring about this righteousness, but the news of it must be published and proclaimed to a lost world, as it were by sound of trumpet. Hence the apostle, Romans 1:17, when he would give us an account of the sum and substance of the gospel, does it in one word, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is revealed the righteousness of God." O how eager was the grace of God, to have the proclamation respecting the satisfaction of justice by a surety issued out? Adam had scarce sinned, till grace announces the plot to him in the first promise; "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." The Messiah is scarce born in Bethlehem, till an angel is dispatched from heaven to notify it to the shepherds; "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

5. Grace reigns and is displayed in the approach, or the bringing near of this righteousness to the sinner in a preached gospel. Not only does grace reveal the righteousness of God, but it brings it

near to the sinner, in order to be accepted and received: Isaiah 46:12-13 : "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off;" &c. It is brought near to the sinner, just as the manna was brought near to Israel, when it fell about their tent-doors; they had not far to go for it.

6. Grace reigns and is displayed in the imputation of this righteousness. And, indeed, there is a great mystery of grace here, that cannot be expressed in words; how a guilty sinner, that has violated the law, and is obnoxious to justice, comes to be sustained in the sight of God as though he had fulfilled the law, and satisfied justice in his own person, and to be put in a condition to say, "Who shall lay any thing to my charge? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?"

7. Grace reigns in the soul's acceptance of this righteousness by faith. There is nothing in all the world that runs so cross to proud nature, as to renounce all its own righteousness, its obedience, duties, endeavours, its own grace and holiness, in point of acceptance, and to submit to the righteousness of another, and to be obliged to the doing and dying of the Son of God alone. This was a stone of stumbling to the Jews; they could never imagine any other way of justification before God, but "by the works of the law;" and therefore they "went about to establish a righteousness of their own, and would not submit unto the righteousness of God." Now, I say, to dislodge a sinner from this legal foundation, to bring down these towering imaginations of a righteousness in ourselves, to cast down the "refuge of lies," and to bring the proud conceited sinner that length, as to own and acknowledge, that his own righteousness is but "as filthy rags," saying, "Surely in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength; in him will I be justified, and in him alone will I glory." I say, grace reigns, and is wonderfully displayed in all this.

8. Grace reigns through righteousness, inasmuch as that it is by the revelation of this justice-satisfying righteousness that grace conquers and powerfully subdues sinners, brings them under its own government and dominion. The apostle, speaking of believers, Romans 6:14, says. "Ye are not under the law, but under grace;" that is, ye are brought in under the government and administration of grace. But what way is it that grace conquers them? What is the great power made use of for this end? It is just the revelation of the righteousness of Christ in the gospel, Romans 1:15 : "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation." What way? Mark the expression, Romans 5:17 : "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." From which it is plain, that the preaching of an imputed righteousness, as the alone ground of a sinner's acceptance, is the very pith and marrow of the gospel. Some, now-a-days, have got a way of preaching, which, I believe, will never convert a soul; they deliver fine elegant harangues of morality, adorning them with all the flowers of rhetoric; but, in the mean time, they do but stink in the nostrils of a solid Christian. Why? Because though they preach up a moral righteousness, yet they have little or nothing of the righteousness of Christ, which is the very basis and foundation of a throne of grace: and when that is wanting, they want the true Shibboleth of the gospel; for the gospel is a revelation of the righteousness of God;" and this makes it to be "the power of God unto salvation."

Here I judge it not amiss, to subjoin a quotation from the great and judicious Owen to this purpose, in his commentary on the Hebrews, Hebrews 5:7 : 'Some are of the mind,' says he, 'that the whole business of ministers is to be conversant in and about morality. For this fountain and spring of grace, (the righteousness and satisfaction of Christ); this basis of eternal glory; this evidence and

demonstration of divine wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and love, this great revealing of the purity of the law, and vileness of sin; this first, great, principal subject of the gospel, and motive of faith and obedience; this root and cause of all peace with God, all sincere and uncorrupted love toward him, and all joy and consolation from him, they think it scarcely deserves a place in the objects of their contemplation, and are ready to guess, that what men write and talk about it, is but phrases, canting, and fanatical. But such as are admitted into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, will not so easily part with their immortal interest and concern therein. Yea, I fear not to say, that he is likely to be the best, the most humble, the most holy and fruitful Christian, who is most sedulous and diligent in spiritual inquiries into this great mystery, of the reconciliation of God unto sinners by the blood of the cross, and in the exercise of faith about it. Nor is there any such powerful means of preserving the soul in a constant abhorrence of sin, and watchfulness against it, as a due apprehension of what it cost to make atonement for it."

V. The fifth thing was the application of the doctrine. And the first use shall be of information, in the following particulars:—

1. Is it so that justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the ever-blessed Surety, is the foundation of a throne of grace? then, hence we may see what an expensive piece of work a throne of grace is. Why, the foundation of it is laid in the death and blood of the Son of God. When God is about to erect a throne of glory for himself, as the great Creator and Governor of the world, he makes little or no ceremony about it; he only says, Let it be, and immediately heaven, which is his throne, and the earth, which is his footstool, springs out of nothing in wonderful order; but when the throne of grace is to be reared, justice must be satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Son of God; he must "become sin for us, and a curse for us, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, and we made the righteousness of God in him."

2. See from this doctrine, the glory of a gospel-dispensation. We read sometimes of the glorious gospel of the blessed God; why, here is the reason of the denomination, the royal majesty of the grace of God reigning through the righteousness of his eternal Son, is here displayed and manifested. God has erected a glorious high throne for the place of his sanctuary; and "for the beauty of his ornament, he hath set it in majesty," Ezekiel 7:20. There was much of the divine glory manifested in the delivery of the law on mount Sinai, and in the typical dispensation of the Old Testament: but, O! All that glory vanished, like a shadow, at the greater glory that is manifested in the actual erection of a throne of grace, by the incarnation, obedience, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the manifestation of him that is made by the word now under the New Testament: 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." O let us prize our mercy, who live under the New Testament dispensation, in which "all we with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

3. If it be so that justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon Christ, is the foundation of a throne of grace; then, see hence, that the salvation of a lost sinner by grace is very consistent with the honour of divine justice; why, justice and judgment are the very habitation of this throne. Some poor souls, when they fall under the challenges and awakenings of conscience, are ready to think and say, O it is needless for me ever to think that God will extend his grace and mercy to me: why, my sins are of such a bloody hue, of such an aggravated nature, that I cannot think that ever it will stand with the justice of God to pity and pardon, or save the like of me. But, O sirs, will you consider, that God has already taken care for the satisfaction of his justice, in the death and blood of his eternal Son, and laid the foundation of his throne of grace upon that. And therefore, you are not to think or imagine, that justice will be your enemy in coming for grace and mercy to a throne of grace: no, no; God is just and righteous in saving the sinner that comes to this throne, as well as in damning the sinner that will not come. Yea, let me tell you, that the justice of God gets more glory in saving of sinners through the blood and satisfaction of Jesus, than in the damnation and ruin of all the reprobates and unbelievers in the world; for the believing sinner takes the ransom that God has found, and presents that to justice, and the Lord is well pleased with this; he smells a sweet savour in this propitiatory sacrifice.

4. See hence, the excellency and infinite value of the blood of Jesus, and how much we owe to it; why, by this blood justice is satisfied, and thereby a foundation laid for a throne of grace, to which we are called to come with boldness: Hebrews 10:19 : "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." There are these two things effected by the blood of Jesus, from which our obligations to it will especially appear. (1.) By this blood sprinkled upon the tribunal of justice, the tribunal itself is turned into a mercy-seat: an angry God is reconciled and pacified, and invites the guilty sinner to come for grace and mercy to help him. (2.) By this blood the curse of the law is abolished. The curse of a broken law stands as an insuperable bar in the way of our access to God; but now, by the blood of Jesus, this hand-writing that was against us is cancelled, being nailed to the cross. And whenever this blood is applied by faith, the sentence goes forth from a throne of grace. There is no more condemnation for the man, for he is in Christ, under the covert of blood. It is God that justifieth him; who is he that dare condemn him? God, the great Lawgiver, justifieth; and what has any other to say against him, if the Law-giver acquit him?

5. Has God erected a throne of grace at the expense of the death and satisfaction of his eternal Son? Then I would have you consider, whether you be courtiers about this throne. Wast thou ever at a throne of grace, man, woman? Perhaps you may think this a very strange question. 'Why,' say you, 'have you so little charity as to think that we never prayed? Blessed be God, we are at a throne of grace every morning and evening; we read, hear, pray, communicate, and yet will you ask, if ever we were at a throne of grace?' I answer, A man may do all that, and never yet really come to this throne, that has judgment and justice for its foundation and habitation. What, then, is it to come to a throne of grace?

Ans. It is to come out of yourself to a God in Christ, as your only hope and help; it is to receive Christ and rest on him; for all those ends and uses for which he is revealed and offered in the glorious gospel. In one word, to come to a throne of grace, is, by faith in the blood of Jesus, to enter into the presence of a holy God. 'How shall I know if ever I thus came to this throne?'

Ans. There are a few things in the context which follows my text, which may be improved as marks for your trial. As,

1st, If ever you have come to a throne of grace, you have seen mercy and truth going before the face of him that sits on the throne. Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne; and what follows? Mercy and truth shall go before his face: that is, not only mercy in the abstract, but mercy connected with, and conveyed in a word of truth. I think it very remarkable, that these two, mercy and truth, are commonly linked together in scripture, Psalms 85:10 : "Mercy and truth are met together." John 1:17 : "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;" and John 1:14 : Christ is said to be full of grace and truth. Why are these joined together? The plain reason is, because all the mercy that is in the heart of God, is conveyed in a true and faithful word of promise: so that whatever mercy we want from God, we must always look for it in a promise or word of truth: "What God has joined, no man must put asunder." Some have a way of grasping at the mercy of God absolutely considered, never viewing it as it is in Christ, or as it is in the covenant and word of truth. But, sirs, the mercy of God in this view never saved a sinner: they who really came to a throne of grace, and view God as he is in Christ, see mercy, and truth coupled together, and they dare not claim mercy, but upon the ground of the promise or Covenant established in Christ; and this is all their salvation.

2dly, If ever you were really at the throne, you have heard the joyful sound that issues out from the throne: John 1:15 : "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound," namely, the joyful sound of the King's voice that sits on the throne of grace. The voice of God in Christ has a certain characteristic intimacy with it, by which the believer knows it from the voice of a stranger: "My sheep," says Christ, "know my voice." Song of Solomon 2:8, no sooner does Christ speak, but immediately the spouse cries, "It is the voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh." O, sirs, you are all hearing the sound of a man's voice; but I ask, Do you hear the voice of Christ coming forth from a throne of grace? His words are spirit, and they are life. They have such a divine majesty and melody in them, that they make an echo of praise to rebound back to heaven: hence we read, that, upon the publication of the gospel among the gentiles, songs are heard ascending upward, Isaiah 24:16.

3dly, If ever you came to this throne, and saw the King upon the throne, you will highly value the light of his countenance; you will put such a value upon his smiles, that you cannot think of living without them. His countenance will make your day lightsome; and when he withdraws, all the stars of created comforts cannot supply his place.

4thly, The King's name will be like "ointment poured forth:" ver. 16: "In thy name shall they rejoice all the day." His name will be a strong tower to you, to which you will flee for safety; and there will be such a savour in it to thy soul, that thou wilt be ambitious to cause his name to be remembered to all generations, that the people may praise him for ever and ever.

5thly, If ever you were at this throne, and dignified with his acceptance and approval, you will look upon his righteousness as the only ground of your promotion and advancement: ver. 16: "In thy righteousness shall they be exalted." 'O,' will the poor soul say, 'it was not my goodness, my holiness, my righteousness, that brought me to this honour: no, it was the obedience and death of my Surety, the righteousness that he brought in: "In him have I righteousness; and I count all things but loss and dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith" in him.'

6thly, He will be "the glory of your strength," and his strength will be your glory, ver. 17. When you are helped to the exercise of any grace, to do or suffer any thing for him, you will ascribe the glory of it to him alone: "Not I, but the grace of God in me: Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory."

7thly, If ever you were at this throne of grace, you will be much taken up in admiring the freedom of his grace and love reigning through imputed righteousness; you will see grace written in capital letters on every step of the throne of grace, and in every step of your salvation: ver. 17: "In thy favour our horn shall be exalted." Was I elected from eternity? My election is of grace. Was I redeemed by the blood of Jesus? This is "according to the riches of his grace." Am I justified, sanctified, adopted, or effectually called? — It is grace, grace that has done all; "by the grace of God I am what I am."

8thly. If you be acquainted with a throne of grace, a God of grace will be your only sanctuary, ver. 18: "The Lord is our defence;" and what time you are afraid, you will trust in him. He will be to you "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; for he is the strength of the poor, and of the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." When you are pursued by sin, by Satan, by the law, by conscience; when you are surrounded with trouble from without, or from within, you will turn to him as your "strong hold," as it is said of the "prisoners of hope."

9thly, if you be acquainted with a throne of grace, the King that sits upon the throne will be your only Lord and Sovereign: ver. 18: "The holy One of Israel is our King." You will renounce allegiance to other lords, and make mention of his name, saying, "The Lord is my judge, the Lord is my lawgiver, the Lord is my king; he will save me." And you will love your King so well, that you will love his law, and approve of it as "holy, just, and good," because it is a transcript of the holiness of his nature; you will say, with David, "I esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right: His yoke is easy, and his burden is light." Now, try yourselves by these things, whether you be courtiers at this throne of grace, which hath justice satisfied, and judgment executed on the Surety, for its basis or foundation. You may easily remember these marks, because they are all in the text, and the three following verses.

6. Is it so, that God has erected a throne of grace at the expense of the satisfaction of his justice? O then, sirs, I would invite you all to come to this throne. People usually need little entreaty to come to the thrones of earthly princes; everybody is ambitious to be near the throne. Well, I invite, I call, beseech, and entreat you to draw near to the throne of the Prince of the kings of the earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Now, that I may carry home the exhortation the more effectually upon your souls, I shall endeavour to answer and preclude a few practical questions, which will readily arise in your minds upon such a call or exhortation.

Quest. 1. Who is it that calls us? We hear you that are ministers calling us to come to the throne of grace; that is not enough to us, we would know if the King himself would make us welcome. I answer, It is not we, but the King himself that calls you to come to his throne. We that are ministers are only the heralds sent forth to intimate and proclaim the King's pleasure; and if you ask for our instructions or commission, we shall very readily produce them, that you may read them with your own eyes under the King's hand. 2 Corinthians 5:19-21 : "God was in Christ, reconciling the world

unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" (there is the throne of grace, to wit, "God reconciling the world to himself;" our commission follows in the close of the 19th, and in the 20th verses;) "and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now, there is our commission, the word of reconciliation is committed to us, that is, the publication of this gospel of the grace of God; and when we invite you to come to a reconciled God in Christ, we speak in the name of God, and we are in the very room of Christ. What would you think, if Christ were standing in my place speaking to you, summoning and inviting you to come to his throne for grace and mercy? Well, the case is the very same, when we act by commission from him. So, then, it is God that calls you by us.

Quest. 2. Whom does he call? Does God call every body to come to his throne of grace? That is not an ordinary thing; all the subjects are not allowed to come near the throne, but only some peculiar favourites. Answ. It is true, it is so among earthly princes; it is only some peculiar favourites whom they allow to approach the throne or seat of majesty, otherwise their thrones would be too much crowded. But it is otherwise in the court of the great King, who has justice and judgment for the habitation of his throne; for all and every one that hears the joyful sound of the gospel, which issues out of this throne, are invited and called to come to the throne of grace. And this will appear if you consider,

1. The extensiveness of the commission which God has given to ministers; Mark 16:15 : "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" that is, to Jews and gentiles barbarians, Scythians, bond, or free, noble, and common. Every rational soul you shall meet with, sprung of Adam, go preach the gospel to them; that is, tell them in the name of a God of grace this good news, that God's throne is now accessible, and every one who has a mind may come to it for grace and mercy to help in time of need.

2. The command of God enjoining you to come to a throne of grace is unto all: 1 John 3:23 : "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ;" which is all one with coming to the throne of grace. The law of believing extends to all mankind that hear this gospel. And remember that, for disobedience to this law, you are "condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on you."

3. As the command of believing is to all, so the promise of welcome to a throne of grace is to all and every one, for their encouragement to come. "Him that cometh to me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out. Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Do not think that the promise in the exhibition belongs only to the elect, or to believers: no, no; "the promise is unto you, and to your seed, and to all that are afar off" Thus, I say, all that live under the joyful sound of the gospel are called to come to a throne of grace.

Quest. 3. You bid us come to a throne of grace; but where is it? We do not know where to find it. I answer, Wherever you have access to God in any of the duties of his worship, there you may find the throne of grace. Indeed, under the Old Testament, when the centre of worship was confined to the temple of Jerusalem, the poor gentiles were at a loss where to come to a throne of grace; but now, under the New Testament, the centre of worship is removed from them, and placed among us Gentiles; so that whatever part of the earth you be upon, if the heavens be above your head,

you need not be at a loss where to find a throne of grace: though you were shut up in a prison or dungeon, though you were driven to the utmost part of the earth, from friend, kin and ally, yet you cannot be driven away from a throne of grace. In a word, there is no place on this side of hell but you may find this throne, a God in Christ being a God every where present; "he is not far from every one of us." So much seems to be intimated by Christ to the woman of Samaria, John 4:21-23 : "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

Quest. 4. What is the way we are to take to reach this throne of grace? Answ. In all the world I know of no way but one, and that is Christ: John 14:6 : "I am the way, and the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." As Christ, or God in Christ, is the throne, so he is also the way to the throne. An incarnate Deity is the sinner's way to God, as well as God's way to the sinner: Hebrews 10:19-20 : "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;" The human nature of Christ assumed to the personality of the Son of God, is the portal or gate by which we enter into the throne of grace: John 10:9 : "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." This door of the human nature of Christ was broken into shivers by the hammer of God's wrath, that so our way might be patent to a throne of grace, to a reconciled God: hence we read of the rending of the veil of the temple from top to bottom at the death of Christ. This, then, is "the gate of God," and by it the sinner may, and the saint doth, "enter into the court" of the "great King," and "come to his seat." Some folk have a mistaken notion, as if they actually came to a throne of grace every time they give their bodily presence at the ordinances of God's appointment, such as prayer, hearing the word, communicating, or the like. I claim, indeed, that these external duties are the outer gates and porches by which we come to the throne, therefore called the gates of Zion, especially public ordinances are intended by that denomination: but, O sirs, many a man comes to these gates that never comes to the throne; of such the Lord complains, saying, "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me." True coming or drawing near to a throne of grace, is an inward thing; it is done by an act of the heart; for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." When the heart goes into God in Christ, for grace and mercy to help in time of need, that is coming to a throne of grace. So then, I say, Christ is the only way to the throne, as he is the throne itself.

Quest. 5. After what manner should we come to this throne?

Answ. 1. If you would come aright, you would come with an empty hand. Do not bring money or price with you; for when we come to a throne of grace, we come to get, but not to give any thing to the Lord. You that make a price of your prayers, communicating, and other good deeds and qualifications, you cannot come successfully at the throne of grace. —Remember that it is a "throne of grace," and therefore nothing is to be gotten there in a way of debt.

2. Come with enlarged desires after what you come to ask; for "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

3. Come with confidence, hope, and filial boldness. God would not have you to come hanging your heads, like condemned criminals coming to their judge to receive a sentence of death: no; but he would have us come to him with confidence, as children to a father, trusting in him, and looking for good things at his hand, because of his goodness, veracity, and other perfections manifested in Christ. Come, I say, with hope and expectation; for "he taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." It is a general fault among us, that we go to God in prayer, and other ordinances, as if he were niggardly of his blessings, or were unwilling to part with his grace. But, O sirs, this is not the way to succeed. Let not that man expect to receive any thing from the Lord who comes doubting and wavering, entertaining jealousies of the love and goodness of a reconciled God.

4. Come to this throne with importunity. Follow Jacob's practice, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much."

5. Make much use of the Spirit as a "Spirit of grace and supplication," that he may help your infirmities at the throne. It is he who "fills our mouths with arguments," and teaches us to pray "with groanings which cannot be uttered." And he has promised his Spirit to them that ask him. The last use I make of the doctrine shall be directed to believers, who are courtiers about this throne. And all I shall say to you shall be, 1. In a word of consolation; 2. Of exhortation.

First, A word of consolation. Know then, believer, for thy comfort, that "the holy One of Israel is thy King, and in his favour thy horn shall be exalted; mercy and truth shall go before his face," with a special view to thy happiness in time and through eternity. All the grace and mercy that is in the heart of the King, is ordained for thee, and secured to thee by a well ordered covenant. The whole of his administrations, whether of grace or of providence, are calculated for thy benefit and advantage, Romans 8:28. You are the children of the King; he has adopted thee into his family, yea, settled an inheritance upon thee, as "heirs of God, and joint heirs with himself." You are upon the King's secrets, and he will tell you things which he will not communicate to the rest of the world, even the secrets of his government of grace. "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others it is not given. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he will show them his covenant." And, to crown all, there is no case thou canst be in while in the world, but thou wilt have an act of grace suited and adapted to thy circumstances, registered in the court-book, I mean, in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, every act sealed with the blood of the King, touched with his royal sceptre; yea, thou hast the extract of it in thy hand. O what strong ground of consolation is here to you who by faith are acquainted with this throne! A second word is of exhortation, or counsel to believers, who have come to this throne, in the following particulars:—

1. Be often at the King's court, especially on his court-days; I mean attend his ordinances, especially on the Sabbath, which he has sanctified and consecrated for this end.—Great men's vassals are obliged to attend them upon their court-days; and is it not reasonable, that the subjects and vassals of the King of kings should pay this respect to him? Psalms 96:6-8 : "Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts." O honour your King by keeping his courts: for "one day in his courts is better than a thousand; it is better to be a doorkeeper in his

house, than to dwell in the tents of sin:" and "those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God."

2. Let it not satisfy you to come to the court, unless you get access to the throne, and see the King's face; for it is the presence of the King that makes his courts and tabernacles amiable. Absalom was not satisfied to be at Jerusalem, unless he saw the king's face: so let it not satisfy you to attend ordinances, unless you get a visit from the God of ordinances. This was David's disposition, Psalms 27:4 : "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." And, if you have any acquaintance with the King, whose name is gracious, it will bring a damp upon your spirits, when you miss his presence in his courts; you will "go mourning without the sun," crying, "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat."

3. When the King calls you to court, or to come near to his throne, do not refuse his order. When, by his word, or the motions of his Spirit, he says to thy soul, "Seek ye my face," let thy soul send back a ready answer, saying, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." When he says, "Come," let thy soul return the answer, "Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God." O he takes it ill when any reject his call, as you see in the case of the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:1-16. He comes to her, saying, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." But she indulged carnal sloth, saying, "I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" which provoked him to withdraw, till she is brought to regret her folly.

4. Beware of every thing that has a tendency to degrade you, or to make the King cast down his countenance upon you; for although he "hates putting away," yet you may provoke him to cover his face, and to turn to you the back of his throne: yea, you may provoke him to carry towards you in such a way, that the very remembrance of him will be a trouble to you. Sometimes his own dearest favourites have so grieved his Spirit, that he has carried the quarrel to the gates of hell against them; as we see in the case of David, "Thine arrows stick fast in me," says he, "and thy hand presseth me sore: this grief I have, because of my sin." You may by insensitivity bring yourself to that pass, as to be made to cry, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps." And therefore beware of every thing that may be offensive to your King. Beware of pride, for "he beholds the proud afar off;" he thrusts the proud away from him, when they venture to come near his throne. Beware of unbelief, for that is what he cannot endure. How unsuitable is it for his subjects and children to call him a liar! This is a sin which turns you away from the Lord, and turns him away from you. Do not entertain jealousies of his kindness, after he has given the tokens of it to your souls; for it is a grieving of the Spirit of God to have his love-tokens called in question. Beware of untenderness: if there be not a close walking with God in the way of holiness, you need not expect to have the King's countenance; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord: "it is they that have clean hands, and a pure heart, that shall stand in his holy hill, and have a place in his tabernacle.

5. Be very observant of the King's commandments. As the acts of grace, of which I was speaking, are the measure of faith, so the law of commandments is the measure of practice. Do not think

that the court of grace, or the throne of grace, gives any indulgence to a detestable licentiousness: they are indeed carnal-gospellers, and Antinomians with a witness, who entertain such a notion. No; the moral law of the ten commandments is supported with the authority of the King, whose name is gracious and merciful. As the law, considered as a covenant of works, issues from a throne of justice; so the same law, considered as a rule of obedience, is issued forth from a throne of grace, as is plain from the preface of the ten commandments, "I am the Lord thy God;" that is, I am unto thee a God of grace in Christ, a saving and a redeeming God: "therefore thou shalt keep all my commandments." O sirs, the law, even as a rule of duty, is supported with the best authority in heaven or earth; and "the grace of God," issuing from this throne, "teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts." Micah 6:8 : "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

6. Keep company with the loyal subjects of the King, and beware of associating yourselves, or saying, "A confederacy" with rebels against the King's crown or government. "My delight," says David, "is with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth." But as for those who live in rebellion against the Lord, their company was a burden to them: "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace."

7. Be sure to pay the tribute that is due to this throne; do not withdraw from it its revenues. The King has imposed a tax of praise to be levied upon all his subjects; and "he who offereth praise, glorifieth him. O praise is comely for the upright." "This people have I formed for myself, that they may show forth my praise." Do not withhold this revenue, but let the high praises of a God of grace be continually in your mouth. And, to engage us to a cheerful payment of this tribute of praise, let us always remember the glorious liberties and privileges which we enjoy under the auspicious government and administration of grace; which are so great and many, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive;" which made the psalmist David to express himself, as we have it, Psalms 40:5 : "Many, O Lord, my God are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

8. Lastly, Contend for the royalties and prerogatives of this throne, which are many ways usurped in this day. Attempts are made to rob the King of his equality with the Father, while they would strip him of his independence and self-existence. Others invade his government, by appointing ceremonies in his worship, which were never ordained in his word: others, by wresting the rights of his subjects from them, particularly in the free choice and election of their pastors: others, by tolerating doctrines inconsistent with the eternal truths of his word. Now, I say, it is incumbent on all the loyal subjects of this King, to contend for the dignities of the crown, and the liberties of his kingdom, against all that do invade the same; following the exhortation of the apostle, Galatians 5:1 : Let us "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," that we "be not entangled again with any yoke of bondage."

S. The Wind of the Holy Ghost Blowing upon the Dry Bones in the Valley of Vision

The Wind of the Holy Ghost Blowing upon the Dry Bones in the Valley of Vision by Ebenezer Erskine

[Preached in the Tolbooth-Church, Edinburgh, upon a fast-day before the sacrament of our Lord's supper, March 15, 1715. From "The Whole Works of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine: Consisting of Sermons and Discourses. To which is Added, an enlarged memoir of the Author, by the Rev. D. Fraser," Volume 1 (of 3). Philadelphia: Wm. S. & A. Young, 1836. Pages 81 to 105.] Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. Ezekiel 37:9. In the beginning of this chapter, the Lord, in a vision, brings the prophet Ezekiel into a valley full of dead men's bones, quite dried and withered, and asks him the question, if he thought it possible for these dry bones to live? Thereby intimating, that although it was a thing impossible with men, yet it was easily effected by the almighty power of God. And, to convince him of it, he commands the prophet to speak to the dry bones, and to tell them, in his name, that he would make the breath of life to enter into them; which accordingly is done; for the prophet having in the name of the Lord, called upon the four winds to breathe upon the dry bones, immediately life enters into them, and they come together bone to his bone, and they lived, and "stood up upon their feet, and became an exceeding great army." by which vision we have a lively representation of a threefold resurrection, as a late commentator (Mr. Henry) very well observes. 1. Of the resurrection of the body at the last day, and general resurrection, when God will command the earth to give up its dead, and the sea to give up its dead; and when, by the ministry of angels, the dust and bones of the saints shall be gathered from the four winds of heaven, to which they have been scattered. Or, 2. We have in this vision a lively representation of the resurrection of the soul from the grave of sin; which is effected by preaching or prophesying, as the instrumental, and by the powerful influence of the Spirit of the Lord, as the principal efficient cause of it; and the wind here spoken of is plainly said to be understood of the Spirit, (Ezekiel 37:14) "I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live." Or, 3. We have, by this vision, a representation of the resurrection of the church of God, from the grave of her bondage and captivity in Babylon, under which they were at present detained. And this indeed is the primary and immediate scope of the vision, as is plain from the explication that follows it, Ezekiel 37:11 - 2 Chronicles However, seeing the deliverance of the children of Israel out of their Babylonish captivity, was typical of our spiritual redemption purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, and in a day of power applied by the mighty and powerful operation of the Holy Spirit of God; and seeing it is this redemption with which we under the gospel are principally concerned, therefore I shall handle the words that I have read under this spiritual sense and meaning. And in them briefly we have, 1. A dismal case supposed, and that is, spiritual deadness. The people of God were not only in bondage under their enemies, but likewise their souls were at this time in a languishing condition. But of this more afterwards.

2. We have a blessed remedy here expressed, and that is the breathings of the Spirit of the Lord, the influences of the Holy Ghost: Come from the four winds, O breath, &c. Now, these influences of the Holy Ghost are here described,

1st, From their nature, held out under the notion and metaphor of wind; Come from the four winds, O breath. There are three elements by which the operations of the Spirit are held out to us in scripture. Sometimes they are compared to fire: Matthew 3:11 : "He shall baptize you (speaking of Christ) with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Sometimes they are compared to water: Isaiah 44:3 : "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Sometimes the influences of the Spirit are held forth under the metaphor of wind, as in Song of Solomon 4:16 : "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden." So here, by the wind, or breath here spoken of, we are principally to understand the Spirit: it is plainly declared to be the Spirit of God in the 14th verse of this chapter. I cannot stand to show you the grounds of this metaphor. Wind, you know, is of a cleansing, cooling, fructifying nature and virtue; it acts freely and irresistibly. It is not in the power of man to resist or oppose the blowings of the wind. So the influences of the Spirit cleanse and purify the heart; they allay the storms of conscience, "make the bones which were broken to rejoice?" They make the soul to grow as the lily, and to cast forth its roots like Lebanon;" they render the soul fruitful "like the garden of God?" and the Spirit acts with a sovereign freedom, and irresistible efficacy, as you may hear afterwards. But,

2dly, These influences of the Holy Ghost, are described, from their variety, four winds: Come from the four winds, O breath; importing the manifold influences and operations of this one and eternal Spirit. Hence we read of the "north and south wind," Song of Solomon 4:16; and of "the seven spirits that are before the throne of God," Revelation 4:5.

3dly, These influences are described from their acting or operation, which is here called a breathing: Breathe upon these slain. By the acting of this almighty wind, our natural life was produced and formed, Genesis 2:7. We are there told, that after God had "formed man of the dust of the ground, he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and he became a living soul." Hence is that of Elihu, Job 33:4 : "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." And it is by the influences of the same almighty breath, that our souls are "quickened, when dead in trespasses and sins," and our spiritual life is formed within us. But then,

4thly, These influences are described from the end and effect of their operation: Breathe upon these slain, that they may live; that is, that the dry bones may become living souls, that out of these stones children may be raised up to Abraham.

Now, from these words, thus briefly explained, I only offer you this one observation; namely,

DOCT. "That as the generality of a church and people in covenant with God, may be in a very dead and languishing condition as to their souls; so the breathings and influences of the Holy Spirit of God are absolutely necessary for their revival. This is the sum of what I intend from these words, Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." In discoursing upon this doctrine, I shall, I. Speak a little upon this deadness which is incident to a people externally in covenant with God.

II. Upon the influences or breathings of the wind of the Holy Ghost, which are so absolutely necessary in order to their revival.

III. Touch at that life which is effected by these breathings.

IV. I shall apply.

I. I say, I would speak a little on this deadness which is incident to a people externally in covenant with God. And here I shall only, 1. Give you some of its kinds. 2. Some of the causes of it. 3. Some of the symptoms of it.

1. The first thing is to give you some kinds of deadness. — Know, then, in general, that there is a two-fold death; one is proper and natural, the other is improper and metaphorical.

(1.) Death, properly so called, is a thing so well known, that it is needless for me to tell you what it is. There is none of us all but we shall know it experimentally within a little; for "it is appointed for every man once to die." — The grave is a house appointed for all living; and therefore, with Job, we may "say to corruption, Thou art our father; and to the worm, Thou art our mother and sister." But this is not the death I now speak of; and therefore,

(2.) There is a death which is improper or metaphorical; which is nothing else but a disease or distemper of the soul, by which it is rendered unmeet and incapable for holy and spiritual exercises. And this, again, is two-fold; either total or partial.

1st, There is a total death incident to the wicked and ungodly, who are stark dead, and have nothing of spiritual life in them at all. Hence, (Ephesians 2:1,) men in a state of nature are said to be "dead in trespasses and sins;" that is, under the total reigning power of sin, "in the gall of bitterness, and under the bond of iniquity;" without God, without Christ, and therefore without hope.

2dly, There is a partial death incident to believers, whom God has raised out of the grave of an unrenewed state, and in whose souls he has implanted a principle of spiritual life. And this partial death, incident to believers, consists in a manifest decay of spiritual principles and habits, in the abating of their wonted life and vigour, and activity in the way and work of the Lord: their faith, their love, their hope, and other graces, are all in a fainting and languishing condition; they lie dormant in the soul, like the life of the tree that lies hid in its root, without fruit or blossoms, during the winter season. Such deadness as this we find the Lord's people in scripture frequently complaining of particularly Isaiah 56:3 : "The son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, and taken hold of his covenant," he is made to speak, saying, "The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people:" and the eunuch cries out, I am a dry tree, wherein there is no life or sap. It is this kind of spiritual deadness, incident to believers, that I now principally speak of. The leaves of his profession may in a great measure be withered; the candle of his conversation may burn dimly, or with a very imperfect light; the flame of his affections, his zeal, love, desire, may, like that of a great fire, be reduced to a few coals and cinders. There may be a great intermission or formality in the discharge of commanded duty. The mind, which once with delight and admiration, could meditate upon God and Christ, and the covenant, and things that are above, may come to lose its relish for these things, and to dote upon the transitory fading vanities of a present world. The common gifts of the Spirit, through carnal ease, and defect of employment, may be in a great

measure blasted: and, which is worst of all, the saving graces, and fruits of the Spirit, may come to be woefully impaired as to their former degrees and actings. But now, this partial death of believers, again, is twofold: there is a deadness which is felt by God's people, and a deadness which is not felt; "gray hairs are here and there upon them, sometimes, and they do not behold them." The Lord was departed from Samson, and he wist not, Judges 16:20. But then there is a deadness which is felt, when God's people have a sense of their deadness, and are lamenting it. And it is an evidence of spiritual life, or of some revival, when the Lord's people are beginning to cry out with the church, (Psalms 85:6) "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee? — Why hast thou hardened our heart from thy fear?" Isaiah 63:17. But,

2. The second thing is, to take notice of some of the causes of this spiritual deadness. I shall only name them, because your time would not allow me to enlarge.

(1.) Then, abstinence or neglect of food, you know, will soon bring the body into a pining, languishing condition: so, if the means of grace be not diligently improved, if we neglect, by faith, to apprehend and to improve Christ, and to feed upon him, whose "flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed," the spiritual life of the soul will soon languish and wither. Hence is that [declaration] of Christ, John 6:53 : "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

(2.) Surfeiting the soul with sensual pleasure is another great cause of spiritual death: Hosea 4:11 : "Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart:" they suck out the very life of the soul. What is the reason why many professors of religion have lost their wonted vigour in the way of the Lord, and are in such a languishing condition as to their soul-matters? The plain reason of it is this, they are glutting themselves with the pleasures of sense. If Samson do but sleep on Delilah's lap, she will betray him into the hands of the Philistines, and cut the locks wherein his strength lies; and when he goes out to shake himself, as at other times, he will find his strength gone away from him.

(3.) Inactivity and sloth in salvation and regeneration-work is another cause of spiritual deadness. Physicians observe, that as too violent exercise, so too much rest, or a sedentary way of living, is prejudicial to the health of the body. This holds also in spiritual things: if we do not exercise ourselves unto godliness, and endeavour to abound in the work of the Lord, the spiritual life will soon languish and dwindle away. Therefore, "Let us not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; and whatever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with all our might." And beware of resting upon empty wishes and desires in spiritual matters; for "the desire of the slothful kills him, because his hands refuse to labour."

(4.) The contagion of ill example, of a carnal world, and irreligious relatives, has a fatal influence this way. You know it is exceedingly dangerous for those who have the seed of all diseases in them to frequent the company of those who are infected with the plague or pestilence. A Joseph, if he stay long in the Egyptian court, will learn to swear "by the life of Pharaoh." It is true, indeed, as fire sometimes burns with the greater vehemence, and casts the greater heat, the colder the air be; so the zeal and life of God's people is sometimes rather quickened, by beholding the wickedness of those among whom their lot is cast, as Paul among the Athenians. But if we shall adventure to cast ourselves into the society of the wicked, without a special call and warrant from Providence. It will be next to an impossibility to keep ourselves free of the contagion: for "Can a man carry fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can a man walk upon hot coals, and his

feet not be burnt? Evil communications corrupt good manners."

(5.) Some deadly wound in the soul, not carefully noticed, may be the cause of spiritual death. You know a man may die not only by a draught of poison, or the like, but also by the cut of a sword. While we are in the wilderness, we live in the very midst of our spiritual enemies: the fiery darts of Satan are flying thick about us; he is always seeking to bruise the believer's heel, "going about seeking to devour:" and not only so, but our own lusts also do war against the soul, so that we cannot miss to be wounded thereby. And if the filth and guilt of these wounds be not carefully washed away by the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, they cannot miss exceedingly to impair the spiritual life and health: therefore, David, after he had been wounded by murder and adultery, is so earnest that God would wash and cleanse his wounds, and purge him with hyssop, that so the joy of his salvation might be restored. But then,

(6.) A holy God has sometimes a righteous and holy hand in this spiritual death, to which the Lord's people are liable, by withdrawing and suspending the influences of his Spirit from them. For as the plant and the herb of the field wither, and languish when the rain of heaven is withheld; so when the influences of the Holy Ghost are suspended, the very sap of the soul, and its spiritual life go away. And the Lord upholds the influences of his Spirit for many reasons, As,

1st, He does it sometimes in a way of awful and adorable sovereignty, to show that he is not a debtor to any of his creatures. However, because the Spirit's influences are seldom withdrawn in a way of sovereignty, it is our part to search and try if conscience do not condemn us, as having a sinful and culpable hand in it ourselves.

2dly, Sometimes he does it to humble his people, and to prevent their pride, which makes him to "behold them afar off." If we were always under the lively gales and influences of the Spirit, we would be ready to forget ourselves, and in danger with Paul, of being lifted up above measure, when he was wrapt up into the third heaven. Upon this account, some of the saints have said, that they have got more good sometimes by their desertion, than by their enlargement.

3dly, He does it to make them prize Christ, and see their continual need of fresh supplies "out of his fulness." He lets our cisterns run dry, that we may come anew, and lay our empty vessels under the flowings of the blessed "fountain of life," that "out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace."

4thly, He does it sometimes for the trial of his people, to see if they will follow him "in a wilderness, in a land that is not sown," as well as when he is feeding them with the sensible communications of his grace and Spirit; to see if they will live on him by faith, when they cannot live by sight or sense.

5thly, Sometimes he does it for their chastisement, to correct them for their iniquities. And this, indeed, is the most ordinary cause why the Spirit of the Lord is suspended and withdrawn.

I have not time to enumerate many of these sins which provoke the Lord to withdraw his Spirit; I shall only mention two or three.

(1.) Not hearkening to the motions of his Spirit, is one great reason why the Lord withdraws his Spirit; as you see in the spouse, Song of Solomon 5:1-16 : There Christ comes, and moves, and calls for entrance: the spouse does not hearken to the motion: "I have put off my coat, how shall I

put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Upon which he immediately withdraws and leaves her, as you may read at your own leisure.

(2.) Lukewarmness and formality in the discharge of duty is another cause of it, as we see in the church Laodicea; it made him to spew that church out of his mouth. And then

(3.) Prostituting the gifts and graces of the Spirit to carnal, selfish, and base ends, to procure a name, or make a show in the world. This is another reason of it.

(4.) Sinning against light. Trampling upon the belly of conscience, as David no doubt did in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba; whereby he provoked the Lord so far to leave him, that he cries out, (Psalms 51:11) "Cast me not out of thy sight; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

(5.) Barrenness and unfruitfulness under the means of grace: Isaiah 5:1-30 :the clouds are commanded to give no rain upon the barren vineyard. And then,

(6.) And lastly, Their not listening carefully to the voice of God in ordinances and providences: this is another cause of it; Psalms 81:11-12 : "My people would not hearken to my voice; therefore, I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." And thus you have some of the causes of this spiritual deadness. I come to—

3. The third thing, which was to give you some of the symptoms of it: and would to God they were not too visible, rife, and common in the day, and upon the generation in which we live. I shall name a few of them to you.

(1.) Want of appetite after the bread and water of life is a symptom of spiritual death. You know that man cannot be in a healthful condition that loathes his food, or has lost his appetite after it. Alas! Is not the manna of heaven, that God is raining about our tent-doors, generally loathed? The great truths of God, which some of the saints have found to be "sweeter than honey, from the honey-comb," have not that savour and relish with us that they ought to have. Are not sabbaths, sacraments, sermons, fast-days, and feast-days, burdens to many among us; so that if they would but speak out the language of their hearts, they would be ready to join issue with these, Malachi 1:13: "What a weariness is this?" Whereas, the soul that is in a lively condition is ready to say of the word, "It is better to me than thousands of gold and silver; I esteem it more than my necessary food:" and of ordinances, "I love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy honour dwelleth;" and Psalms 84:10 : "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

(2.) Though a man have something of an appetite, yet if he do not grow, or look like his food, it looks something dangerous and death-like. The thriving Christian is a growing Christian: "They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. — The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." But, alas! is it not quite otherwise with the most part? Many are going backward, instead of forward; as it is said of Jerusalem; (Lamentations 1:8) "She sighest, and turneth backward." May we not cry out of our leanness, our leanness, notwithstanding of all the fattening means and ordinances that we enjoy?

(3.) You know, when death takes a dealing with a person, it makes his beauty to fade: "When with rebukes thou dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." Pale death soon alters the ruddy countenance. Perhaps the day has been, O believer, when the beauty of holiness adorned every step of thy conversation; thy "light did so shine before men, that

they, seeing thy good works," could not but "glorify thy heavenly Father;" but now, alas! the beauty of thy conversation is sullied and stained, by "lying among the pots" of sin. This says, that spiritual death is dealing with thy soul.

(4.) Death not only wastes the beauty, but the strength also: Ecclesiastes 12:3 : "The keepers of the house do tremble, and the strong men do bow," upon the approaches of the king of terrors. Now, see if your wonted strength and ability to perform duty, or to resist temptations, be not abated. Perhaps the day has been, when thou couldst have said with Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? for, through Christ strengthening me, I can do all things;" but now thou art ready to faint and sit up at the very thoughts of duty. The day perhaps has been, when, though Satan, that cunning archer, did shoot sore at thee; yet "thy bow did abide in its strength, and the arms of thy hands were made strong by the mighty God of Jacob;" thou wast in care to beat back the fiery darts of Satan, and to stand thy ground against the corruptions and defections of the day and generation: but now, like a dead fish, thou art carried down the stream. Does not this proclaim thy soul to be under a sad decay?

(5.) Death wastes the natural heat and warmth of the body. There is a kind of chilliness and coldness that seizes a man when death takes a dealing with him. So it is a sign of a spiritual decay and deadness, when wonted zeal for God and his glory, and the concerns of his church and his kingdom, is abated. Perhaps the day has been, when, with David, the zeal of God's house did in a manner eat you up, and you "preferred Jerusalem to your chief joy:" but now you are almost come the length of Gallio's temper, to "care for none of these things;" indifferent whether the work of God in the land sink or swim. Laodicea's distemper is too prevalent among us at this day: we are "neither cold nor hot" in the things of God; and therefore have reason to fear, lest we be spewed out of God's mouth. The day has been, when your spirits were lifted up, in prayer, in hearing, in communicating; you were "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" "you could rejoice to work righteousness, and say, in some measure, with David, "I will go unto the altar of God, to God, my exceeding joy;" but now all this holy warmth is gone in a great measure; you are become formal and careless in the concerns of God's glory.

(6.) A dead man, you know, cannot move, but only as he is moved from without, in regard he wants a principle of motion within. So it is a sign of spiritual death, even in believers, when external motives and considerations have a greater influence in the duties of religion upon them, than an internal principle of faith and love. When the believer is himself, "the love of Christ constrains" him in every duty; this is the "one thing" he desires, "that he may behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple:" but when any selfish or external motive sets him at work, it is a sign of spiritual death. Other things might be added; but I hasten to speak to,

II. The second thing proposed in the method, and that was, to speak a little of these breathings and influences of the Spirit of God, which are absolutely necessary for the revival of the Lord's people under deadness: Come from the four winds, O breath! and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. And here I would, 1. Clear the nature of these influences, in a word or two. 2. Speak to the variety of these influences, four winds. 3. To the manner of their operation upon the elect; they are said to breathe upon, the slain. 4. Speak a little to the necessity of these breathings. 5. To the several seasons of the Spirit's reviving influences.

I fear your time will cut me short before I have done; but I shall run through these particulars as quickly as possible.

1. The first thing is, to clear the nature of these breathings or influences. And what I have to offer upon this head, you may take in these few propositions: —

(1.) You would know, that the influences and gifts of the Spirit of God are of two sorts, either common or saving. As for the common influences of the Spirit, which are sometimes bestowed upon the wicked and reprobate world, I am not to speak of these at this time. All I shall say about them is, to tell you, that they are given in common to the children of men, "for edification of the mystical body of Christ," until it arrive at "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," as you read, Eph. iv.: and therefore they are commonly called by divines *donæ ministrantia*, or ministering gifts. Although they have no saving efficacy upon the person in whom they dwell; yet God, in his holy wisdom, makes use of them for the good of his church in general, as we read, Ephesians 4:1-32 : And another thing that I would tell you, likewise, concerning these common influences, is, that they of an exceeding dangerous nature when they are not accompanied with saving grace. The man that has them, is like a ship having very large sails, and but little or no ballast at all, in the midst of the ocean; and is therefore in danger of being split in pieces against every rock. In Matthew 7:22, we read of some who had extraordinary common gifts; they prophesied in Christ's name, wrought miracles, and cast out devils in his name, and did many wonderful works, and yet Christ utterly disowns them. I do not speak of these common influences now, but of such as are saving. And therefore,

(2.) A second proposition is, that the Holy Spirit of God, considered in his particular economy in the work of redemption, as the applier of the Redeemer's purchase, is the author and efficient cause of all saving influences. It is he, I say, that prepares and disposes the soul of man for the entertainment of the things of God, which are not received nor discerned by the natural mind. It is he that ploughs up the fallow ground of the heart, and brings in the wilderness, and turns it into a fruitful field. It is he that garnishes the face of the soul with the saving graces of the Spirit; these are flowers of the upper paradise, therefore called "the fruits of the Spirit," Galatians 5:22. It is he that preserves, cherishes, and maintains, them by renewed influences: he cherishes the smoking flax, and at last turns it into a lamp of glory in heaven; for "he brings forth judgment unto victory."

(3.) Again; you would know that the elect of God are the subjects recipient of all saving influences of the Spirit of God: I say, they are peculiar only to the elect of God, and to them only upon their conversion, when they come to be united to Christ, as members of his mystical body. We must be ingrafted into this true olive tree, otherwise we can never partake of his sap, and "receive out of his fulness, grace for grace." That these influences are peculiar to the elect of God, is plain from Titus 1:1; where we read of "the faith of God's elect."

(4.) These influences of the Spirit, are given for various ends to the elect of God. The judicious Dr. Owen, in his Discourses on the Spirit, observes, that these saving influences are given to the elect of God for regeneration, to the regenerate for sanctification, to the sanctified for consolation, and to the comforted Christian for further up-building. and edification; and establishment, until they arrive at perfection in glory. But the nature of these influences will farther appear from,

2. The second thing proposed, which was, to speak a little to the variety of these influences of the Spirit. You see they are diversified here, while they are called four winds: Come from the four winds, O breath. The apostle tells us, that "there are diversities of gifts and operations, but the same Spirit," 1 Corinthians 11:4. And we read, as I was telling you, of "seven Spirits that are before the throne," Revelation 1:1-20. Here, if time would allow me to enlarge, I might tell you, that the saving influences and breathings of the Spirit are either primary, fundamental, and absolutely necessary to salvation; or they are accumulative, additional, necessary only for the believer's comfort and well-being. Some of these influences are antecedent, or preparative unto conversion; some of them are regenerating, and others are subsequent and posterior unto regeneration. But I shall not stand upon such subtle distinctions. You may take a few of them in the order following: —

(1.) There are the convincing influences of the Spirit: John 16:8 : "When he is come, he will convince the world of sin." This is what I conceive we are to understand by the "north wind," (Song of Solomon 4:16;) which is commonly boisterous, cold, chill and nipping. The elect of God by nature lie fast asleep within the tidal mark of God's wrath, upon the very brink of everlasting ruin, crying, "Peace, peace," to themselves; the Spirit of the Lord comes like a stormy north wind, blows hard upon the sinner's face, and awakens him; breaks his carnal peace and security, brings him to himself and lets him see his danger; fills him with remorse and terror. Hence, (Isaiah 28:17,) the hail is said to "sweep down the refuge of lies," before the sinner come to settle upon the "foundation that God hath laid in Zion." In Acts 2:37, it is said, "they were pricked in their heart;" and then they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

(2.) There are the enlightening influences and breathings of the Spirit. Hence, he is compared to eye-salve, Revelation 3:18 : "Ye have received an unction from the Holy One, whereby ye know all things," 1 John 2:20. We read, Isaiah 25:7, of a "veil and face of a covering that is spread over all nations." The wind of the Holy Ghost must blow off this veil of ignorance and unbelief; and then the poor sinner comes to see a new world of wonders that he never saw before; a wonderful great God, a wonderful Redeemer, a wonderful covenant, and a wonderful holy law. Hence, we are said to be "translated out of darkness into a marvellous light. The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God." And, 1 Corinthians 2:12 : "By the Spirit we know the things that are freely given to us of God."

(3.) There are the renewing influences of the Spirit. We are said to be "saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Titus 3:5. Hence, he is called "a new Spirit." He renews the will, and "makes old things to pass away, and all things to become new."

(4.) There are the comforting influences of the Spirit. This is the south-wind, as it were, gentle and easy, and refreshing; and therefore he is called the Comforter. And, indeed, his consolations are strong consolations; they put more gladness into the heart than corn, wine, and oil in abundance; fill the soul with a joy that is "unspeakable, and full of glory." And then,

(5.) There are the corroborating and strengthening influences of the Spirit. By the breathings of the Spirit the feeble are made "like David, and as the angel of God before him." It is he that "gives power to the faint, and increases strength to them that have no might." It is by him that worm Jacob is made to "thresh the mountains, and to beat them small, and to make the hills as chaff" And then,

(6.) There are the drawing and enlarging influences of the Spirit: "Draw me," (says the spouse,) "we will run after thee." The poor believer lies many times, as it were, wind-bound, that he is not able to move one step in the way of the Lord: but, O! when the Spirit of the Lord comes, then come liberty and enlargement: "I will run the way of thy commandments," (says David,) "when thou hast enlarged my heart;" to wit, by the influences of thy Spirit. He is like oil to their chariot-wheels; and when he comes, they are as the chariots of Amminadib, or a willing people.

(7.) There are the sin-mortifying and sin-killing influences of the Spirit: "We, through the Spirit," are said to "mortify the deeds of the body, that so we may live." When this wind of the Holy Ghost blows upon the soul, he not only makes the spices to revive, but he kills the weeds of sin and corruption, making them to wither and decay; so that the poor believer, who was crying, "Wretched man, what shall I do to be delivered from this body of death!" is made some-times to tread upon the necks of these enemies, as a pledge of his complete victory at last; And then,

(8.) There are the interceding influences of the Spirit: Romans 8:26 : "The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He intercedes in a physical and efficient way. He makes us to wrestle and pray; therefore he is called "the Spirit of grace and supplications," Zechariah 12:10. He fills the believer's heart and mouth with such a heavenly rhetoric, that God is not able to withstand it. Hence Jacob "had power with the angel, and prevailed;" for "he wept, and made supplication unto him." And then

(9.) There are the sealing and witnessing influences of the Spirit: He "witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the sons of God." He bears witness of the glorious fulness and suitableness of Christ to the soul: "The Spirit shall testify of me," John 15:26. And he is said to "seal believers to the day of redemption;" and his seal is the earnest of glory: Ephesians 1:13-14 : "Ye are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance." But these things I have not time to insist upon. So much for the second thing.

3. The third thing that I proposed here, was, to speak a little to the manner of the acting or operation of these influences, or flow it is that this wind blows upon the soul? I answer,

(1.) The wind of the Holy Ghost blows very freely; the Spirit acts as an independent sovereign, John 3:8. It does not stay for the command, nor stop for the prohibition of any creature. So the breathings of the Spirit are sovereignly free as to the time of their donation, free as to their duration and continuance, free as to the measure, and free as to the manner of their working. And then,

(2.) He breathes on the soul sometimes very surprisingly: "Or ever I was aware (says the spouse,) my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Canst thou not seal this in thy experience, believer, that sometimes, when thou hast gone to duty in a very heartless and lifeless condition, perhaps beginning to raze foundations, and to say with Zion, "The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten," a gale from heaven has in a manner surprised thee, and set thee upon the high places of Jacob, and made thee to cry with the spouse, "It is the voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills? —His anger endureth but for a moment: in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

(3.) These breathings and influences of the Spirit are some-times very piercing and penetrating. The cold nipping north wind, you know, goes to the very quick. The sword of the Spirit "pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of

the thoughts and intents of the heart." Wind, you know, is of a very seeking, penetrating nature; it seeks through the closest chambers. So the Spirit, which is the candle of the Lord, "searcheth the lower parts of the belly:" he makes a discovery of these lusts and idols that sulk in the secret chambers of the heart.

(4.) The breathings of this wind are very powerful, strong, and efficacious. Who can oppose the blowings of the winds? Some winds have such a mighty force with them, that they bear down, overturn, and overthrow every thing that stands in their way. So the Spirit of the Lord sometimes, especially at first conversion, breaks in upon the soul like the rushing of a mighty wind, as he did upon the apostles, breaking down the strongholds of iniquity, casting to the ground every high thought and towering imagination of the soul, that exalts itself against Christ, with a powerful and triumphant efficacy. He masters the darkness of the mind, the contumacy and rebellion of the will, and the carnality of the affections: the enmity of the heart against God, and all the spiritual wickednesses that are in the high places of the soul, are made to fall down at his feet, as Dagon did before the ark of the Lord.

(5.) Although he act thus powerfully and irresistibly, yet it is with an overcoming sweetness, so as there is not the least violence offered to any of the natural faculties of the soul: for whenever the Spirit comes with his saving influences, he sweetly overcomes the darkness of the mind; the sinner becomes a volunteer, and content to enlist himself a soldier under Christ's banner: Psalms 110:3: "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." No sooner does Christ by his Spirit say to the soul, "Follow me," but immediately they arise and follow him. "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Then,

(6.) There is something in the breathing of this wind that is incomprehensible by reason: John 3:8 : "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goes," says Christ: "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There is something in the operation of the eternal Spirit and his influences beyond the reach, not only of natural but of sanctified reason. Who can tell "how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child?" So, far less can we tell how the Spirit forms the babe of grace in the heart; how he preserves, maintains, and cherishes "the smoking flax," that is not quite extinguished. We may, in this case, apply the words of the psalmist in another case, and say, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known;" and that of the apostle, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

(7.) These influences of the Spirit, are sometimes felt before they are seen; as you know a man will feel the wind, and hear it, when he cannot see it. So it is with the Lord's people many times, on whom the Spirit breathes: they feel his actings, they are sensible that he has been dealing with them; and all that they can say about it is, with the man that was born blind, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." "The kingdom of heaven comes not with observation."

4. The fourth thing proposed was, to speak a little to the necessity of these breathings. And here I shall show, 1. That they are necessary. 2. To what things they are necessary.

(1.) That they are necessary, will appear,

1st, From the express declaration of Christ, John 15:5 : "Without me, ye can do nothing;" that is, without the aid and influences of my Spirit. He does not say, Without me, ye cannot do many

things, or great things; but, "Without me, ye can do nothing."

2dly, It is evident from the express acknowledgment of the saints of God upon this head: 2 Corinthians 3:5 : "We are not," says the apostle, "sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." It is he that must "work all our works in us and for us."

3dly, It is plain from the earnest prayers of the saints for the breathings of this wind: Song of Solomon 4:16 : "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden." Psalms 85:6 : "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee?" They are promised in the covenant, and therefore necessary: Isaiah 44:3 : "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Ezekiel 36:27 : "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Now, there is not a mercy promised in the covenant that can be lacking. But, (2.) To what are these breathings necessary? I answer, they are necessary,

1st, To the quickening of the elect of God, when they are stark dead in trespasses and sins. Can ever the dry bones live, unless this omnipotent wind blow upon them? It is strange, to hear some men that profess Christianity, talking of the power of their own wills to quicken and convert themselves. They may as well say, that a dead man may take his grave in his two arms, and lay death by him, and walk. "No man," says Christ, "can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." Oh! What a dead weight is the sinner, that a whole Trinity must draw! For both Father and Son draws the sinner by the breathings of the Holy Ghost.

2dly, These influences are necessary for the suitable discharge of every duty of religion. You cannot read, you cannot hear, you can not pray or praise, you cannot communicate to any advantage, unless the wind of the Holy Ghost blow upon you. It is the Lord that must enlarge our steps under us, and make your feet like hinds' feet in the ways of the Lord.

3dly, They are necessary for accomplishing our spiritual warfare against sin, Satan, and the world. We will never be able to combat with our spiritual enemies, if he do not help us: it is he only that must "teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, so as bows of steel may be broken in pieces by us." Without the Spirit, we will fall before every temptation; like Peter, curse and swear, that we never knew him.

4thly, They are necessary to the exercise of grace already implanted in the soul. As we cannot work grace in our hearts, so neither can we exercise it without the renewed influences of the Holy Ghost, Song of Solomon 4:16 : When this wind blows, then, and never till then, do the spices flow out. But I shall not stand on this: the Spirit's influences are necessary to all the uses mentioned upon the second head: for conviction, illumination, renovation, consolation, enlargement, mortification of sin, for assurance of our adoption.

5. The fifth thing that I proposed upon this head, was, to give you some of the seasons of these influences of the Spirit: for the wind, you know, has its seasons and times of blowing and breathing. I shall only name a few of them to you.

(1.) The Spirit's reviving influences blow, very ordinarily, in a day of conversion. This, as you were hearing, is a season when this wind breathes on the soul, Ezekiel 36:26 : when God "takes away the stony heart, and gives the heart of flesh." He puts his Spirit within them, when the soul is first

espoused unto Christ. So Jeremiah 2:2 : "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."

(2.) When the soul has been deeply humbled under a sense of sin and unworthiness. When Ephraim is brought low, and is smiting on his thigh, acknowledging his sin and folly, then the Spirit of the Lord comes with a reviving gale upon his spirit. "Is Ephraim," says the Lord "my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

(3.) After a dark night of desertion, when the Lord returns again, it is a time of sweet influences. After Zion had been crying, "The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me;" upon the back of it comes a sweet gale of the Spirit, "Can a woman forget her child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee."

(4.) Times of earnest prayer and wrestling; for he gives his Spirit to them that ask it. This is agreeable to the promise, Ezekiel 36:37.

(5.) Times of serious meditation are times of sweet influences of the Spirit Psalms 63:5-6, Psalms 63:8 : When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, my soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my soul followeth hard after thee."

(6.) Communion-days are sometimes days of sweet influences. Some of the Lord's people can attest it from their experience, with the spouse; that "while the King sat at his table, the spikenard sent forth the smell thereof;" and when they "sat down under his shadow, they found his fruit sweet to their taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

(7.) The day of death has sometimes been found to be a day of such pleasant gales of the Spirit that they have been made to enter into the haven of glory with the triumphant song in their mouth, saying, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus David, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Thus, Simeon, thus Paul, &c.

III. The third thing in the text and doctrine to be spoken to, is the life that is effected and wrought in the souls of God's elect by these influences and breathings of the Holy Spirit. Your time will not allow me to enlarge upon this. I shall only tell you, in a few particulars, what sort of a life it is.

(1.) It is a life of faith. The apostle calls it so, Galatians 2:20, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me; and gave himself for me." And the just is said to live by faith. The man is ever embracing a Redeemer, and the fulness of the Godhead in him; always deriving fresh supplies out of that full treasury and store-house.

(2.) It is a life of justification. The law pronounces a curse against every one that "doth not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The believer gets this sentence of death cancelled: Romans 8:1. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And not only so, but he has the everlasting righteousness of Immanuel God-man imputed to him: so that with a holy boldness he may challenge justice, and challenge the law, what they have to say against him, as the apostle does, Romans 8:33 : "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" &c.

(3.) It is a life of reconciliation with God; God and they are at friendship; which follows naturally on their justification: Romans 5:1 : "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." God does not retain the least grudge in his heart against them; and he and they walk together, because they are agreed: that is, they have fellowship one with another, according to that, 1 John 1:3 : "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

(4.) It is a life of holiness and sanctification: for the Spirit of the Lord is a cleansing, purifying, and renewing Spirit: he renews the soul after the image of God; makes the heart, that was a "cage of unclean birds," a fit temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; he garnishes the soul, and makes it like the King's daughter, all glorious within. They that had lain among the pots, become "like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

(5.) It is a very lightsome and comfortable life: and no wonder; for his name is The Comforter. His consolations are so strong, that they furnish the soul with ground of joy in the blackest and cloudiest day: Habakkuk 3:17-18 : "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." And the joy that he gives is deep: "Your heart shall rejoice." And it is abiding: "Your joy shall no man take from you." And it is such as cannot be made language of: "We rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

(6.) It is a life of liberty; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." He brings us into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." Before the Spirit comes with his saving influences, the man is in bondage; in bondage to sin, to Satan, to the law, and to the curse and condemnation of God: but the Spirit of the Lord frees from all these. Christ, by his Spirit, sets the captives of the mighty at liberty, and "delivers the prey from the terrible."

(7.) It is a hidden life: Colossians 3:3 : "Your life is hid with Christ in God." And believers are called "God's hidden ones," Psalms 83:3 : The spring and fountain of this life is hid, namely, an unseen Christ; for with him is the fountain of life. The subject of this life is hid, even the hidden man of the heart. The actings of this life are hid, and the means of its support; he feeds upon "the hidden manna, and the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." And then the beauty and glory of this life is hid; for "the King's daughter is all glorious within." The beauty of the hypocrite's life lies all in the outside, painted sepulchres.

(8.) It is a heavenly life; they are made to live above the world: "Our conversation is in heaven," says the apostle. They look on themselves as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and, therefore, look not so much to the things that are seen, as to the things that are not seen. With Moses, they "have respect unto the recompense of the reward;" their eyes are set upon the land that is very far off, and the King in his beauty.

(9.) It is a royal life: for they are "made kings and priests unto God," Revelation 1:6 : They have a royal kingdom, of which they are heirs: "I appoint unto you a kingdom," says Christ; a royal crown, "a crown of glory which fadeth not away." They shall have a royal throne at last, Revelation 3:21. Royal robes, princely attire, "the garments of salvation;" a royal table provided for them, Isaiah 25:6 : "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined;" royal guard continually attending them, the angels of God, and the attributes of

the divine nature, &c.

(10.) It is an eternal life: John 17:3 : "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The saving knowledge of a God in Christ, what is it but the first dawns of eternal glory in the soul? And where he once dawns, he is ever in the ascendant until the mid-day of glory come; for "his goings forth are prepared as the morning."

IV. The fourth thing is the use of the doctrine. And waiving other uses that might be made of this doctrine, I shall only improve it by way of examination and of exhortation. The first use shall be of trial and examination. Oh try, sirs, whether or not these saving influences of the Spirit did ever breathe upon your souls, yea, or not. For your trial I shall only suggest these few things: —

1. If these breathings have blown upon thy soul, man, woman, then he has blown away "the veil and face of the covering" that was naturally upon your mind and understanding. He has given you other views of spiritual and divine things, than you can have by any natural or acquired knowledge. The Spirit of the Lord is called "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation," Ephesians 1:17 : because he reveals these things to the soul which flesh and blood is not able to receive or understand. So then, has the Spirit testified of Christ unto you? Has he "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?" And as a fruit and consequence of this,

2. If the wind of the Holy Ghost has blown upon thy soul, he has blown away some of the filth of hell that did cleave to thy soul, and has transformed thee into his own image: 2 Corinthians 3:18 : "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, thou art changed into the same image. from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." If you have the Spirit, the "same mind will be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:" for "he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit." You will imitate and resemble him in his imitable perfections, in his holiness, meekness, self-denial, patience. He is a holy God; and wherever he comes, he works holiness, and makes the soul holy.

3. If this Wind has blown upon your souls, then it has driven you from your lying refuges, and made you take sanctuary in Christ. He has driven you from the law, and made you consent to the method of salvation through the righteousness of the Son of God: "I through the law," (says the apostle,) "am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." This is the design of all the Spirit's influences, to lead sinners off from sin, off from self, off from the law, that they may rest in Christ only.

4. If ever you felt any of the reviving gales of this wind of the Spirit, you will long for new gales and breathings of it: and when these breathings are suspended and withheld, your souls will be like to faint, as it were, like a man that wants breath. You will pant for the air of the Spirit's influences, like David, Psalms 63:1 : "My soul longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;" and Psalms 84:2 : "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Oh for another gale of his Spirit in public ordinances!

5. If you have felt the breathings of this wind you will not snuff up the east wind of sin and vanity: John 4:14 : "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." You will not thirst immoderately after things of time; no, no; you will see them to be but mere trash and vanity. You will "choose that good part which shall not be taken away from you." You will "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

6. If this wind has blown upon thy soul, then you will follow the motion of this wind: you will not run cross to this wind, but will go along with it. I mean, you will yield yourselves to the conduct of the Spirit speaking in his word; for "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

But, say you, How shall I know if I be led by the Spirit of God? I answer,

1st, If you follow the Spirit, then "you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," but, on the contrary, you will study to "crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts." You will be ready to cut off your right hand, and to pluck out the right eye sins at the Lord's command.

2dly, Then the way wherein you walk will be a way of holiness, for he is a Spirit of sanctification; and a way of truth; for the Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of truth, and he leads into all truth: a way of uprightness: Psalms 143:10 : "Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness."

3dly, You know leading imports spontaneousness and willingness. There is a great difference between leading and drawing; between being driven by the wind, and following the motion of the wind. Sometimes, indeed, the wicked, a hypocrite, a natural man, by a strong north wind of conviction, may be driven on to duty through the force of terror. But the believer is a volunteer; he freely yields himself to the Spirit's conduct; he rejoices to work righteousness, and to remember God in his ways. Whenever he hears the Spirit whispering in his ears, and saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," presently, he complies. When the Spirit of Lord says, "Come," he immediately echoes back again, and says, "Behold, I come unto thee; for thou art the Lord my God." Now, try yourselves by these things. The second use shall be exhortation. Is it so, that the influences of the Spirit are so necessary in order to our revival? Then be exhorted to look up to Heaven, and cry for the breathings of the Spirit. O sirs, will you turn the words of my text into a prayer? And say, "Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live?" I might enforce this exhortation by many motives: I only name them.

Motive 1. Consider, that spiritual deadness is very prevalent in the day in which we live. There is a great multitude of "dry bones" scattered up and down our "valley of vision." There are many that carry the marks of a deadly leprosy on their foreheads: their atheism, their profanity, irreligion, and other gross abominations, plainly declare to the world, that they are "dead in trespasses and sins." And, alas! May it not be for matter of lamentation, that even many of those, who, in the judgment of charity, have "the root of the matter," the principles of spiritual life, are yet under sad decays of the life of grace? Alas! It is not with Scotland's ministers and professors as once it has been. I might produce many melancholy evidences of this, if time would allow. Remember those already mentioned, the general loathing of the word, &c.

Mot. 2. Consider the evil and danger of spiritual deadness. The evil of it will appear, 1st, If you consider that it is a frame of spirit directly contrary to the command of God. God commands us to "present ourselves a living sacrifice unto him:" and, indeed, this "is our reasonable service," Romans 12:1. Yea, it is contrary to the very nature of God; for God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth," 1 John 4:24.

2dly, The evil and danger of it appears farther from this; that it unfits the soul for every duty, and mars our communion and fellowship with God. God meets the lively Christian in the way of duty: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways." But, for the man that comes to him with a Laodicean, dead, lifeless, and lukewarm frame of

soul, he will not hold communion with that man; no he "will spew him out of his mouth."

3dly, It opens a door for all other sins, and renders a man an easy prey to every temptation. A dead man can make no manner of resistance; he is carried down the stream without opposition. Then,

4thly, It lays a foundation for sad and terrible challenges from conscience. David's spiritual deadness brought him to that pass, in the end, that he is made to cry out of broken bones, &c.

Mot. 3. Consider, that as the breathings of the Spirit are necessary for every duty, so particularly for that solemn work which you have before your hands of commemorating the death of the exalted Redeemer. I might here let you see, how the influences of the Spirit are necessary for every part of your work, if time would allow. Without the Spirit's influences of light, you can never examine yourselves to purpose: it is "the Spirit of the Almighty that giveth understanding" how to search out "the mystery of iniquity" in the heart, which is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And then, without the Spirit you cannot mourn for sin; for it is the kindly influences of the Spirit that thaws the heart into evangelical tears, Zechariah 12:10. Without the Spirit you cannot discern the broken body of a Redeemer; for it is the Spirit that testifies of Christ. "I will pour the Spirit of grace upon the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem;" and then follows, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." In a word, you cannot exercise any grace, you cannot wrestle in prayer, you cannot have any right view of the contrivance of redemption, you cannot "take hold of God's covenant," or improve any promise of the covenant, without the Spirit.

Mot. 4. Consider the excellency of these influences of the Spirit.

1st, They blow from an excellent quarter and original: the Holy Ghost is the author of them; and you know he "proceeds from the Father and the Son." So that a whole Trinity, as it were, convey themselves with these breathings.

2dly, They are the purchase of a Redeemer's blood, and therefore excellent. There is not the least grace, or the least gale of the Spirit, that is given to believers, but it cost Christ the blood of his heart. He purchased grace as well as glory.

3dly, These influences of the Spirit, as it were, supply Christ's room while he is in glory. And truly, sirs, I may safely say it upon scripture-warrant, that the presence of the Spirit with believers upon earth, is a greater blessing than the mere bodily presence of Christ: and, therefore, Christ tells his disciples by way of comfort, (John 16:7) "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." As if he had said, "When I am gone, the Spirit will be poured out from on high, which is far better for you than my bodily presence."

4thly, These breathings of the Spirit are pledges of glory, the earnest-penny of the inheritance: Ephesians 1:13-14 : "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance."

5thly, Their excellency appears from the excellent effects that they produce upon the soul. They beautify the soul on whom they fall, and make it like "a field which the Lord hath blessed." They render the soul "fruitful in every good word and work:" Hosea 14:5 : "I will be as the dew unto Israel:" And what follows? "he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Isaiah

44:3 : "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;" and then follows, (Isaiah 44:4,) "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses."

Quest. What advice or counsel do you give, in order to our obtaining or recovering the enlightening and reviving gales of the Spirit?

Ans. 1. Be aware of your deadness, and mourn over it; for the Lord "comforts them that mourn in Zion." He will "give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness:" and then follows, "They shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," Isaiah 61:2-3.

2. Be much upon the mount of divine meditation; for here it is that the Spirit of the Lord breathes: "While I was musing the fire burned," says David, Psalms 39:3; Psalms 63:5-6 : "When I meditate on thee in the night-watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness."

3. Cry mightily to God for these influences, that he would pour down his Spirit from on high: for "if ye, being evil," says Christ, "know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke 11:13. Plead the promises of the new covenant; and, particularly, be much in pleading this absolute promise of the Spirit, Isaiah 44:3 : "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Ezekiel 36:27 : "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." But still remember, that these promises are to be managed by the prayer of faith. We are to turn God's promises into prayers; for it is added, (Ezekiel 36:37) "For these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

4. Make conscience of waiting on him in all the duties and ordinances of his appointment, particularly the preaching of the word. And beware of a legal frame of spirit in your attending upon these ordinances, as if thereby you could merit anything at God's hand, or as if God were obliged to you for what you do this way; for "we receive the Spirit," (says the apostle,) "not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith." Gospel ordinances are the usual chariots in which the Spirit rides, when he makes his entrance at first, or when he returns into the soul after absence.

5. Lastly, Study to have union with Christ; for it is upon them that are in Christ, that "the Spirit of God and of glory" rests: "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit" with him. "The oil of gladness," that was poured upon the head of our exalted Aaron, runs down upon the skirts of his garments, upon every member of his mystical body.
<http://www.puritansermons.com/erskine/eerskin01.htm>

S. Unbelief Arraigned And Condemned At The Bar Of God

Unbelief Arraigned And Condemned At The Bar Of God by Ebenezer Erskine

"And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me." John 16:8-9.

"He that believeth not, is condemned already." John 3:18 Word format PDF format (81K)

Christ having, in the preceding verse, declared the great end and design of his mission by the Father, or of his manifestation in our nature; namely, not that he should "condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved;" in the verse where my text lies, deduces a two-fold inference therefrom. The first is very sweet and comfortable, in the former part of the verse; "He that believeth on him, is not condemned;" that is, he who falls in with the great end of my manifestation in the nature of man, he who gives me my errand, by entrusting his lost and ruined soul into my hand, although he be a sinner, and a great sinner, though the law and justice of God be pursuing him, for the many millions of talents he is owing: yet the process shall be stopped, the judgment arrested, the sentence of the broken law cancelled, insomuch that he cannot come into condemnation; and if he be not condemned, he must be absolved and acquitted. I, as his Surety, have paid the debt, and obtained the discharge under the hand of justice; I was made sin for him, that he might be made the righteousness of God in me: and, therefore, who can lay any thing to his charge? The second inference, drawn from the design of the incarnation of the Son of God, is very terrible and awful; and you have it in the words I design to spend a little time upon, He that believeth not, is condemned already. For which there is a very relevant reason given, in the close of the verse: "Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

It is the middle clause of the verse on which I am to speak — He that believeth not, is condemned already. Where we may notice, (1.) A capital crime chargeable upon most of gospel hearers, not believing. (2.) An awful sentence passed against the criminal; he is condemned. (3.) The quality of the sentence implied in that expression, condemned already. Which may point either at the certainty of the unbeliever's condemnation: it is not simply a thing future, or to be done; but it is done already. The sentence is pronounced and gone forth against him, from the mouth of the righteous Judge; yea, not only is sentence passed, but is partly executed, the law having delivered him over, in a way of righteous judgment, into the power and dominion of sin, which is spiritual death. Or, the word already may point at the severity of the unbeliever's sentence; his sin is of such a deep dye, of such a criminal nature, that the Judge cannot sit with it, as he doth with other sins, Psalms 50:21. It offers such indignity to his beloved Son, the darling of his soul, that he cannot shun to adjudge the accused to immediate death. Or, the word may indicate this much to us, that the sentence of the broken law stands in full force and vigour against the unbelieving sinner, for all his other sins: he despises the only remedy, the only sacrifice for sin; and therefore every sinful thought, word, and action, exposes him to the just vengeance of a righteous God, in time, and through endless eternity. My doctrine is, "That every unbeliever is a sentenced and condemned criminal before God. Or, take it, if you will, in the very words of the text, He that

believeth not, is condemned already."

Here, through divine assistance, I shall speak, I. Of the crime.

II. Of the sentence.

III. Of the grounds on which the sentence is founded.

IV. Deduce some inferences from the whole.

I. I would speak a little of the crime, which is unbelief, by giving some account of it, 1. In its nature; 2. In its causes. As for the first, namely, the nature of unbelief. Before I proceed to show in what it consists, to prevent mistakes, I shall name a few things, which will not amount to this heavy charge in God's reckoning, whatever they may sometimes do in the court of an erring or misinformed conscience.

1. Unbelief does not lie in a person's being in the dark as to his actual union with Christ, or interest in him. A real believer may lack the sensible assurance of God's love, and yet, at the same time, have an acting faith with an assurance of appropriation upon the promise of a reconciled God in Christ. Sense may be saying, as in the case of Heman, Psalms 88:1-18, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. I am afflicted and ready to die, from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." And yet faith breathing out its appropriating act, and saying, "O Lord God of my salvation;" it will look in the face of a hiding and smiting God, and say, "Though he should slay me, yet will I trust in him." And, seeing it is so, it must needs follow, that unbelief does not lie in a person's being in the dark as to his actual interest in Christ; to say so, were to "offend against the generation of the righteous," who may be "trusting in the name of the Lord, and staying themselves upon their God, while they walk in darkness and see no light."

2. Unbelief does not lie in the interruption of the actings and exercise of faith. We find the faith of the most eminent saints many times interrupted in its exercise, through the prevalency of temptation and indwelling corruption. Psalms 77:7, &c., the holy man there, in a fit of unbelief, cries, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Doth his promise fail for evermore?" David, in the like case, gives the lie to a God of truth, through the sides of all his prophets, Psalms 116:10-11 : "I said in my haste, All men are liars." This was indeed a pang of unbelief; but it did not argue unbelief in its reign. Many times faith is laid asleep in its habit, while yet the life of it remains; like Samson in the hands of the Philistines, though his life was continued, yet the locks, in which his strength lay, were cut off.

3. This unbelief, of which I speak, does not consist in a disbelief of some particular truths of the word, through ignorance, providing they be not fundamental. Every error in the head, through ignorance, does not destroy the being of faith in the heart; no more than every miscarriage in the life through weakness, destroys the being and reality of the grace of God in the soul. The apostles, we find, all the time of Christ's life, yea, after his resurrection also, were in an error as to the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, imagining that it would be modelled after the fashion of the kingdoms of this world; neither did they believe the universal call and offer of the gospel to the Gentile nations, as well as to the Jews, until they were convinced of their error by Peter's vision. But, notwithstanding of this error of theirs, they believed in Christ as the promised Messiah, and rested on him as the Saviour of the world.

4. I do not here speak of the negative unbelief of the heathen world, who never had the benefit of gospel revelation: "How shall they believe," (says the apostle, Romans 10:14,) "in him of whom they have not heard?" Their unbelief, or infidelity is more properly their punishment than their sin. They can no more be punished for not believing in Christ, than a man can be condemned for not seeing the sun at midnight, when it is in the other horizon; or than a man can be blamed for not receiving a gift that was never offered to him. So that, it is not the negative unbelief of the heathens of which I now speak, but the positive unbelief of those who sit under the light of the glorious gospel.

But, say you, seeing none of these will amount to the charge of unbelief, in what does it consist? Answ. There are three things, any one of which will amount to this capital crime —

1. A denial of the truth of the gospel; looking upon the word of God, contained in the scriptures, as a fiction, or a cunningly devised fable. I am very suspicious there are unbelievers of this stamp among those who are called by the name of Christians; men pretending to be great masters of reason, who, because their weak and depraved minds cannot grasp the unsearchable mysteries of our holy religion, do, therefore, turn infidels, and reject the whole as an incredible paradox. This very thing upon which they stumble, proves it to be of a divine original. The unsearchable wisdom that appears in every one of the works of God, proves them to be indeed his works, and not the works of any created being. And shall it be imagined, that there is less wisdom in his words than in his works, when they are the more immediate product and picture of his infinite understanding, which can never be searched out? Here, if any where, we may expect the "deep things of God; the wisdom of God in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew."

2. A doubting or wavering uncertainty of mind about the truths of the gospel, will amount to this crime of unbelief pointed at in my text. There are some, who, though they do not go the length of denying flatly that the Bible is the word of God, or that the gospel is of a divine original, yet they waver, and are in suspense about it; like the worshippers of Baal, they "halt between two opinions;" they neither believe nor disbelieve it; but are like the scales of an even balance, ready to turn either to this or the other side. Such are unbelievers, in Christ's reckoning; for "he that is not with me," says he, "is against me."

3. When, though a person may be convinced in his mind, by rational arguments, that the Bible is the word of God, that the gospel is of a divine extract, yet does not fall in with the great design of the scriptures by receiving Christ, and resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is there presented and revealed. We have the design of the whole word of God expressed in one verse, John 20:31 : "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." And therefore when Christ is not received as the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world, and actually made use of for these ends and uses for which he is revealed and exhibited in the word; particularly for "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" in this case, I say, a person falls under the heavy charge of unbelief, and is condemned already. This last is the unbelief which I take to be principally pointed at in my text, and is most frequent and prevalent among the bearers of the gospel. So much for the nature of unbelief.

I come, secondly, to inquire a little into some of its causes and, among many that might be named, I shall only mention these few:

1. The devil has a great hand in it. Faith is the great engine by which his kingdom and interest is overthrown in the world; and therefore he studies, by might and main, to keep the sinner under the power of unbelief: for which end, he uses a great many wiles and stratagems. His first and principal care is, to hush the house, and keep it in peace and quiet. In order to this, he persuades the man that his state is good enough; that, though he be a sinner, yet his sins are but small and venial; and that it cannot consist with the justice of God to pursue such small sins with eternal punishment. If, notwithstanding these surmises, the man's conscience cannot be satisfied, but it begins to awaken, challenge, and smite him, he studies to lay him asleep again, with the prospect of general and absolute mercy. If, again, this lying refuge be beat down by the hail of divine terrors, he betakes himself to another artifice; he conceals and hides the attribute of mercy, presenting God to the soul as an implacable and inexorable Judge, who will by no means acquit the guilty; and thus, by hiding the remedy, he studies to drive the sinner to despair. And, indeed, the devil is much more skilled in representing the justice than the mercy of God to a sinner's view, being an utter stranger to the last, but well acquainted with the first from his sad experience. But whatever views he gives of God to the sinner, whether in his justice or mercy, his design is still to carry the soul off from Christ, and the mercy of God running in the channel of his propitiatory blood. By presenting absolute mercy, he encourages the sinner to go on in sin, hoping to be saved, though he never be sanctified by the Spirit of Christ. When he presents the justice of God, he studies to drive the sinner to a hopeless despair of salvation by his atoning blood; and thereupon the sinner either with Judas runs to a halter for ease, or puts on a desperate resolution, that if he be damned, he shall be damned for something, and so takes a full swing in gratifying his lusts, crying with those, Jeremiah 2:25, "There is no hope. We have loved strangers, and after them will we go." If, notwithstanding the utmost arts and efforts of hell, the remedy be revealed to the sinner, namely, Christ, as the sole foundation God hath laid in Zion; then the enemy has another stratagem at hand to discourage the poor sinner from making use of Christ: he persuades the man that he is not fit enough for Christ; he must be so humble, so holy, so penitent, and have this and the other qualification, before he venture to come to Christ. O if I were sanctified, mortified, self-denied, washed, then Christ would make me welcome. This is nothing but an artifice of hell, for the ruin of souls, persuading sinners that they must bring money and price with them to Christ; that they must have such and such things before they come to Christ, which are only to be got by an actual union with him by faith. Thus, I say, the devil has a great hand in unbelief; it being the very strength of his kingdom; and so long as he keeps this hold in safety, he is very easy what shapes of morality, civility, or profession, a man may cast himself into; for he well knows that "be who believes not, shall be damned," let him do else whatever he pleases.

2. Ignorance is another great cause of unbelief. "My people," says the Lord, "are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Ignorance of God, in his holiness, justice, and other adorable excellencies; ignorance of the law of God in its purity, extent, and spirituality; ignorance of sin in its exceeding sinfulness; ignorance of the great mystery of godliness, the union of the two natures in the person of our wonderful IMMANUEL; ignorance of his substitution in the room of sinners, and of that everlasting and law-magnifying righteousness he has brought in by his obedience unto the death; ignorance of the free access sinners have to Christ, and his whole salvation, in and by a confirmed testament or promise, which is put in their hands, and left to them, Hebrews 4:1, that they may use and claim the benefit of it in a way of believing: I say, the god of this world "blinds the minds of them which believe not," that they may not know "the things which belong to their eternal peace;"

he is afraid, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into their hearts." I am persuaded, did sinners but know how near Christ, and his purchased salvation, are brought to them by the gospel, there would not be so many unbelievers among us. People generally look on Christ, and eternal life in him, as things that are far out of their reach; and thereupon they turn careless and easy about them, having no hope of ever attaining them, being things too high and great for them. But, O sirs, this is only a veil or mist cast before your eyes, by the great enemy of your salvation, that you may not see your own mercy; for were your eyes opened, you would see Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase, brought, as it were, within the very reach of your hand. The manna is lying round your tent-door, and you have no more trouble but to gather and use it, Isaiah 46:13; Romans 10:7-8; John 6:32.

3. Pride is another great cause of unbelief. This is just the poison of the old serpent, who being "lifted up with pride, fell into condemnation." By pride he ruined all mankind at first; Ye shall be as gods; and by pride he still keeps us under his power: hence we read of high and towering imaginations in the heart of man, which "exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ." There is a pride in the heart of man, by nature, which stands directly opposite to the way of salvation by grace: God is willing to give life, but we desire to merit and deserve it: God will have all to be of grace, that boasting may be excluded; but we will have all in a way of debt, that we may have whereof to glory. What, says the proud heart, will ever God give, or shall I take, eternal life for nothing? No, I will not have it, unless God will accept some equivalent, some service or work for it. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams?" &c. The pride of the heart will set a man at work to do or suffer any thing for life and salvation, rather than believe in Christ, and be saved in a way of grace; as we see in the case of the poor deluded Papists. They will rather quit their kingdoms and thrones, put themselves into monasteries, lie on hair, live on alms, tire themselves with saying the book of Psalms over once every twenty-four hours; and for that end break their sleep, by rising twice or thrice a night, saying so many prayers to the Virgin Mary, and to this and the other saint; they will whip themselves, tear their bodies, go into penances and long pilgrimages: all this, and much more, will they do, for pardon and salvation, rather than take God's method, which is to receive eternal life, as the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Whence comes all this stir, but only from the pride of our hearts, which will stoop to any thing of our own devising, though ever so base and mean, rather than stoop to be saved in a way of grace? That is a strange instance of the pride of the heart, which we have, Romans 10:3, where it is said of the proud self-righteous Jews, "they went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit unto the righteousness of God." O strange! Shall a poor naked beggar, that has not a rag to cover him, reckon it submission or humility in him to accept of a robe? Shall a condemned malefactor reckon it submission to receive the king's pardon? The captive to accept of liberty? Or a man mortally wounded to accept of a healing balm? Yet this is the very case with us: through the pride of our hearts we will not submit to the righteousness of God, but feel compelled to establish a righteousness of our own. Nature, though assisted by external revelation, can never think of another way of salvation than that of the first Adam, namely, by doing and working. To be saved and justified by the doing and dying of another, is a mystery which flesh and blood cannot receive, till the strength of natural pride be broken by the almighty power of God. Men naturally will wear no other garment than that which, like the spider, they spin out of their own bowels. But what says God, Isaiah 59:6? "Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works." Man will needs enter into life and glory, by the door of the law, which

God has condemned and barred against all mankind since the fall; "for by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Sirs, allow me to tell you, that God never designed to bring man to life by the law, or the works of the law: no, the law of works was only intended as a scaffold, by which he meant to rear up a house of mercy, in which he designed to harbour a company of broken debtors and bankrupts, that they might live upon his charity and grace for ever: and immediately upon the entrance of sin, the scaffold of the law as a covenant was taken down, and broken in pieces. Oh! what devilish pride is it in us, to attempt the rebuilding of the scaffold, that we may climb up to heaven by it, rather than enter the threshold of the house of mercy, which God has resolved shall be built up for ever! Psalms 89:2. Sirs, allow me to tell you, however high you may climb heaven-ward upon the scaffold of the law, in your own conceit, and in the esteem of others; yet you shall be cast down into hell like Capernaum. Your house being built upon the sand, it will fall, and great will be the fall thereof. "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty; and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted," Isaiah 2:1-22.

4. A pretended humility and self-denial is another great bar in the way of believing to many. They thrust away Christ and the mercy of God from them, under a pretence that they are not fit for it. O! says the man, I am such a hell-deserving sinner, my sins are so great, that I dare not think of coming to Christ; he was never intended for the like of me. This carries a fair show of humility and self-denial, while it is only a devil of pride, transforming himself into an angel of light. You say you are not worthy of the mercy of God. I answer, It is very true; but then you should consider, that mercy could not be mercy, if you were worthy of it; it would be merit, and not mercy: grace would not be grace, but debt, if you could deserve it. This way of thinking or speaking is quite contrary to a covenant of grace, where Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase, are made over to us, in the form of a testamentary deed, or free gift and legacy. "I will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will take away the stony heart; I will sprinkle them with clean water," &c. In these, and the like absolute and unlimited promises, the grace and favour of God in a Redeemer comes to every man's door, be who or what he will; and by these great and precious promises, we must receive Christ, and apply him in a suitableness to our soul's need, or perish for ever. And to refuse Christ, and his salvation tendered in the word of grace, under this pretext, that we are great sinners, is all one, as if a traitor should refuse his prince's pardon, because he has been in arms against him; or as if one should refuse to accept of a free discharge, because he is a bankrupt, drowned in debt.

5. A secret jealousy as if God were not in good earnest with us, when he offers Christ and his salvation to us in the gospel. I am afraid that this lies at bottom with many; they do not really believe, that God is willing to bestow his Christ, and salvation through him, upon them, though he be every day calling, commanding, beseeching, and entreating them to embrace him. But, sirs, what else is this, but to charge God with treachery and disingenuousness, as if he said one thing in his word, and intended another in his heart? God says, "He is not willing that you should perish;" yea, he swears by his life, that he has no pleasure in your death, but rather that you turn unto him, through a Redeemer, and live: and yet, to think or say that he is not in good earnest, what else is this, but to make God a liar, yea, to charge him with perjury? And what an insufferable affront is this to a God of truth, for whom "it is impossible to lie?" We cannot offer a greater indignity to a man than to call him a liar; yea, if we but insinuate a jealousy of his veracity and ingenuousness, it is enough to exasperate and enrage his spirits; for "jealousy," says Solomon, "is the rage of a

man:" and how, then, shall we imagine that God will sit with it? O, sirs! Be persuaded that God speaks the truth in his heart; his words of grace and truth in the scripture, are the sweet picture of his thoughts. And, therefore, beware of harbouring the least jealousy in your hearts, as if he were not in good earnest when he offers his Christ to you, and commands you to receive him, and his whole salvation.

6. People finding peace and ease in some one thing or other on this side of Christ, is another great cause of unbelief. Perhaps the man has had some challenges and awakenings; upon which, he falls to his prayers, vows, promises, resolutions, to be a better man in time coming, and better servant to God; upon this he finds quiet and ease, and there he rests, without ever coming to the blood of the Lamb. But, sirs, as sure as God lives, this is but a refuge of lies, a hiding place which "the hail shall sweep away." Do not mistake me; I am not dissuading you from duties, but only persuading you not to rest in your duties; let duties be as wagons to carry your souls to Christ, who is the end of the law, and of all the duties it enjoins; for when you rest in them as a righteousness or ground of acceptance before God, they become a bar in the way of your coming to Christ, and they prove soul-damning and ruining things, instead of being the causes or means of salvation. And, therefore, go a little farther than these; do not make a plaster of them to heal the wound of conscience; for if your healing do not come from under the wings of the sun of righteousness, the wound will fester, and prove deadly in the issue. Let him only be the well-spring of your comfort, who is the consolation of Israel, and in whom all our well-springs are. We read of the brook Cherith, which supplied the prophet Elijah with water, for a time; but, at length, the brook dried up, and he would have perished, unless God had brought him to a spring of water. Just so it is with many: they lie for a long time by the brooks of their own duties; and finding some sort of ease and comfort there, conscience is pacified, and they rejoice, because they think God will pity and save them, while they have done as well as they can. But, depend on it, these brooks will dry up, and your souls will starve and perish for ever, if you do not, by faith, come to the fountain opened in the house of David, and draw water out of this well of salvation. O come, sirs, to this open and overflowing fountain: "Whosoever will, let him come, and drink of the waters of life freely:" here you shall find water in the time of the greatest drought, Isaiah 41:17 : "When the poor and needy seek water," in duties, ordinances, and created comforts, "and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." Jeremiah 17:7-8 : "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." So, then, beware of resting on this side of Christ. Many other causes of unbelief might be remarked upon; but I will let them go for now.

II. The second general head proposed was, to give some account of the condemnatory sentence passed against this crime of unbelief. The unbeliever is condemned already. Here I shall, 1. Prove that sentence is passed. 2. Show in what courts it is passed. 3. Give some qualities of the sentence.

First, I would prove that sentence is passed against the unbeliever. I need not stand to prove this, when it lies so plain and clear in the text: He that believeth not, is condemned already. The word rendered to condemn, is forensic, borrowed from courts of justice, where the malefactor, or guilty person, is arraigned and indicted before the judge, his crime made legally evident, and then

sentence passed against him, according to the nature and demerit of his crime. So, here, the unbeliever is, as it were, arraigned before the bar of divine justice; process is led against him, and he found guilty of the violation of the royal law of Heaven, and of holding in contempt the glorious remedy provided and offered in the gospel; and, thereupon, sentence goes forth against him, from the mouth of the great Judge, who has "justice and judgment for the habitation of his throne." This man believes not in my Son, and, therefore, I condemn him to death everlasting; he rejects the Saviour of sinners, and, therefore, let him die in his sins; he would needs seek life by the law as a covenant, and, therefore, let the curse of that covenant lie on him for ever. See, to the same purpose, the last verse of this chapter: "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Secondly, I come to tell you in what courts the unbeliever is condemned.

1. Then, he is already condemned in the court of the law as a covenant, by which he is seeking to be justified and saved: Romans 3:19 : "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Every unbeliever is upon a law foundation; he is seeking salvation and righteousness by the works of the law, by some good thing or other, which he apprehends to be in him, or done by him, or which he hopes to do. But I may say to you, who are of this law-spirit, as Christ said to the self-righteous Pharisees, John 5:45 : "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust;" where, by Moses, we must understand the law of Moses. The same say I to you, The law accuseth and condemneth, it is denouncing its heavy anathemas against you, while you cleave to it as a covenant: "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." While you are out of Christ, cleaving to the law as a husband, it lays you under the curse for every and the least failure in obedience. O, sirs! The vengeance of Heaven lies upon you, while you are under the power of unbelief; you are cursed in your basket and store, in soul and body, and all that belongs to you: and the curse not being causeless, it shall come; yea, it cleaves to you, and will cleave to you for ever, unless, by faith, you flee to him who "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

2. The unbeliever is already condemned in the gospel-court. Now, do not mistake this way of speaking, as if, when I speak of the gospel-court, I meant, that the gospel, strictly considered, condemned any man: the gospel, like its glorious Author, "comes not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through" it, "might be saved." Neither do I mean, as if there were new precepts and penalties in the gospel, considered in a strict sense, which were never found in the book or court of the law. This is an assertion which has laid the foundation for a train of damnable and soul-ruining errors; as of the Antinomian error, in discarding the whole moral law as a rule of obedience under the gospel; the Baxterian error, of an evangelical righteousness different from the imputed righteousness of Christ; the Pelagian and Arminian error, of a sufficient grace given to every man that hears the gospel, to believe and repent by his own power. But when I speak of the unbeliever's being condemned in the court of the gospel, my meaning is, that the sentence passed against him in the court of the law, is aggregated and heightened by his contempt of gospel grace. All I intend by it is comprised in that awful word, Hebrews 2:3 : "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?" or that, Hebrews 10:28-29 : "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be

thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, and unholy thing?"

3. The unbeliever is condemned already in the court of his own conscience. Conscience is God's deputy and vice-regent, and, in the name and authority of the God of heaven, it keeps a court in every man's breast, and either approves or condemns, accuses or excuses, according to the views and uptakings that it has to the holy law of God. When the law is only known by conscience, in the letter of it, it condemns only for sins which lie against the letter of the law; but when conscience comes to be irradiated and instructed by the Spirit of God, in the spirituality and extent of the law, then it condemns even for those spiritual wickednesses, that are of a more refined nature, and which lodge in the high places of the soul; of which kind is the sin of unbelief. A natural conscience, even though assisted by external revelation, will smite a man for a thousand sins, before it gives him one check for his unbelief. This seems to be the peculiar province of the Spirit of God, to "convince the world of sin, because they believe not in Christ," John 16:8-9. And, O! When once conscience, by the direction of the Spirit, begins to smite for this sin of unbelief, there is no sin in the world that appears in such a formidable hue; and there is no sin that the worm of conscience will gnaw a man so much for in hell through eternity, than that he had a Saviour in his offer, and yet refused him. In a word, let a man be ever so moral and sober, let him have ever so much seeming peace and quiet, yet he still carries an evil conscience in his breast, till by faith he comes to get his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of sprinkling, Hebrews 10:22.

4. The unbeliever is already condemned in the court of the church; or, may I call it, in the ministerial court. Ministers, by virtue of the commission they have received from their great Lord and Master, must "go and preach the gospel to every creature." And having acted according to their commission, they must, in the same authority declare, that he who believes this gospel, shall be saved; he who believeth not, shall be damned. Indeed, this ministerial sentence is but little regarded by a profane and secure world, who are ready to say or think that our words are but wind. But, whether sinners hear or forbear, we must, by our commission, declare to the righteous or believer, "it shall be well with him:" but "woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the rewards of his hands shall be given him." And when this ministerial sentence, whether doctrinal or judicial, is faithfully pronounced, whatever men may think of it, it is ratified in heaven: Matthew 16:19: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

5. The unbeliever is condemned in the court of the great God. It is true, every one of these courts I have mentioned is his; he sits as supreme Judge in each of them: but they are only his inferior courts; and while the sinner's sentence is in dependence before them, there is still access for an appeal by faith to a throne of grace, or mercy seat. But when once a man comes to be personally sifted before the bar of God at death or judgment, no farther appeal can be admitted; the man then goes out of mercy's reach; "he that made him will have no mercy upon him;" the things that belonged to his peace are then "for ever hid from his eyes." O that an unbelieving world may lay this to heart in time, before their case become absolutely hopeless and helpless: "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver."

Thirdly, I come to give you a few qualities of this sentence of condemnation passed against the unbelieving sinner.

1. It is a most mature and deliberate sentence: the sentence is well advised and ripened, before it is pronounced or executed. "The Lord is a God of judgment," and can do nothing that is rash or precipitate. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed;" he ponders the crime before he sentences the criminal. It was resolved among the counsels of heaven, from all eternity, that every unbelieving sinner should be condemned to the "lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," Revelation 21:8.

2. It is a most righteous sentence, as will appear when we come to speak of the grounds upon which it proceeds. O, sirs, God will be clear when he judges; yea, so clear, that the guilty panel, before all be done, will be made to subscribe to the equity of the sentence, and own that his blood is upon his own head. As justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Surety, is the foundation of a throne of grace, where the believing sinner is acquitted and absolved; so, vindictive justice and judgment, terminating on the person of the sinner, is the habitation of the throne of justice, where the unbeliever is condemned.

3. It is a most awful and terrible sentence; and it cannot be otherwise, for it is pronounced by a terrible Judge: "With God is terrible majesty. He cutteth off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth." The sentence goes forth from a terrible tribunal, a bench clothed with red vengeance. The nature of the sentence itself is terrible, for it is a sentence of condemnation. To be condemned to a natural or bodily death, is terrible; but to be condemned to eternal death, to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from [or by] the glory of his power," has a terror in it, that surpasses expression and imagination.

4. When the sentence comes to be uttered by God against the unbeliever, personally compeering before his tribunal, upon the back of death, it becomes an irrevocable sentence, which shall never be repealed through eternity; it stands ratified for ever: as the tree falls, so will it lie; for God's loving-kindness is not declared in the grave, nor his faithfulness in the land of darkness.

III. The third thing in the method was, to inquire into the grounds of this condemnatory sentence. And, among many others, I shall instance in the few following.

1. The unbeliever is condemned already, because, by his unbelief he has offered the highest indignity to a Trinity of persons in the glorious Godhead, that a creature is capable of. He despises the love of the Father, who, out of his good-will and kindness to a lost world, "gave his only begotten Son." He gives him to be incarnate; he gives him to death; and gives him and his whole purchase in the revelation of the gospel, "that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." But now the unbeliever despises all the riches of this grace and love, and practically says, that the unspeakable gift of God is not worthy to be taken up at his foot. And as he despises the love of the Father, so he tramples upon the blood of the Son, as if it were an unholy thing. He says, upon the matter, that Christ shed his blood in vain; hence, unbelievers are said to "crucify the Son of God afresh:" they react the bloody tragedy that was once acted upon Mount Calvary; and, upon the same account, the unbelieving communicant is said to be "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Again, the unbelieving sinner sins against the Holy Ghost. I do not mean that every unbeliever is guilty of the unpardonable sin, for then there would be no need of

preaching the gospel to them. But I mean, that every believer, in rejecting Christ, runs directly cross to the work and office of the Spirit, in the economy of redemption. It is the office of the Spirit to convince the world of sin, because they believe not in Christ; but the man is so far from acknowledging this, that he practically denies unbelief to be any sin at all. It is the office of the Spirit to convince of righteousness; that is, of the necessity and excellency of the righteousness of Christ for justification: but the unbeliever goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, and will not submit to this righteousness of God. It is the office of the Spirit to glorify Christ, to "take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us." But the unbeliever, upon the matter, says, "There is no form nor comeliness in him, why he should be desired." Thus, I say, the unbeliever affronts a whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and therefore he is condemned already.

2. The unbeliever is condemned already, because he has affronted all the glorious attributes and perfections of the divine nature. He rebels against awful and adorable majesty and sovereignty. The authority of God is, in a particular manner, interposed in the command of believing; God speaks of this command as if he had never given another command to the sons of men, 1 John 3:23: "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Now, the unbeliever flies in the face of all this authority, saying, with proud Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" Let the Almighty depart from me; for I desire not the knowledge of his ways. Again; the man makes a mock of the masterpiece of Infinite Wisdom, as though it were nothing but unmitigated folly. The device of salvation through a Redeemer, is the wisdom of God in a mystery; it is hidden wisdom: but the unbeliever, with the Greeks, calls it foolishness; and, with the Athenians, looks on it as mere babbling, when it is brought out in a gospel revelation. The unbeliever also spurns against the passionate sympathy of infinite and amazing love; yea, as it were, runs a spear into the heart of a compassionate God, which are sending out a sound after him: "O turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die? As I live, I have no pleasure in your death." He dares and challenges Omnipotence to its worst, while he refuses to take sanctuary in Christ, and to turn in to the strong hold, where he may be sheltered from the storm, wind, and tempest of divine vengeance. He laughs at the shaking of God's spear, and the whetting of his glittering sword. He gives the lie also to the veracity of God, 1 John 5:10 : "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar:" not as if he could do so indeed; for God will be true, and every man a liar: but the unbeliever does what he can to make God a liar. This is the language of his sin, God is a liar, he is not to be trusted, there is no truth in his words. Which is blasphemy in the highest degree. Thus, I say, the unbelieving sinner injures God in all his glorious excellencies. And is it any wonder then though he be condemned already?

3. Another ground of this awful sentence is, because the man counteracts, and runs directly cross to the most glorious designs that ever God had in view; I mean, his designs in the work of redemption through Christ. I shall only clear this in two or three instances. (1.) God's design in redemption was the illustration and manifestation of his own glorious excellencies, which were sullied or obscured by the sin of man: but the unbeliever, as was showed just now, does his utmost to darken and affront every one of them. (2.) God's design is, that in all things Christ should have the pre-eminency; that he should have "a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." But, now, the unbeliever, like the devil, being lifted up with pride refuses to bow or submit to that name JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness, Jeremiah 23:6, Romans 10:3. He refuses to own or bow unto that royal name written upon his

thigh and vesture, Revelation 19:16. The KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS. He joins in a confederacy with those who refuse to stoop to his royal sceptre, saying, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us," Psalms 2:3. (3.) God's design in redemption is, that grace only should reign, and that all ground of boasting and glorying should be cut off from man for ever, so as he that glorieth may glory only in the Lord. But, now, the unbeliever's language is, Not grace but self shall reign. He chooses rather to be damned for ever, than submit to grace's government, "reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." What, says the man, will not "God be pleased with thousands of rams?" &c. If God will give him life for some equivalent, some good thing wrought in him or by him, he is content; but to take it for nothing, as the gift of free grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, this is too low a bargain for his proud heart to stoop to. And for this pride of his heart, which makes him to run cross to God's glorious designs in redemption, he is condemned already.

4. He is condemned already, because his sin (I mean his unbelief) is of a more criminal nature, in God's reckoning, than any other sin that can be named or thought upon. The sin of Adam, in eating the forbidden fruit, was a most aggravated crime. For a creature newly dropped out of his Creator's fingers, a creature dignified with the lively image of God upon him, exalted to sovereignty over this lower world, having all things put under his feet: I say, for such a creature, upon a slender temptation, to turn his back on God, and cast himself into the devil's arms, to ruin himself and the whole tribe of mankind at one blow; this, no doubt, was a most crying sin. But yet the sin of unbelief far surpasses it: for our first parents sinned only against God as a Creator; but the unbeliever sins against him as a Redeemer, consequently, he sins against more love than they could sin against, before the revelation of Christ. Again; unbelief is more criminal than the sin of the Jews in crucifying of the Lord of glory; they crucified him when veiled and disguised under the form of a servant; but the unbeliever crucifies him upon his throne, when the evidences of his being the true Messiah are completed by his resurrection from the dead, Romans 1:4. It would be a crime of a far more capital nature, to maltreat a king sitting on the throne, with all his nobles about him, than to maltreat him when under a disguise, sitting upon the dunghill with a company of beggars about him: yet the former is the case with the unbeliever. Again; unbelief is worse than the sin of Sodom, which provoked God to rain hell out of heaven upon its inhabitants. Christ tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah will have a cold hell in comparison of those who have had the offers of a Saviour in the gospel, and yet have rejected him. Matthew 11:24 : "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for" Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and other cities where Christ had preached. Again; all the sins of the blinded nations are not comparable to the sin of unbelief. We have a black list of their sins, Romans 1:1-32, toward the close: but yet Christ speaks of them as no sins, in comparison of the sin of those who remain in unbelief under the drop of the gospel: "If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." Witchcraft is a very monstrous sin; for a man or woman to enter into compact with the devil, and give themselves soul and body to be his for ever: and yet the unbeliever does the same upon the matter; for he is in league with hell, and with death is he at an agreement. I remember, the rebellion of Saul against the express command of God, ordering him utterly to destroy the Amalekites, is compared to the Sin of witch-craft, 1 Samuel 15:23. Now, the unbeliever (as was said) rebels against the greatest command that was ever issued out from the throne of the Majesty on high. I shall only add, that unbelief is a sin attended with aggravations which are not to be found in the sin of devils. The devil never rejected a Saviour,

as the unbeliever does; for "he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Some think that the devil, and his angels who joined him, were cast out of heaven for refusing to be subject to God in man's nature, when intimation of his design was made in heaven. No doubt he would have been well enough pleased to subject himself to God, manifesting himself in the nature of angels; but to be subject to "God manifested in the flesh," he looked upon it as a disparagement. But the unbeliever rejects God appearing in his own nature, Saying, "We will not have this man to rule over us." Is it any wonder, then, though the unbeliever be condemned already?

5. He is condemned already, because unbelief is the spring and ringleader of all other sins. Every sin is a turning away from the living God: and whence comes this, but from an evil heart of unbelief? Hebrews 3:12. The name of the sin of unbelief may be Gad, for a troop doth follow it. Why are men proud? why are their hearts lifted up within them, as if they were "rich, and increased with goods, and stood in need of nothing?" Why, the reason is, they do not believe the verdict of the Spirit of God concerning them, that they are indeed "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Why are men covetous? Why have they the world set in their hearts, but because they do not believe that Christ is a better good than this world, and the things of it? Why are men uncharitable to the poor, but because they do not believe that what is given to the poor is lent to the Lord, and that he will pay it again? Why are men secure in a way of sin, crying, Peace, peace, but because they do not believe that wrath and destruction from the Lord is pursuing them? Why is the blessed Bible so much slighted and neglected by many, like an almanack out of date, but because they do not believe it to be the word of God, or that eternal life is to be found therein? Why do people generally hear us, who are ministers, preaching the everlasting gospel, with such raving hearts and careless ears, but because they do not believe that we are ambassadors for Christ, and that God doth beseech them by us to be reconciled unto him? Why do many live in the neglect of prayer? Why are they so formal, heartless, and careless in prayer, but because they do not believe God to be the hearer of prayer? Why are there so many hypocrites, contenting themselves with a show of religion, but because they do not believe there is a reality in religion and that God searches the heart and tries the reins? Why do men remain under the power of natural enmity, but because they do not believe that "God is love," 1 John 4:16; and that, through the ransom he has found, he bears a hearty good-will toward them? Ezekiel 33:11. Whence comes that flood of profanity, which, like Jordan, has overrun all banks and bounds in our day, such as cursing, swearing, cheating, lying, Sabbath-breaking, thefts, robberies, forgeries, and the like abominations! Why, the plain reason is, they do not believe there is a God, or that ever they shall stand before his tribunal to answer for the deeds done in the body. The plain language of the heart of unbelief is, "The Lord doth not see, neither doth the God of Jacob regard;" and therefore they give themselves loose reins in a way of sin. To conclude this head, unbelief is the principal pillar of the devil's kingdom in the world, and in the soul of man. Let this pillar be but broken, and all his strong holds go to ruin. Faith is the root grace which gives life and spirit to all the other graces: it is the spring of all true gospel-obedience, therefore called the obedience of faith: so, in like manner, unbelief is the root sin, which gives life and spirit to all vicious habits and acts of disobedience in the life and conversation. Faith is a shield that beats back the fiery darts of Satan; so unbelief is a shield that beats back all the good motions of the Spirit of God. Faith is the victory by which we overcome the world; unbelief is the victory by which the world overcomes us. After all, is it any wonder though such a severe sentence pass against the unbelieving sinner, as that in my

text, He that believeth not, is condemned already?

IV. The fourth and last thing proposed, was the application, which I shall endeavour to discuss in a few inferences.

Inf. 1. See hence a very relevant reason, why ministers of the gospel harp so much upon the subject of faith or believing. Why, it is for unbelief, that sinners are condemned already; and there is no way to free them from this sentence, but by bringing them to believe in the Son of God. Unbelief is the main pillar of the devil's kingdom; and therefore the main batteries of the gospel must be raised against it. It is but at best a foolish ignorant objection of some against ministers, Why so much insisting upon faith? Are not other things as necessary to be preached? I answer, Other things are necessary in their own place, but faith or believing in the first place: and till we bring you to believe, we do nothing at all, this being the laying of the foundation of all religion; and, you know, it is foolish to think or speak of rearing up a superstructure, till the foundation be once laid. Can we ever make you accepted of God without faith in his Son? No, surely, "Without faith it is impossible to please him:" we are "justified by faith without the works of the law." Can we ever make you the members of Christ without faith? No, this is the very bond of the soul's union with him; "Christ dwells in our hearts by faith." Can we ever make you the children of God who are by nature the children of wrath, without faith? No, "We are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." It is to them who receive him that he gives power or privilege to become the sons of God, John 1:12. Let us press and inculcate the duties of holiness with ever such flourishing harangues of rhetoric, we shall never make you holy, till we once land you in Christ by faith, he being the fountain and root of holiness; therefore said to be "made of God unto us sanctification." In one word, whatever duties we inculcate upon you, we only call you to build castles in the air, to build a tower without a bottom, unless we first bring you to Christ by that faith which is of God's operation.

Inf. 2. See hence the miserable and mournful condition of the generality of gospel-hearers; they are a company of condemned men, under sentence of death. O that God may dart home an arrow of conviction on the hearts of unbelieving sinners, and persuade them of the truth of my doctrine, that every unbeliever is condemned already. I am sure it is true, whether you believe it or not; and you shall find it to be so, sooner or later. O sirs! here is a hand-writing against you, that may make the joints of your loins to loosen, and your knees to smite one against another: HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT, IS CONDEMNED ALREADY. And, that I may, if possible, awaken you to some serious thought and concern about this matter, will you consider whose sentence it is? It is none other than God's sentence of condemnation. It is somewhat awful and terrible, to be arraigned and condemned at the bar of man; what then must it be to be condemned at JEHOVAH'S bar? The Judge is omniscient; "his eyes are as a flame of fire;" he "setteth our secret sins in the light of his countenance," so that the crime cannot be concealed from him: his justice is unbiassed; his eye cannot be blinded with bribes: the arm of his power cannot be stayed from the execution of the sentence. What a fearful thing is it to fall into the hands of this living God? He is indeed a consuming fire. The solemnity of the bench adds terror to the criminal; and you may see with what solemnity the bench is to be reared, before which you and I must stand ere long, Matthew 25:31: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." O! Whither will the unbeliever fly for help? or where will he leave his glory at that day? If hills and mountains could cover him, he would choose far rather to be buried under them, than appear before the face of the Lamb, when he comes to ride his circuit as the

universal Judge of all the earth. You may read your doom, Matthew 25:41 : "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The sentence being passed, there can be no stop in the execution; the Judge will have his officers at hand, an innumerable host of angels, all ready for this service: these reapers shall gather the tares, bind them in bundles, and burn them. The Judge will stand and see the sentence executed before his face, saying, "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me," Luke 19:27. Among all the innumerable multitudes of angels, men, and devils, who shall be spectators of the righteous execution, there shall be no eye to pity; and the reason is, because the sinner wilfully, through unbelief, slighted Christ the only Saviour, and refused to accept of pardon and redemption through his blood. Who will pity the traitor, who dies for his treason, rejecting his prince's pardon presented to him to the last? Christ would have gathered you, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not; and therefore ye must die without pity, and without remedy.

Inf 3. See hence how fitly the gospel is called a joyful sound, Psalms 89:15 : "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound." Among other reasons why it gets that denomination, this is none of the least; it brings a proclamation of life to the sons of death, a sound of liberty to the captive, and of pardon to the poor sinner condemned already. One would think that the very hint of a pardon to a condemned criminal, would make his heart to leap within him for joy: but, alas! sad experience tells us, that the gospel, which brings such "glad tidings of great joy" to condemned sinners, meets with a very cool reception from the generality, Isaiah 53:1 : "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

Inf. 4. See hence how ill-grounded the joy and triumph of a Christless unbelieving world is. We would think that man beside himself, who, being under sentence of death, and to be brought forth in a little to the place of execution, would spend any little time he has, in eating, drinking, dancing, and revelling. Yet this is the very case with the generality; they take up the timbrel and harp, rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth and ease, without ever thinking that they are condemned already by the great God. All I shall say, to stop your progress at present, is this: The triumphing of the unbelieving sinner is short, and his joy but for a moment. You may, indeed, "kindle a fire, and compass yourselves about with sparks: but this shall ye have of the Lord's hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow," Isaiah 1:11.

Inf 5. See hence how much we are obliged to Christ, who came to save us from this heavy sentence of death we were under: "He came not into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." He himself was condemned, that we might be acquitted. Judgment passed upon him, that it might not pass against us. He was made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of the law. When Adam had entailed death and condemnation upon us, and all his posterity; Christ comes, and by his obedience to death, cuts off that entail, procuring our justification. "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," Romans 5:18. O believer, acknowledge thy obligations to the Son of God; for if he, as thy Surety, had not paid thy debt, thou hadst been condemned to the prison of hell for it for ever.

Inf. 6. See hence that it is every man's duty and interest to examine and try, whether he be under this heavy sentence, yea or not. It is a miserable thing to be under sentence of death, and to know

nothing of it. Neither will a man ever seek to be freed from it, till he be convinced that he is indeed under it. I shall give you the few following characteristics of such as are under sentence of condemnation.

1st, You who never yet saw yourselves to be condemned in the court of the law and conscience for sin, and particularly for the sin of unbelief, you are surely under sentence of death to this day; for the first work of the Spirit, when he comes to liberate a poor soul from condemnation, is to "convince the world of sin; of sin, because they believe not on him," John 16:8-9.

2dly, You whose minds are so blinded with ignorance and prejudice against Christ, that you "can see no form or comeliness in him," notwithstanding of the bright displays of his glory that are made to us in the word. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.

3dly, You, who are yet wedded to the law as a covenant, and are seeking life and righteousness by that first husband, you are, to this moment, under the sentence of death; for, "as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." If you never knew what it is to be dead to the law by the body of Christ, to have as little hope of life and salvation by the law and its works, as though you had never done any one duty commanded by the law in your whole life, you are yet married to the law as a husband, consequently, under the law's sentence. Yea, I will adventure to say, that the legalist, or self-righteous person, is a step farther off from heaven and eternal life, than the grossest of sinners; for "publicans and harlots," says Christ, "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before you."

4thly, You who cast off the obligation of the law as a rule of obedience, under a pretended hope of being saved by grace, without the works of the law. All practical Antinomians, who are following the swing of their own lusts, are under the power of unbelief, and consequently condemned already. Away with lying, swearing, drinking, whoring believers. Will you pretend to be the people of a holy God, the members of a holy Jesus, the federates of a holy covenant, the heirs of an undefiled inheritance, and yet wallow in your sins, or yet retain any known iniquity in your hearts? No, no. To such, not I, but God himself saith, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." O sirs, they that are dead to the law as a covenant, are so far from casting off its obligations as a rule of duty, that they bind it about them as an ornament, choosing it for a light to their feet, and a lamp to their paths. We are not without law to God, when under the law to Christ. The law is so dear and sweet to a true believer, that it is his meditation day and night. O how love I thy law! says David: as if he had said, I love it so well, that I cannot tell how well I love it: "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times," Psalms 119:20.

Inf. 7. Is it so that every unbeliever is a condemned criminal before God? O, then, be concerned at your hearts to get rid of that disastrous sentence you are under. What can be matter of concern, if this be not? I come, in the name of God, to tell you, that this is not impossible; yea, I dare go farther, and tell you, that if you will but hear, your souls shall live, and not die under that condemnatory sentence which is gone forth against you. I am so bold as to promise you not only a reprieve, but a remission; for thus saith the great Judge, as a reconciled God in Christ, to the poor trembling defendant, standing condemned before the bar of his holy law; "I, even I, am he that

blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," Isaiah 43:25. Here is an act of grace passed at a throne of grace, sealed with the blood of the Lamb, published and proclaimed from the tops of the high places, that none may pretend ignorance, and that every condemned sinner may take the benefit of it, and come in upon the King's royal indemnity, granted upon the satisfaction made to justice by his eternal Son. O, then, sirs, "Hear, and your souls shall live, and he will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David," Isaiah 55:3 : "O earth, earth, earth, hear this word of the Lord."

I come not to tell you how you may be rich, great, and honourable in the world; these things are but trifles to people in your circumstances. Should you come to a condemned man, and talk to him of riches, honours, crowns, robes, sceptres, and kingdoms: Alas! would he be ready to say, what is all that to me? I am a poor man going into another world within a few hours; if you can tell me how I may save my life, or how I may get rid of my sentence, chains, prison, you will say something to the purpose. This is the very case with thee, O sinner; for "by the offence of one, judgment is come upon all men to condemnation." And, therefore, O poor criminal, listen, lend me a believing ear for a few moments, and I will tell thee how infallibly thou shalt make thy escape.

Quest. O, may the poor criminal say, how is that? I answer, I have no advice to give thee but one; it is an old advice, a new advice, and the only advice that can be given while the world stands; it is the very same which Paul and Silas gave to a poor panel, trembling at God's bar, crying, "What must I do to be saved?" The plain advice they gave him, I give this day to you, Acts 16:31 : "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:" agreeably to which are the words of Christ himself, in the first part of the verse, where my text lies, "He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned;" and verse 16: "Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Quest. You advise us to believe in Christ; but pray tell us what is it to believe in him? You have the answer in your Catechism: To believe, is to "receive Christ, and to rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel;" or, in other words, it is to trust and credit him, as the Saviour of sinners, with the salvation of thy lost soul, upon the warrant of his own call and command in the word. Christ's business and occupation is to save that which was lost. Now, you all know what it is to trust a man in his trade and occupation; you who have some business at law, know what it is to trust your advocates with your most valuable concerns, and the whole management of your cause depending before the judges. Well, in like manner, to believe, is, upon the credit of God's testimony concerning Christ in the word, to trust him, as the Saviour of sinners, with the salvation of thy own soul in particular. This, I say, is the business, the office, and occupation of Christ, to save sinners; and he is so fond of employment in his trade of saving, that he says, "Come to me who will, I will in no wise cast out." And, therefore, trust in him in his occupation; put thy condemned soul in the hands of the sinner's Saviour, for that is to believe in him and on him. O, what a happy suitable meeting is it when the sinner and the Saviour of sinners thus meet together! Some have a notion, when we bid them believe, we bid them do some great thing as the condition of salvation. But this is a mistake. Believing is a resting from works in point of salvation, and a resting on Christ alone for salvation from sin, and all the effects of it. It is to receive a salvation already completed and prepared to your hand, and brought near to you in the word of grace. But I must not stand farther in describing faith at present.

Quest. What influence (may you say) will our believing have upon our being delivered from this condemnatory sentence we are under? Answ. Much every way. For,

1. That moment thou believest, thou becomest a member of Christ, as a new covenant head. While under the power of unbelief, thou art a member of the first Adam, and consequently under Adam's covenant, which is a cursing and condemning covenant to all who are under it, "judgment being come upon all men to condemnation," through Adam's breach of it; but in believing, thou becomest a member of Christ, the second Adam, the head of the new covenant, the covenant of grace and promise, which contains nothing but blessings to the soul that takes hold of it, Romans 8:1 : "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." It is not said, there is nothing culpable or condemnable in the believer; but there is no condemnation to him: he is no more liable to the penalties of Adam's covenant, Christ, his glorious Surety, having endured these in his room and stead; and it were inconsistent with justice, to demand payment of the same debt, both from the cautioner and principal debtor.

2. To clear this yet farther, the poor soul, in believing, is married to a new husband, even Christ; and being under his roof, the cover of his blood and righteousness, the condemning law can have no action against it, this new and better husband having made his spouse free indeed, by the imputation of his law-magnifying righteousness: Romans 7:4 : "Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ (or, by the offering of his body on the cross,) that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." He does that for us, which the law could not do, through the corruption of nature; particularly, "condemns sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And if the law have its end, and be fulfilled in the believer, by virtue of his union and marriage with the Son of God, how can he be liable to condemnation, or any law penalties?

3. That moment the condemned sinner believes in Christ, he is entered heir of a new family, a member of a new corporation: he is come, not to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion; not to the earthly Jerusalem, which is in bondage, but to the heavenly Jerusalem, which is free. He is "no more a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God." He comes in among the "general assembly, and church of the first-born." He becomes an "heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ;" and the inheritance is settled upon him by a charter, which contains no irritant clauses. No, no: having taken hold of God's covenant by faith, he hath a name and a place within the walls of God's house, even an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off; and therefore must needs be free from the condemnatory sentence he lay under before he believed.

4. That moment you believe, your cause is carried into a new court; I mean, from a tribunal of justice to a mercy-seat, where all the acts and interlocutors that pass are acts of grace and mercy, acts of pardon and acceptance in the beloved. No sentences of condemnation pass in the court of grace: no, this is inconsistent with the nature of the court. O let every guilty sinner, who finds himself condemned in the court of the law, and of conscience, carry his cause, by a solemn appeal, to this court; for the court is open to all comers, and the Lord merciful and gracious, who sits upon this throne of grace, receives all appeals that are made to him, and will in no wise cast out the sinner, or cast his appeal over bar. O, therefore, "let us come with boldness unto a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."

Quest. But (may you say) if matters stand thus with a believer, that he cannot fall under the sentence of the law, cannot come into condemnation, then he may live according to his desires. Does not this doctrine open a wide door for licentiousness and profanity? For if once a man be a believer, according to this doctrine, he has nothing to fear, and so may do what he will. Where it not better for ministers to forbear doctrines that are liable to such abuse? I answer,

1. The whole counsel of God must be revealed, and not one particle of divine truth must be suppressed, though a whole reprobate world should break their necks on it, by wresting it to their own destruction. The gospel will be the savour of death unto some; Christ crucified will be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. But shall we, because of this, forbear to preach Christ, and his gospel? God forbid; we must not starve God's children, out of fear lest dogs snatch at it to their own perdition.

2. I acknowledge, that a carnal-gospeller, who has some dizzy notions of the grace of God in his head, may abuse the doctrine of the believer's freedom from condemnation by virtue of his union with Christ: but the grace of God in the heart teaches the very reverse of this; namely, to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

3. Though the believer be delivered from the law as a covenant, and its condemnatory sentence, through Christ, yet it does not in the least pave a way to licentiousness; because at the same time that he is absolved and acquitted from his obligation to the law as a covenant, he comes under stronger and more powerful ties than ever to yield obedience to it as a rule of duty.

I shall conclude this discourse, by naming a few of these bonds of obedience the believer remains under, even when delivered from condemnation.

1st, He is still under the bond of the royal authority of the great God both as a Creator and Redeemer. The authority and obligation of the divine law can never be dissolved, while God is God, and the creature a creature.

2dly, He is under the bond of interest, to obey the divine law. It is true his obedience does not give him the title to the reward of glory; it is only his union with Christ, the heir of all things, that gives him this; but yet his own personal obedience is evidential and declarative of his title through Christ. And is it not much for the believer's interest, to have his claim to glory and everlasting life cleared up and made evident to his own soul? In this sense I understand that word, Revelation 22:14 : "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

3dly, He is still under the bond of fear; Jeremiah 32:40 : "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." This is not a slavish fear of hell and vindictive wrath, for that is inconsistent with his freedom from condemnation: but is a filial fear of God as a Father, flowing from an affectionate regard to his authority, interposed in the commands of the law. Though they be not afraid of being cast into hell; yet they "fear him who is able to cast soul and body into hell." Though they have no reason to fear him as an avenging and condemning Judge; yet they have much reason to fear him as a fatherly Judge, lest he "visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes;" for, pass who will unpunished, they shall not pass: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

4thly, He is under the bond of love. He studies to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind; and this love of God in Christ, like a strong cord, draws him on in the way of obedience, "I drew them with the cords of love:" "The love of Christ constraineth us," says Paul. This love laid in the believer's heart has such a force and power with it, "that many waters cannot quench it, neither are all floods able to drown it," Song of Solomon 8:7; Romans 8:35, Romans 8:39.

5thly, He is under the bond of gratitude; being bought with a price, he studies to glorify God in soul and body, which are his. Christ having delivered him from the hand of his enemies, he serves the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of his life. The believer, when delivered from the hand of the condemning law, says to Christ, as the men of Israel did to Gideon, Judges 8:22 : "Rule thou over us; for thou hast delivered us from the hand of our enemies." Suppose a king should not only pardon a rebel, but restore him his forfeited inheritance, advance him to the highest places of honour about the throne; yea, make him his son, his heir, and set him upon the throne with himself: would not that man be under a far greater obligation to serve and obey the king, than if he had never received such singular favours at his hand? There is no bond of obedience like the bond of gratitude to a sincere spirit.

6thly, He is under the bond of a renewed nature. The man is made a partaker of the divine nature, by which the life of God, the love of God, and the law of God, is laid in his very heart; and this is a mighty bond to obedience: Hebrews 8:10 : "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." It is engraved there with the finger of the Holy Ghost: his heart is cast into a divine mould, moulded into the will of God, his will of grace, his will of precept, and his will of providence; so that he "delights in the law of God, after the inward man. The law of his God is in his heart," and therefore "none of his steps shall slide."

Lastly, The inhabitation of the Holy Ghost is another efficacious bond to obedience: Ezekiel 36:27 : "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." This law of the Spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, makes them "free from the law of sin and death." And being led by the Spirit, they do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. To conclude, that very grace of God which frees them from the law as a covenant, binds them to it as a rule, Titus 2:11-12.

These are some gospel bonds of obedience: and you who never knew what it is to have your souls under the sweet influence of these, but only obey the law with a view to purchase a title to heaven, or to redeem your souls from hell and wrath, I, in the name of God, pronounce the heavy doom of my text against you, he that believeth not, is condemned already.

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