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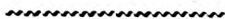
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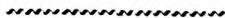
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BY JOHN WESLEY, M.A.

LATE FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD.



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CONTENTS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WORKS OF THE REV. RICHARD ALLEIN.

VINDICIÆ PIETATIS: OR, A VINDICATION OF GODLINESS.

DISCOURSE I.

EPHES. v. 15. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not
as fools, but as wise.*

	Page
<i>The text opened</i>	5
<i>The doctrine propounded</i>	6
<i>Christians must be Precisians</i>	6
<i>Precisians are no Fools</i>	7
<i>Precisians described to be no Pharisees, no Enthusiasts, no Phrenetics</i>	7
<i>Precisians described</i>	
I. <i>By their make or constitution</i>	8
II. <i>By their way or conversation</i>	10
1. <i>By the end of their conversation</i>	10
2. <i>By their course or motion towards this end</i>	11
(I.) <i>They are such as walk in the right way, which is described to be</i>	
1. <i>The old and good way</i>	11
2. <i>The new and living way</i>	12
3. <i>The strait and narrow way</i>	14
(II.) <i>They are upright and exact in the way</i>	18
1. <i>In having respect to every command</i>	18
2. <i>In having respect to the most spiritual and inward part of the commandment</i>	20
3. <i>In observing the commands to the utmost</i>	21
<i>They endeavour to get up their hearts to the highest pitch of affection, care, and activity</i>	22

	Page
<i>They are studying and seeking out opportunities for service</i>	22
<i>They shun all occasions and temptations to sin</i>	23
<i>They abstain from all appearance of evil</i>	24
<i>They take great care of conscience</i>	27
<i>A summary description of these Precisians</i>	37
<i>Precisians are proved to be no Fools</i>	38
1. <i>GOD accounts them no Fools</i>	39
2. <i>They will not be accounted Fools at last, neither by GOD nor men</i>	40
3. <i>The properties of wise men are found in them</i>	41
(1.) <i>They understand themselves aright</i>	42
(2.) <i>They are wise builders</i>	46
4. <i>The treasures of Wisdom are found with them</i>	47
(1.) <i>They have gotten the Pearl</i>	47
(2.) <i>The White Stone</i>	48
(3.) <i>The White Robe, or Sanctification</i>	48
(4.) <i>The Kingdom</i>	50
(5.) <i>Advice to the ungodly to forbear censuring or reproaching them</i>	54
<i>A Persuasion for the ungodly to come in and be of this number</i>	57
<i>The absolute necessity of precise Godliness evidenced from Scripture</i>	58

DISCOURSE II.

JOHN i. 47. *Behold an Israelite in whom is no guile!*

<i>The text opened</i>	66
<i>The doctrine propounded</i>	67
I. <i>The doctrines and principles of Godliness are real truths; instanced in</i>	
1. <i>The doctrine concerning the Being of GOD, and his Holiness</i>	69
2. <i>The doctrines concerning Sin.</i>	69
(1.) <i>That man is a sinner</i>	69

	Page
(2.) <i>That sin is the greatest of evils</i>	70
(3.) <i>That spiritual sins are the greatest of sins</i>	72
(4.) <i>That sin is the root of all misery</i>	73
3. <i>The doctrine of Redemption is a real truth</i>	76
4. <i>The doctrine of Regeneration is a real truth</i>	80
5. <i>The doctrine of Faith is a real truth</i>	86
6. <i>The doctrine concerning Good Works is a certain truth</i>	88
7. <i>The doctrine of the Last Judgment is a real truth</i>	98
II. <i>The duties and comforts of Godliness are no fancies</i>	105
First, <i>Worshipping GOD in the SPIRIT</i>	105
Secondly, <i>Walking in the SPIRIT</i>	110
1. <i>What is meant by the SPIRIT</i>	110
2. <i>What is meant by walking in the SPIRIT</i>	110
(1.) <i>Living under the conduct of the SPIRIT</i>	112
(2.) <i>Living in the power of the SPIRIT</i>	112
(3.) <i>Living a spiritual life</i>	113
<i>An exception against the reality of the delights, joys, and comforts of GOD, answered</i>	122

THE APPLICATION OF THE WHOLE.

<i>Directions to the ungodly, in order to bring them to a godly life</i>	127
DIRECT. I. <i>Get these three Principles fixed in your hearts,</i>	
1. <i>That the things which are eternal are unspeakably more considerable than the things which are but temporal</i>	128
2. <i>That the things which are not seen are as infallibly certain as the things that are seen</i>	130
3. <i>That according to your present choice, must be your eternal lot</i>	132
DIRECT. II. <i>Make your choice</i>	133
DIRECT. III. <i>Embark with CHRIST</i>	134
DIRECT. IV. <i>Resign yourselves to GOD in CHRIST</i>	138

DIRECT. V. Confirm and complete all by solemn Covenant	141
<i>There is a two-fold covenanting with God; virtual, and formal</i>	<i>142</i>
<i>Some directions for putting this matter in practice</i>	<i>143</i>
<i>A form of Covenanting</i>	<i>143</i>
<i>Directions to the godly, in order to carry them on in Holiness: and</i>	
I. Concerning holy duties	148
II. Concerning the leading of a holy life	148
<i>Four things premised concerning the Influence of holy duties on a holy life.</i>	
1. <i>Holy duties are the exercise of grace</i>	<i>148</i>
2. <i>In duties we have converse with God</i>	<i>148</i>
3. <i>In duties we obtain new supplies, and fresh influences from God</i>	<i>149</i>
4. <i>Duties are our conflicting with corruption, or striving against sin</i>	<i>151</i>
<i>Directions for the right performance of the duty of Prayer</i>	<i>151</i>
<i>Four special grounds on which a believer may plead with God in Prayer</i>	<i>155</i>
(1.) <i>On God himself</i>	<i>155</i>
(2.) <i>On CHRIST</i>	<i>157</i>
(3.) <i>On the Promises</i>	<i>158</i>
(4.) <i>On Experiences</i>	<i>158</i>
<i>Encouragement for sinners to pray</i>	<i>158</i>
(1.) <i>The Grace of God</i>	<i>160</i>
(2.) <i>The Invitation of God</i>	<i>160</i>
(3.) <i>CHRIST</i>	<i>161</i>
<i>Directions for performing the duty of Meditation</i>	<i>165</i>
<i>Several causes of languishing, or hinderances of flourishing in grace</i>	<i>168</i>
<i>Directions for renewing your Covenant</i>	<i>171</i>
<i>Directions for the right improvement of holy duties</i>	<i>175</i>
<i>Directions for carrying on a constant course of Holiness.</i>	
I. Pursue and eye your end	180

	Page
<i>Two things which make a holy life beautiful . . .</i>	181
<i>Two Grounds upon which sin is odious to true believers</i>	181
<i>Directions and encouragement</i>	182
1. <i>Take direction from heaven</i>	182
2. <i>Look heaven-ward, and take encouragement thence to go on</i>	183
II. <i>Live by faith in the Son of GOD.</i>	183
III. <i>Deny yourselves</i>	186
IV. <i>Order yourselves aright.</i>	190
1. <i>Allow not yourselves in the least known sin . . .</i>	191
2. <i>Live not in the neglect of any known duty . . .</i>	192
3. <i>Take heed of the world</i>	195
4. <i>Be humble</i>	200
5. <i>Be temperate</i>	201
6. <i>Be moderate</i>	201
V <i>Carry yourselves well towards others</i>	202
1. <i>Be true</i>	202
2. <i>Be just</i>	203
3. <i>Be merciful</i>	204
4. <i>Be peaceable</i>	204
5. <i>Be courteous</i>	205
<i>Directions for the right ordering of Families</i>	209
<i>Four General Directions for a conclusion of the whole.</i>	
1. <i>Be sincere</i>	210
2. <i>Be steady in all your ways</i>	213
3. <i>Be fruitful</i>	213
4. <i>Be steadfast and immoveable</i>	215
<i>To prevent Apostasy in times of Temptation.</i>	
1. <i>Try yourselves beforehand</i>	216
2. <i>Mortify the flesh</i>	219
3. <i>Be circumspect</i>	220
4. <i>Resolve to stand your ground against all the world</i>	221



A REBUKE TO BACKSLIDERS, AND A SPUR FOR LOITERERS.

ISAIAH lxiv. 6, 7. *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.*

	Page
<i>The text opened</i>	227
<i>FIRST, There is a two-fold decay in Religion . . .</i>	229
1. <i>Partial or gradual</i>	229
(1.) <i>Inwardly</i>	229
(2.) <i>Outwardly</i>	230
2. <i>Total</i>	235
<i>SECONDLY, Consumption in Religion, where it proves epidemical, is the fore-runner of destruction . . .</i>	235
<i>I. What it is to stir up ourselves in religion . . .</i>	236
1. <i>There is a stirring up ourselves to get religion, where there is none</i>	236
(1.) <i>In thinking how it is with us</i>	237
(2.) <i>In crying out for help</i>	238
(3.) <i>In taking the alarm from the watchmen . . .</i>	239
(4.) <i>In forcing ourselves back from our sins, and onwards towards CHRIST</i>	240
2. <i>There is a stirring up ourselves to religion, where there is something of it already . . .</i>	242
(1.) <i>By what acts we must stir up ourselves . . .</i>	243
(2.) <i>To what pitch of religion we should stir up ourselves</i>	246
3. <i>Stir up yourselves to solidity in religion . . .</i>	250
(1.) <i>To solid, substantial religion</i>	250
(2.) <i>To be more solid in religion</i>	252
<i>II. What need there is of stirring up ourselves to and in religion</i>	264

1. <i>Those that fall short of religion, or carefully maintain not that religion they have, will be lost at last.</i>	264
2. <i>Those that stir not up themselves are never likely to attain religion, or to maintain that little they have</i>	264
III. <i>What it is to take hold of God</i>	275
1. <i>Our great happiness is in this, that the LORD is in us</i>	275
2. <i>Our happiness is in this, that the LORD is among us</i>	276
3. <i>Our taking hold of God is our continuing the presence of God with us, and our preventing his departure</i>	284
IV <i>Stirring religion will take hold of God</i>	299
FIRST, <i>What is meant by stirring religion</i>	299
1. <i>Negatively</i>	300
2. <i>Positively</i>	300
SECONDLY, <i>Stirring religion will continue the presence of God with us</i>	302
1. <i>It will work out sin</i>	302
2. <i>It will increase holiness</i>	305
V. <i>How we are to stir up ourselves</i>	306
First, <i>Make your advantage of stirring Providences</i>	306
Secondly, <i>Put yourselves upon stirring Thoughts</i>	309
Thirdly, <i>Get stirring Affections</i>	313
1. <i>Stir up godly sorrow</i>	313
2. <i>Stir up fear</i>	314
3. <i>Stir up desire</i>	317
4. <i>Stir up hope</i>	320
Fourthly, <i>Get stirring Consciences</i>	325
Fifthly, <i>Be much conversant with stirring society</i>	331
<i>Directions for the practice of holy and quickening discourse</i>	331
<i>The advantage of this practice</i>	344
Sixthly, <i>Be much exercised in stirring duties</i>	346
<i>Of prayer and fasting</i>	346

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF GODLY FEAR.

PROV. xxviii. 14. *Happy is the man that feareth alway.*

	Page
<i>The text opened</i>	369
<i>The doctrine propounded: expounded in two particulars</i>	369
I. <i>What that fear is to which blessedness is pronounced, and what there is in it</i>	370
1. <i>It hath understanding in it</i>	372
2. <i>It hath faith</i>	374
3. <i>It hath love</i>	374
4. <i>It hath in it aversion from evil</i>	375
5. <i>It hath foresight</i>	375
6. <i>It hath forecast</i>	377
II. <i>What that blessedness is that is pronounced</i>	381
<i>The man that feareth shall have,</i>	
1. <i>Sufficiency</i>	381
2. <i>Security</i>	381

APPLICATION. *Of information, exhortation, and direction. For the carrying on whereof, understand,*

I. <i>The grounds or reasons why we should fear</i>	386
1. <i>Because of our ignorance</i>	386
2. <i>Because of the deceitfulness of our hearts</i>	390
3. <i>Because of the importance of the work we have upon our hands</i>	398
4. <i>Because of the great treasure we carry with us</i>	409
II. <i>What things we should especially fear</i>	411
1. <i>Our DELILAHS, or our beloved sins</i>	411
2. <i>Our JEZEBELS, or our painted sins</i>	414
3. <i>Our ISAACS, or every beloved creature</i>	415
4. <i>The cross or afflictions</i>	418
(1.) <i>How the cross is not to be feared</i>	418
First, <i>Not out of tenderness to the flesh</i>	419

	Page
Secondly, <i>Not out of faintness of spirit</i>	421
<i>Some cordials to preserve from fainting</i> . . .	421
(2.) <i>In what respect the cross is to be feared</i> . . .	423
First, <i>Fear a surprisal by the cross</i> . . .	423
Secondly, <i>Fear the temptations of the cross</i>	424
5. <i>The curse or everlasting damnation</i> . . .	425
<i>The fear of the curse will</i>	
First, <i>Quicken our fear of sin</i>	428
Secondly, <i>Allay our sinful fear of the cross</i> . . .	430
III. <i>How we should improve this fear</i> . . .	432
DIRECTION 1. <i>Fear and search</i>	432
First, <i>Search what good thing there is in you, whether</i> <i>there be sincerity in your hearts towards God</i> . . .	433
<i>Five considerations to make afraid</i>	437
1. <i>There are preparations to grace, which are</i> <i>not grace</i> . . .	437
2. <i>There are images of grace, which are not grace</i>	441
3. <i>There are some properties of gracious persons,</i> <i>which are no certain evidences of grace</i>	442
4. <i>No one grace, if it be alone, will put us out</i> <i>of doubt</i>	443
5. <i>Whatever you have short of perfect love, it</i> <i>may go back, and you may return to a worse</i> <i>state than ever</i> . . .	444
<i>Objections against putting Christians in fear answered</i>	444
<i>How this fear will work towards a farther search</i> . . .	445
<i>Three infallible marks of sincerity to settle the</i> <i>fearing soul</i> . . .	447
1. <i>A resolved choice of God for our portion and</i> <i>happiness</i> . . .	447
<i>Five marks to prove the sincerity of our choosing God</i>	447
2. <i>An actual embracing of CHRIST, as he that shall</i> <i>bring us to God</i>	453
3. <i>A giving up ourselves to the practice of a holy</i> <i>life; endeavouring to follow God in holiness,</i> <i>without</i>	
(1.) <i>Allowing ourselves in any known sin</i> . . .	458

	Page
(2.) <i>Allowing ourselves in the neglect of any known duty</i>	459
Secondly, <i>Search what evils there are found in you</i>	464
DIRECTION 2. <i>Fear and beware</i>	466
First, <i>Fear and hide</i>	467
1. <i>What we are to hide</i>	
(1.) <i>Our sins</i>	467
(2.) <i>Our souls</i>	467
2. <i>Where we are to hide, viz. in CHRIST</i> . . .	467
3. <i>How we may hide ourselves in CHRIST</i> . .	468
Secondly, <i>Fear and flee</i>	469
DIRECTION 3. <i>Fear and follow after</i>	473
1. <i>Applied to Unbelievers; follow after true and saving grace, in fear of falling short of it</i> . . .	473
2. <i>To Believers; follow on towards perfection, in fear of falling back from, or walking unworthy in that grace wherein you stand</i>	474
<i>That you may not receive the grace of GOD in vain, but may grow up to fruitfulness therein; follow after</i>	
1. <i>Power</i>	479
2. <i>Activity</i>	480
3. <i>Severity</i>	480
4. <i>Simplicity</i>	484
5. <i>Pleasure</i>	486



EXTRACTS

FROM

THE WORKS

OF

THE REV. RICHARD ALLEIN :

VIZ.

I. A VINDICATION OF GODLINESS :

**II. A REBUKE TO BACKSLIDERS, AND A
SPUR FOR LOITERERS :**

III. A DISCOURSE ON GODLY FEAR.

VOL. XVIII.

B

VINDICIÆ PIETATIS :

OR

A VINDICATION OF GODLINESS,

IN THE

GREATEST STRICTNESS AND SPIRITUALITY OF IT :

BY

THE REV. RICHARD ALLEIN.

B 2

VINDICIÆ PIETATIS :

OR

A VINDICATION OF GODLINESS.

DISCOURSE I.

EPHES. v. 15.

*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but
as wise.*

IN the first verse of this chapter, the Apostle exhorts to the whole duty of Christians, "Be ye followers of God." The same exhortation he gives in other terms, "Walk as children of the light:" (*ver. 8:*) both which exhortations are comprehensive of the whole duty of Christians.

IN the following verses he gives particular directions respecting the particular duties of religion: As, 1. Walk in love. (*ver. 2.*) 2. Flee all iniquity: both (1.) Greater iniquities; fornication and all uncleanness, and covetousness: (2.) Smaller iniquities; such as the evils of the tongue; both filthiness, that is, filthy talking, and foolish talking, and jesting, which are not convenient. 3. Be not partakers of other men's sins: (*ver. 7:*) which he further dehorts from, (*ver. 11,*) charging them to have no communion with them, and to be guilty of no connivance at them, but rather to reprove them.

OF the strict rules in the text, he presses the strict observation; "See that ye walk circumspectly," with an eye to every duty, to every direction; not only the greater and more weighty duties of religion, but the smaller parts of it, even to all that the LORD requires.

In the words you may observe,

1. A strict charge ; “ See,” or look diligently and carefully to it.

2. The matter given in charge, “ Walk circumspectly,” which some render, *walk warily* ; others, *accurately, exactly* ; others, *walk precisely*,—and that, a learned critic affirms, the word *ἀκριβῶς* most properly signifies.

3. A commendation of this circumspect walking ; this is wise walking : “ not as fools, but as wise ;” intimating, that to walk loosely is to walk foolishly ; to walk circumspectly is to walk wisely.

The observations from these words are chiefly these two :—

1. Christians must be Precisions.

2. Precisions are no fools ; or Christians of an exact and circumspect life are, whatever the world accounts them, truly wise men. This latter observation it is which I intend to insist upon.

Beloved, I am entering upon a discourse on a sort of people, of whom we may say, with those Jews, “ Concerning this sect, we know that it is every where spoken against ; (*Acts xxviii. 22* ;) and who, with the Apostle, “ are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men ;” (*1 Cor. iv. 9* ;) concerning whom, heaven and earth are divided, and the world is divided within itself ; of whom God says, “ the world is not worthy ;” of whom the world say, they are not worthy to live ; of whom God says, they are the “ apple of mine eye ;” of whom the world say, “ they are a sore in our eye ;” whom God accounts his jewels ; whom men account “ the filth of the world,” and “ the offscouring of all things ;” of whom God says, they are the “ sons of wisdom,” but men say they are fools. And as God and men are thus divided, so are men no less divided among themselves. Some few say concerning these, as they of old concerning **CHRIST**, “ They are good men ;” others say, “ No, but they are deceivers of the people.” A Precisian, with the most, is grown into a proverb of reproach, a mark of

infamy. To be a drunkard, a fornicator, a swearer, is no reproach, in comparison of being noted for a Puritan.

Well, but let us inquire a little more narrowly into this sort of people, about whom the world is thus moved, and hath been in all ages.

In order hereunto, I shall show you,

First, What a Precisian is ; and Secondly, prove to you, against all the world, that he is no fool, but a truly wise, yea, the only wise man.

Touching the former, What a Precisian is, a Scripture-Precisian, let me first tell you, to prevent mistakes, who he is not.

1. Not a Pharisee, a painted sepulchre, whose religion is a mere show ; who hath the form of godliness without the power ; who is pure in his own eyes, and yet not cleansed from his filthiness ; who is exact about the punctilios of religion, and hath a great zeal about the lower and more circumstantial matters, and neglects the weightier things of the law. This is not he.

2. Not an Enthusiast, properly so called ; (though that be a vizard put upon him by some, as the hides of beasts were put upon the Christians of old ;) not an Enthusiast, I say, whose religion is all fancy, imagination, enthusiasm, the dreams and visions of his own heart. Neither is this he. Christianity is not a castle in the air, but is a building that hath foundation.

3. Not a Phrenetick, no son of violence or contention, who, not knowing what spirit he is of, calls for fire from heaven, to set all in a combustion, if every thing be not exactly fashioned according to his own mind. Neither is this he. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable. The servant of the LORD must not strive, but be gentle."

By a Precisian, I mean, a sincere, circumspect Christian ; one whose care and endeavour it is "to walk uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel ;" who, withdrawing himself from the fellowship, fashions, and lusts of the world, and denying himself the sinful liberties thereof,

doth exercise himself to keep a good conscience towards God and men. This is the person against whom the great hate and envy, the severe censures and calumnies of ungodly men, are chiefly intended, under what colour or disguise soever they are carried. The enmity is not betwixt sinners and hypocrites, but betwixt the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman; not the pretended, but the true seed: Israelites indeed are the men whom the Ishmaelites persecute; "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him" not who pretended to be, but "who was born after the Spirit." (*Gal. iv. 29.*) Of this sort of people I shall give you a more full description in these two particulars:—I. By their Make, or Constitution. II. By their Way, or Conversation.

I. By their Constitution. They are made and cut out exactly according to the pattern; they are born of the SPIRIT, born of God, and they bear the express image of their Father upon them: "Renewed after the image of him that created him;" (*Col. iii. 10.*) they are of a new make from what they were; there is a mighty change wrought in and upon them. Μεταμορφώμεθα, "We are changed into the same image." (*2 Cor. iii. 18.*) In our first birth we were brought forth in the image of our first father: "ADAM begat a son in his own image;" (*Gen. v. 3.*) that is, a fleshly and earthly image. The first man was of the earth, earthly; and such are all his natural progeny, an earthly seed, an earthly generation: he that is born of the SPIRIT is brought forth in a spiritual frame. "That which is born of the SPIRIT is spirit:" (*John iii. 6.*) He that is born from above is of a heavenly nature, as well as original. The change which religion makes on men is not such a low and inconsiderable thing as some men make it, standing only in some little reformation of the life; but it consists chiefly in the renewing of the soul after the image of God, the forming of CHRIST upon the heart. As that second change, which shall be at the resurrection, will be the transforming of our vile bodies into the likeness of CHRIST's glorious body; so this first change is a trans-

forming of our vile souls into the likeness of his glorious SPIRIT. Christians are the temples of the LORD; and as MOSES made the tabernacle exactly according to the pattern which was showed him in the Mount, so these spiritual temples are made as exactly according to their pattern; "They are the epistles of CHRIST, written not with ink, but with the SPIRIT of the living GOD; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." (2 Cor. iii. 3.) Carnal men plead hard for their Christianity; they are all Christians, though they be ignorant, unbelieving, earthly, sensual; yet some kind of profession (such as it is) there is amongst them, a profession of faith, a profession of repentance, which though it amount to little more than the bare saying, "I believe, I repent, I am sorry for my sins," yet this must pass for Christianity. But "whose is this image and superscription?" Where is the divine stamp and impress? Where is your likeness to CHRIST? Is there not still the visage of the old man? Are not the old pride, the old envy, the old enmity against holiness, the old guile, and falsehood, and lust, still spread over you? Is this the image of CHRIST? Christians, who are truly such, are precisely formed according to this pattern; they have face for face, limb for limb, grace for grace: all the grace that is in CHRIST is truly, though yet not perfectly, copied out upon them: though the characters may be somewhat blotted and obscured, by reason of the remainders of corruption, yet there they are; the same mind, the same heart that was in CHRIST, is in them. A true Christian is a transcript of CHRIST: "As he is, so are we in this world."

This inward change, this forming of CHRIST upon the heart, is the very soul and life of Christianity. You may as well call him a man whose soul is not in him, as you may call him a Christian who hath not the SPIRIT of CHRIST in him. Let no man count himself a Christian from any outward privileges, much less from any outward paint of Christianity, but from the inward prints of it upon his heart. Thou hopest that thou art a Christian; but where is the image and

superscription of CHRIST upon thy heart? Dost thou not find, not only an unlikeness to CHRIST, but a dislike of CHRIST, an inward loathing of the holiness of CHRIST, and a rising of heart against the strictness of that holy life which he requires? Dost thou not find a savour of earthliness and fleshliness bearing the sway in thine heart? Is this thy likeness to CHRIST? Dost thou not find an emptiness of the light, life, love, and grace of CHRIST in thy soul? Whatever thou hast of CHRIST without, thou hast nothing of CHRIST within. Deceive not thyself; GOD is a spirit, and his eye is first upon the spirits and souls of men: he loves truth in the inward parts; he loves holiness in the inward parts. "He is a Jew which is one inwardly," and he is a Christian who is one inwardly: he is not a Christian who is only outwardly so. Nay further, as he is not a Christian who is not inwardly so; so neither is he who hath something of the inwards of a Christian, and hath not radically all the graces of CHRIST in him: he who hath faith, and hath not charity; he who hath the light of a Christian, and not the love; he who hath the desires of a Christian, and not the conscience of a Christian; he who wants any one of the vital parts of Christianity, hath nothing at all; a thorough Christian is throughout conformed to the pattern. And thus you have a description of Scripture-Precisians by their make and constitution.

II. I shall describe them by their Conversation: and that, 1. By the End of their conversation. 2. By their Course or Motion to this end.

1. By the End of their conversation. What is it that these men would have, or whither are they bound? They cannot be content to go along with their neighbours, to live and do as others: whither is it that they are going, or what is it that they would have? Why this is it; they are travelling heaven-ward, and trading to another country; they are bound for the holy land, for the holy city; they are going towards Sion, or Jerusalem which is above: they are those strangers and pilgrims here on earth, mentioned in *Heb.* xi. 13, 14, that are seeking a country,—not an

earthly, but a heavenly country. A traveller's eye is much towards his journey's end: Christians that are making heaven-ward are much and often looking heaven-ward: a Christian's heart is in his eye, and his eye is on his home.

And this is a further description of this sort of people; they are men for another country, men for another world; they are born from above, and they seek things above; they are risen with CHRIST, and they are ascending unto CHRIST; their treasure is above, and their hopes are above, and thither are they hastening. Whatsoever they have of this world's goods for the support of their life, yet these things are not the scope and end of their life: they seek that glory, honour, and immortality, which come from GOD; and they are going on from strength to strength, till they come and appear before GOD in Sion. Hearken, O you foolish worldings! You say, every one of you, that you hope for salvation; but which way are your faces set? Whither are you going? Is that way of carnal liberty, and covetousness, and sensuality, to which you give up yourselves, the way of life? In this a sincere Christian is differenced from all others in the world; he fixes his heart, and his hope, and his aims, upon an eternal happiness; and he bends his course towards the obtaining of it.

2. By their Course or Motion towards this end.

And here I shall give you a threefold description of them.

(I.) They are such as walk in the right way.

(II.) They are upright and exact in the way.

(III.) From this way they will not be turned aside by any flatteries on the one hand, or frowns on the other.

(I.) They are such as walk in the right way, which is called sometimes the way of the LORD, sometimes the way of truth, sometimes the way of righteousness, sometimes the way of life. (*Ps. i. 1, 2; cxix. 1.*) They understand which is the right way, by these three marks:—1. The Old and Good Way. 2. The New and Living Way. 3. The Strait and Narrow Way.

1. The Old and Good Way, that is the right way; that

is the way which they are commanded to inquire after and take: "Stand ye in the ways and see; ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; stand ye in the ways and see." (*Jer.* vi. 16.) There are many ways in the world, some which are apparently the way of death, and not a few which pretend to be the way of life. If you would know which of these ways is the right, ask for the old path, the good way; the old path, that which was from the beginning. Godliness is no innovation; it is as old as the world; "that which was from the beginning declare we unto you." (1 *John* i. 1.) Then it is the good, as well as the old way. Antiquity alone is not enough to prove that we are in the right way; there is an evil way, which is an old way; the way of sin is very ancient. The right way is the old and good way; there is a three-fold good, profitable, pleasant, and honest. Though the right way have both profit and pleasure in it, yet its proper character is, that it is the honest way, the way of righteousness, mercy, and holiness. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (*Mic.* vi. 8.) This is good, — the good way: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, these things do, and the God of peace shall be with you." (*Phil.* iv. 8, 9.)

2. The New and Living Way. Three things, it may be, you will ask me about this:—

(1.) What is the new and living way?

I answer, CHRIST is this way; "I am the way." (*John* xiv. 6.) "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of JESUS, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us," &c. (*Heb.* x. 19, 20.) A Christian who walks heaven-ward, walks in CHRIST: (*Col.* ii. 6:) he walks in union with CHRIST, in the name, and strength, and SPIRIT of CHRIST: he that is not in CHRIST is out of his way.

(2.) Whether there be two right ways?

I answer, No, but one. It is true, there is mention

made also of the way of GOD's commandments; but these make not two distinct ways, but are one and the same way: faith in CHRIST, and obedience to the law of GOD, are the one way of life. He that walks with GOD walks in CHRIST: it is through CHRIST, and our union with him, that we are enabled to do the will of GOD; it is through CHRIST that what we do is accepted of GOD: there is no act of obedience, be it ever so excellent for the matter of it, that is a step to the kingdom of GOD, which hath not something of CHRIST in it, which is not done through his SPIRIT, and sprinkled with his blood: and so, on the other side, whatever faith, and hope, and confidence we have in CHRIST, if it be not such a faith, such a hope, as brings forth obedience to the will of GOD, it cannot save us. This way of faith and obedience, this is the right way, and the one and only way of life. In all that "general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven," there is not one soul but entered by this way. ABEL, and ENOCH, and ABRAHAM, and MOSES, and DAVID, and PETER, and PAUL, with the whole generation of Saints now in glory, they all went the same way; they walked with GOD, and lived and died in faith, and now inherit the promises. And all the residue of Saints that are yet in their pilgrimage, yea, and whoever shall be, in the ages to come, must by this one way enter into the kingdom of GOD. This is the good and old way which was from the beginning; this is the new and living way which shall be to the end: "These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in GOD be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable for men." (*Tit.* iii. 8.) If this be so, if this be the one and only way of life, then in what case are the sinful and unbelieving world? Whither are you going, O ye sons of folly? You tell us you hope to be saved; what, in your unbelief and folly? Search and see it, in the whole book of GOD, you find any other way of salvation, but faith in CHRIST, and obedience to the Gospel.

(3.) How can one and the same way be old, and yet new?

I answer, it is old, and yet not antiquated; it is new, and yet no innovation. It is old, because it was from the beginning; it is new, because now, in the latter end of the world, it hath been newly cast up, made more plain, easy, and open.

3. The Strait and Narrow Way: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life." Christians must go by a line; there is no elbow-room for lust to expatiate; every step on this hand, or on that, is a deviation: it is a way which is hedged in; the commandment is the hedge, which limits us within a narrow path. Christians must live by rule; they must not eat or drink but by rule; they must not buy or sell but by rule; they must not work or sit still, they must not speak or keep silence, but by rule: "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them." (*Gal. vi. 16.*) It is also a narrow way: the word might have well been translated, a troublesome, or painful way: there are many afflictions to be met with in this way; the Cross is a Christian's way-mark: "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." The way of sinners is a plain; there is neither hedge nor ditch to limit them; there is neither bush nor bark to discourage them.

Now this is the way which circumspect Christians take; this good and old way, this new and living way, this strait and narrow way, this is the right way; and this is also the most excellent way. For,

1. It is the Way of Truth: "I have chosen the way of truth:" (*Ps. cxix. 30.*) "I am the way and the truth, and the life." (*John xiv. 6.*) It is the way which the truth or word of God doth prescribe to us; it is the true way, which is indeed, in all the parts of it, that which it declares itself to be. The way of sinners is a lie, a way made up of lies; the evil works of sinners are lies; "the wicked work a deceitful work," (*Prov. xi. 18.*) the work of a lie;—the

words signify, that their words are lying words : their very duties are a lie ; “ Ephraim compasseth me about with lies ; ” (*Hos.* xi. 12 ;) that is, with lying duties, lying prayers, lying sacrifices, lying praises ; their prayers are no prayers, their sacrifices are no sacrifices, they do but dissemble with **GOD**, and deceive themselves in all their performances ; their hopes are a lie, their comforts are a lie, their refuges are a lie ; the way of sinners is wholly made up of lies : but the way of Christians is the true way ; their duties, their comforts, their joys, their hopes, have truth and reality in them ; “ all the paths of the **LORD** are mercy and truth to them that keep his covenant.” (*Ps.* xxv. 10.) Now what excellency there is in truth above a lie, so great is the excellency of this way of Christians above all other ways.

2. It is the Way of Holiness : holiness hath a glory in it ; every thing by how much the more pure it is, by so much the more precious is it in its kind. What other excellency have the Angels of light above the Devils, but their holiness ? What was it which transformed the Angels who fell into Devils, but the loss of their holiness ? Wherein stands the reasonable creatures’ likeness to the **GOD** of glory, but in their holiness ? This is the divine nature of which they are made partakers ; the **SPIRIT** of **GOD**, and of glory, resting upon them. (1 *Peter* iv. 14.) There is such a beauty and majesty in holiness, as doth command an acknowledgment of it from all sorts of knowing men.

3. It is the Way of **GOD** ; not only the way wherein the **LORD** hath commanded them to walk, but wherein the **LORD** appears to them, and wherein they have the vision and fruition of **GOD** ; and therefore a godly life is often expressed by “ walking with **GOD**,” by living in fellowship or communion, or acquaintance with **GOD** : (*Ps.* xvi. 8 :) “ I have set the **LORD** always before me ; I will behold thy face in righteousness.” (*Ps.* xvii. 15.) **ENOCH** walked with **GOD** ; **NOAH** walked with **GOD**. Good company will make any way pleasant : how craggy or dirty soever be our way under foot, it is pleasant to see the sun shine over

us: "To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of GOD." (*Ps. l. 23.*) The LORD meets his people in his ways, and causes all his goodness to pass before them; proclaiming his name, "The LORD gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." This vision of GOD makes all the labours and difficulties of this way sweet and easy to them; certainly this is the blessed way, for GOD is in it. Christians, let all the ungodly world say all they can to disgrace and disparage the way of righteousness, as a wretched, disconsolate, and contemptible way; yet until they can confute your senses, and make you not to believe what you taste and see, be not discouraged: neither let them delude you into any better opinion of the ways of sin from any pleasure, credit, ease, or gain, that is in them; whatever there is in them, GOD is not in them: GOD is in the way of righteousness, and there alone to be found and enjoyed, and therefore this is the most blessed and excellent way.

4. It is the Way of the Kingdom. The proper excellency of the means stands in this, that it will certainly bring about its end; that is our best way which will bring us safely home. This way is called the Way of Life; "Thou wilt show me the path of life." (*Ps. xvi. 11.*) "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness:—for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST." (*2 Pet. i. 5—11.*) If there were no other excellency of this way, yet this is enough to commend it, and exalt it above all other ways, that it is the way to heaven. The way of the LORD, whatever men may say against it, to discourage, or make you unwilling to travel in it, is the only way which you have to save your souls, the only way to eternal blessedness. When you have made all your objections, and all your excuses, you must take up this holy course of life, or you can never come into the kingdom of GOD. The way of jollity and merriment is, as you think, a more

pleasant way; but is this your way to heaven? The way of covetousness you count a more profitable way; but is this the way of life? The way of slothfulness is, you think, an easy way; but is this the way of the kingdom? The strict way of holiness hath little carnal delight, ease, or profit in it; but is not this the way to everlasting life? "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD." (*Heb. xii. 14.*)

Now, if all this be so, (search, sinners, search and consider if it be not so, consult the Scriptures, consult your reasons and consciences, and see if you find them not bearing witness to this truth;) and if these things be so, then come, all ye foolish, and judge of the unreasonableness of these scoffing demands, addressed to the people of God: "Why must you be so nice? Why so precise? Why so strict in making so much ado about every small matter? Why cannot you be content to do as others, and take the same liberty as others?" This is all one as if they should demand of them, "Why will you keep your way, the way of life? Why will you be saved? Why cannot you be content to be damned as well as others?" Is there not a great deal of wisdom in such questions? If you stood by a dangerous mire through which there was one narrow tract of firm ground, and should see a company of poor creatures sunk, and almost swallowed up, on the one hand and the other, and yet should see them laughing, and mocking, and jeering at those who kept on the narrow tract of firm ground; would you not say, that they were all mad, or bewitched? This is the case of foolish worldlings; they are sunk in the mud, they are even swallowed up, and ready to perish, and yet they fall a laughing, and deride those who will keep the sure way. Sinners, what do you mean? You are sinking, you are sinking; a few steps farther, and you are swallowed up. Why will you not come back, and get into this safe way? Leave your scoffing at the saints, and learn of them; leave your judging and censuring, and follow them in the same steps in which they are going before you.

(II.) They are upright and exact in the way; they walk on in the strait way, with a strait foot: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way;" (*Ps.* cxix. 1;) or the perfect, or entire in the way. It is said of **CALEB**, that he "followed" the **LORD** "fully;" (*Num.* xiv. 24;) and of **ZACHARIAS** and **ELIZABETH**, that they walked "in all the commandments and ordinances of the **LORD** blameless." (*Luke* i. 6.) "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world." (2 *Cor.* i. 12.) "Ye are witnesses, and **GOD** also, how holily, and justly, and blamelessly, we behaved ourselves among you." (1 *Thess.* ii. 10.)

But here, that I may be not mistaken, I must distinguish betwixt their aims, or what they are reaching towards, and their attainments, or what they have reached to. The aims of these circumspect Christians, in their whole course, are at perfection: "I press toward the mark:" (*Phil.* iii. 14:) they would keep their way, without the least wandering; they would not tread one step awry; they would not speak one word amiss; they would not think one thought amiss; they would not neglect any one duty, nor commit any one sin, but would be what the Apostle would have them to be, "holy and harmless, the children of **GOD** without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked generation." These are their aims, though their attainments fall short of their desires; they follow the **LORD** with the best of their understanding, and serve the **LORD** with the best of their strength; and when they have done their best, they mourn and grieve that it is no better.

That I may more distinctly open this exact and upright walking in the way of the **LORD**, I shall consider it, 1. As it hath respect to the Commandment; 2. As it hath respect to Conscience.

1. Their exact walking, as it hath respect to the Commandment, stands,

(1.) In having respect to every commandment, to the whole word of **GOD**: "Then shall I not be ashamed,

when I have respect to all thy commandments: (*Ps.* cxix. 6;) “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (*Matt.* xxviii. 20.) The life of a Christian is a busy life; the word of God finds us much work to do; we have work for every faculty and member: our understandings have their work; our wills, affections, consciences, tongues, ears, eyes, hands, have all their particular works assigned them: every grace hath its work; faith hath its work, love hath its work, patience hath its work: every lust makes us work, to restrain, deny, watch, and crucify it; these are weights and clogs that will hang on, and hinder us from all other works, if we let them alone; these are working against us continually, and are apt to set us on work against ourselves; working mischief and ruin to our souls, if they be not continually looked to, and kept under. We have work against us for every condition. Our prosperity finds us much work, to keep ourselves humble, heavenly, watchful, and in a holy fear and jealousy, lest the pleasures of this life should make an inroad upon our hearts, and spoil us of our graces. Our afflictions find us work, to keep our spirits from sinking and fainting, from murmuring and envying at those whose way doth prosper. We have all the set and solemn duties of religion to attend upon; we have praying work, and hearing work, and sacrament work, and reading work, and heart-searching work, and meditating work. We have work to be done for others, our neighbours and acquaintances, our friends and enemies, our families, our servants, our children. We have not only work to do for them as men, but work to do for God with them: God hath work for us to do among our neighbours; God hath work for us to do in our families, and for our friends and enemies, instructing work, reproving work, praying work, works of mercy and charity. We have a continual succession of works; every day hath its business: Christians must have no sleeping days; their very sabbaths must be working-days; we must be at work for our souls, even on those days wherein we must do no bodily work. “There remaineth

a rest to the people of **GOD** ;” such a rest, wherein they shall work no more, nor be weary any more, wherein all their work shall be to “eat of the fruit of their doings :” but on this side of that rest, there is no rest, but we must be full of labour.

You see that the Word hath provided much work for Christians: now those who are circumspect and upright in the way, will be thorough-paced, and stick at nothing which the Word requires; they are for any service, ready to every good work; they will not pick and choose, they will not halt or balk with **GOD**, but, as the Apostle says, they will endeavour to stand “complete in all the will of **GOD**.” (*Col. iv. 12.*) Those duties which have most pain and hazard attending them, those duties which have the greatest contrariety to their natural temper, if they be duties, if the Word says, “They must be done; this is that which the **LORD** requires,” an upright heart will yield and stoop to them. Brethren, if there be any one thing required in the whole Book of **GOD** to which you cannot consent,—if you allow yourself in the neglect of it, and say concerning it, with **NAAMAN**, “The **LORD** spare me in this one thing,”—whatsoever else you do, your hearts are not upright.

(2.) In having respect to the most spiritual and inward part of the commandment. The commandment contains sins to be avoided, and duties to be performed; and both these are either outward or spiritual.—As there are outward sins to be avoided, sins of the mouth, sins of the eyes, ears, and hands; so there are inward sins, spiritual wickednesses, evil thoughts, “unclean lusts,” (*Jer. iv. 14.*) “inordinate affections,” (*Matt. v. 28.*) an evil conscience. Now sincere Christians have an eye to, and hold a strict hand upon, these spiritual wickednesses; they labour to have their consciences purged, their “hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,” their affections and lusts mortified. “They that are **CHRIST**’s have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts;” their care is, not only that they be no drunkards, nor swearers, nor liars, nor railers, nor oppressors, nor of proud, froward, fretful, impatient

carriage and behaviour,—but they do not covet, they do not lust; they are not of a proud, impatient, fretful, envious, unpeaceable heart; they would not that an evil thought, or a vain thought, should lodge within them.—As there are outward duties to be performed, praying, hearing, and works of mercy, so there are spiritual duties, purely spiritual, as the internal acting of faith, and love, and hope, and the fear of **GOD**, the soul's choosing of **GOD**, its cleaving to **GOD**, and its rejoicing and delighting in **GOD**. Exact Christians have a special respect to these spiritual duties, in the exercise whereof stands chiefly their living in a holy fellowship, communion, and acquaintance with **GOD**. And for outward duties, their care is to perform them spiritually: they pray with the mouth, and pray in the spirit; they praise the **LORD** with their lips, and offer up their hearts as a spiritual sacrifice; they hear with their ears, and with their understandings also; they labour to bring their souls under the word, to pour forth their souls in prayer, to draw forth their souls in their very alms: “if thou draw forth thy soul to the hungry;” (*Isa. lviii. 10*;) “I chastened my soul with fasting.” (*Psa. lxi. 10*.)

Oh! Brethren, if this be to walk exactly, then how much looseness doth this discover in us!—a looseness in our very duties: men do not only drink like libertines, and swear like libertines, and neglect duties like libertines, but perform duties like libertines. Thou that usest to pray in thy closet, or in thy family, or in the congregation, in an outward formal way, and dost not pour out thy soul in prayer, thou prayest like a libertine: Thou that fastest, and dost not “chasten thy soul with fasting,” thou fastest like a libertine: Thou that hearest, and dost not bring thy soul under the word, thou hearest like a libertine: This is loose praying, and loose hearing; loose from the rule, which requires the exercising of the inner man, as well as the outward.

(3.) In observing the commands to the utmost. And here I shall give a four-fold further description of them.

First, They endeavour to get up their hearts to the highest pitch of affection, care, and activity: they would be the best Christians, the most humble, the most mortified, the most patient, the most exemplary and active Christians; "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the LORD." A sincere Christian is a zealous Christian; in his sincerity stands the truth of his Christianity; in his zeal stands the height of it. Zeal is not a distinct grace, but the height of every grace; love in the height of it, desire in the height of it. A zealous Christian exercises every grace, performs every duty, and doth it with all his might; he is not willing to spare, or to favour himself, but will spend and be spent in the work of the LORD. The flesh will be pleading for a little ease, and for moderation; it will be soliciting the soul, as PETER did CHRIST, saying, "Pity thyself, favour thyself; thou wilt never hold out at this rate; thou wilt pull all the country about thine ears, if thou art thus hot and forward:" but the soul returns the same answer as CHRIST did to him; "Get thee behind me, SATAN; hold thy peace, slothful heart; let me alone, for I will speak for GOD while I have a tongue to speak; while I have a heart, while I have a hand, while I have an eye, while I have a soul, while I have a being, I will follow on after the LORD. I will serve him, I will praise him, I will sacrifice all I am and have to Him; and then, come on me what will!"

Secondly, They are studying and seeking out opportunities for service. Such Christians are of strict lives, but of large hearts; of strict consciences, but of large desires and aims. Grace sets limits to their consciences, but none to their holy affections; they never do so much for GOD, but they are studying how they may do more. "A liberal man deviseth liberal things;" a merciful man deviseth merciful things; a righteous man deviseth righteous things; he doth not only exercise liberality and mercy, and work righteousness, when he hath an opportunity put into his hand, but he sits down and considers what great things the LORD hath done for him, and what marvellous loving-

kindness the LORD hath showed to him; and thereupon he studies and casts about what greater things than yet he hath done, he may do for the name of GOD. As it is said of the wicked, "He deviseth mischief continually;" (*Prov.* vi. 14;) "they search out iniquity, they accomplish a diligent search;" (*Ps.* lxxiv. 6;)—search out for every opportunity to work wickedness, and to satisfy their lust;—so righteous men search out, and make a diligent search after opportunities to work righteousness. "Is there not yet a man left of the house of SAUL," said DAVID, "to whom I might show the kindness of GOD?" (*2 Sam.* ix. 3.) Is there not yet a poor soul in distress, to whom I might show kindness for the name of GOD? Is there not yet a poor family in misery, to whom I might show mercy? Is there not yet a poor sinner to whom I might give counsel? Is there not yet a poor saint to whom I might administer comfort for the sake of my GOD? As it is said of the Devil, "He goeth up and down seeking whom he may devour," so it may be said of such, that they are going up and down seeking whom they may save.

Thirdly, They shun occasions and temptations to sin: they keep at as great a distance from sin as possible; they are careful to keep far enough within their line; they dare not venture to their utmost border, lest they go beyond it ere they are aware. A wary Christian, having observed what things have proved snares and temptations to him, and have drawn him aside to iniquity formerly, will take heed how he comes nigh them again. If company hath cooled and damped his heart, he will take heed how he comes into such company again: if going to his utmost liberty in the use of the creatures, either meat, drink, or apparel, hath enticed him beyond his bounds, he will be wary how he allows himself the like liberty, and will deny himself the freedom he might use, rather than again run upon danger: he is sensible of his weakness to stand against a temptation, and thereupon is the more watchful that he run not into temptation. Men that are hold to venture into temptation, or to venture among vain persons, especially when they have

proved what a snare such have been, they have little fear of sin, care of their souls or consciences, or regard to God or godliness. Circumspect Christians dare not venture so: profane men wonder at them, why they will be no more free, nor familiar with them, not so much as to sit and be merry with them: they think it strange, (saith the Apostle,) that you run not with them: the reason is, they are afraid of the hook, and therefore dare not meddle with the bait.

Fourthly, They “abstain from all appearance of evil;” for that is the command: they would live, not only *sine crimine*, but *sine labe*; not only without any fault, but without any flaw or scar upon them. To the end that they may cut off all occasion from them that seek occasion against them, they would do not only things honest, but things of good report too; they inquire concerning what they are about to do, not only whether it be lawful, but whether it be comely; for there may be divers things that may be lawful in themselves, which are yet unseemly, and may look with an evil face. The servants of CHRIST see that there are many eyes upon them, which will espy the least spot upon them; and therefore their care is, to keep themselves “unspotted from the world;” to carry themselves so, that, if it be possible, the world may have nothing to spot them with: they are sensible how obnoxious they are to the censures of the world, and that all the reproaches that fall on them, fall on the LORD and his Gospel. What an outcry is there in the world against those who fear God?—as if they were briars and thorns, the fire-brands of the world, and the troublers of nations, who turn the world upside down; as if there were no lions in the world but CHRIST’s lambs; as if CHRIST’s sheep were all wolves: and therefore, to prevent this, and to put to silence the ignorance and malice of evil men, they endeavour, as much as may be, to gain upon the hearts of all men; to walk so, that they may not only profit, but please others, and render the Gospel the more lovely with them: they would not only wrong no man,

defraud no man, provoke no man, but they would displease no man, and give no man any occasion of offence or distaste at them and their way. Sinners, as much as these men are cried out against for troublesome and unquiet, yet they are desirous rather to please than provoke you; they would please all the world as far as they may without hurting themselves or them: indeed they would not sin against God to please men; they would not wound their consciences to save their credit; they would not lie, nor dissemble, nor flatter, nor connive at you, nor comply with you in sin, to gain your good will; but as far as they can, in order to your good, they are willing to become all things to all men: let them alone but to do their duty to God, to your souls, and to their own; and, if that do not displease you, they are willing in all things to do their best that they may not offend you.

And thus have I given you the description of these men, by the exactness of their walking according to the Scriptures, which stands in their endeavour to have respect to every command, to the most inward and spiritual part of every command, and to observe every command to the utmost. To this I shall add two things:—

1. When they have done all they can, after all this care and circumspection, they acknowledge themselves unprofitable servants. They are thankful, and bless God for helping them on in his way; but yet they are humble: they are so far from boasting that they have done so much, that they are ashamed they have done no more: whilst they admire the grace of God towards them, they abase and abhor themselves in dust and ashes: “I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I,” (no thanks to me,) “but the grace of God which was with me.” (1 Cor. xv. 10.) The world brands them for a proud generation, who say to their brethren, “Stand aside, I am holier than thou.” What more common in such mouths, than “Precise, but as proud as the Devil?” It is true, and Christians will freely acknowledge it, and take the shame of it upon them, that this pestilent evil, pride, is a weed that is apt

to spring up in the richest gardens. Many a christian hath groaned and travailed in pain under the bondage of a self-exalting heart ; but yet he is bewailing it, and bemoaning himself for it. And the constant desire and labour of his soul is, to bring himself to, and hold himself in such lowliness, that whatever he be, or hath done, the excellency of the power may appear to be of **GOD**, and not of him.

2. Whatever they have done, they dare not trust in it ; they dare not be found in their own righteousness, but “ count all things but loss, so that ” they “ may win **CHRIST**, and be found in him.” They labour as zealously in the works of righteousness, as they would have done, if this must have been their righteousness in which they must have stood before the **LORD** ; and yet they depend as singly upon **CHRIST** and his righteousness, as if they had never done any thing.

Before I proceed, let us consider what it is, of all this which hath been spoken of these men, wherein their folly lies. Are they fools for making so wise a choice ?—for choosing the better part, those true riches, that enduring substance, those everlasting treasures, which are laid up in another world ?—or because they will not be cheated by the Devil of that better inheritance, by those toys and fooleries, the pleasures, honours, and vanities of this world ? That is, Are they fools because they are not brutes ? Are they fools, who have taken the right way to obtain that blessedness which they have chosen ?—because they do not content themselves with idle wishings, and hopings for heaven, and promise to themselves they shall not fail of it, though they never take the course which leads to it ? That is, Are they fools because they be men ; and will hearken to their reason and understanding, which tell them, that the end cannot be attained without the means ? Are they fools because they will be upright ; because they will not lie, nor swear, nor riot, nor defraud, nor oppress, but walk in all the commandments of the **LORD** blameless ? That is, Are they fools because they are honest men ? Is this their folly, that

they will not content themselves with a formal, outside religion, but will take care of the heart, as well as the outside ; will perform spiritual duties, and purge themselves from spiritual wickedness ; will make sure work, by laying the axe to the root of that wickedness which breaks forth in their lives, those lusts that war in their members ? That is, Are they fools because they are not hypocrites ? Is this their folly, that they are so free and forward, and zealous, in that which is good ? That is, Are they fools because they will love **GOD** so much, and fear **GOD** so much, and go on so far, and so fast, in obedience to him ; or because they do not give up the strength of their hearts, the vigour of their affections, and care, and labour, to the Devil and their lusts, and reserve only some little for **GOD** and their souls ? Are they fools because they will be so wary, and watchful against sin and temptation, and because they will keep themselves as far out of danger as may be ? That is, Is it their folly that they are not fools ? Stand forth, ye wise men of the world, who charge the saints with folly ; read over all the particulars of that true description which **I** have given you of them ; and tell us in good earnest, if you can, in which of the particulars their folly lies : Is it because they are not brutes, that they are men, that they are honest men, that they are not hypocrites, or that they are not fools, that you account them such ? You say, “Men are fools that they are so precise :” It is all one as though you should say, If they were wise, they would be brutes, knaves, and fools. Behold here the wisdom of this world ! Hath not **GOD** made the wisdom of the world foolishness ?

2. Thus we have seen what this exact and upright walking is, as it respects the Commandment : Now we shall consider it as it respects Conscience. (1.) They take great care of Conscience. (2.) They give good heed to Conscience.

(1.) They take great care of conscience, and take great pains about their conscience. Their care is two-fold ;—about the informing and instructing their conscience ; and about the keeping their conscience tender.

They take great care about the informing and instruct-

ing of their conscience. Conscience is to be the inward guide of their way. As the word is to be their guide without them, so conscience is to be their inward guide: their care therefore is, that it may not be a blind guide. Hence it is, that they are so much employed in searching the Scriptures; they are much conversant in their Bibles; they are frequent in hearing sermons, and diligent in noting and repeating what they hear; they are often putting their doubts, and opening their difficult cases, to those who are able to resolve them; and all this in order to get their consciences enlightened and instructed in the will of God. Though there are many things of which they are ignorant, yet there is nothing of which they are willingly ignorant: their desires and prayers to the LORD are the same with the Psalmist's, "Hide not thy commandments from me;" (*Psa.* cxix. 19;) and with ELIHU's in JOB, "That which I know not, teach thou me. (*Job* xxxiv. 32.)

They also take great care to keep their consciences tender. Tenderness of conscience is sometimes taken for weakness of conscience. A weak conscience is that which is weak-sighted, not able to discern between things that differ, and very subject to mistakes; it mistakes good for evil, lawful for unlawful; and it is also full of troublesome and unreasonable fears, and endless scruples; it often fears where no fear is: this tenderness their endeavours are to cure, and not to cherish.

Tenderness of conscience is the perfection of it: a truly tender conscience is a sound conscience, which is quick of sense, and presently feels and smarts, and is put to pain, with any thing that is really an offence to it. A tender conscience is as the eye; the least dust that blows into it will make it smart; and this not from soreness, but quickness of sense. The dim-sighted world looks upon all tenderness as weakness. It counts all as weak, whose consciences cannot down with any thing; and all their doubtings it reckons to be humour, and conceit, and causeless fears: but this tenderness is so far from being the sickness, that it is the health and soundness of the heart, It was the com-

mendation, and not the reproach of King JOSIAH, that his heart was tender. (2 *Kings* xxii. 19.) Circumspect Christians labour to keep their hearts in this temper; and therefore they carefully shun any thing that would harden them; as the eye that cannot endure the dust which falls into it, is quick at its ward, to keep off any thing that would be obnoxious to it. And this is the reason why Christians can bear any thing rather than sin, because it is this alone that is hurtful to conscience: they are hardy enough to bear afflictions, for these are no prejudice to conscience; it is not against their consciences to suffer, but it is to sin: Affliction may perplex the thoughts, but will never trouble conscience.

Objection. *Tender Conscience! Who more stubborn and stiff in their way? Do you call this tenderness?*

Solution. There is a three-fold stiffness, manifested,

First, In refusing to receive conviction touching any thing wherein men are faulty, or in an error.

Secondly, In refusing to revoke their errors, upon conviction that they are so. Let either of these be charged upon them, and the charge be made good; and then call them stubborn, or what you will.

Thirdly, In refusing to act contrary to their conviction, or to do that in which conscience is not satisfied,—that which, after most candidly inquiring into, and most impartially weighing, all that is said for it, their conscience still tells them, that they should sin in doing. Hereupon, though all their friends should come and persuade and entice them, and though all their adversaries should reproach and persecute them, yet still they refuse to yield. This stiffness is that steadfastness which the LORD requires in them, and is so far from being inconsistent with true tenderness, that it is their tenderness.

If an idolater should come and persuade such to worship an idol, if he should threaten them with the fiery furnace, or with the lions' den, and yet they will not; is this their stubbornness, or is it their tenderness? If an adulterer should persuade them to uncleanness; if a libertine should

think to scoff them out of their holy course, in such way as this;—"Why, what hurt is there in a little mirth? What great matter is it, to take a little liberty now and then? Why should you think yourselves wiser than other men?"—and yet they will not hearken; will you call this their obstinacy? Here are obstinate creatures indeed! They will not be idolaters, they will not be unclean, they will not be libertines, they will not be liars nor dissemblers, they will by no means be persuaded to rebel against God and conscience; and therefore they are obstinate! Persuade them to do that which is good, convince them that they are in an error, and then try whether they will be obstinate.

Christians, prove yourselves to be conscientious. However the world reproach you, and call your uprightness hypocrisy, and your tenderness obstinacy, yet part not with it so, but still resolve with Job, "Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me." (*Job* xxvii. 5.) There is a double way wherein we may be said to remove our integrity;—by departing from it, and by belying it.

Our integrity is "removed" by *departing* from it; by turning aside to iniquity; by being found false to God and conscience; by exchanging this truth and tenderness of heart, for hardness and hypocrisy. Take heed you do not thus depart from your integrity. Beloved, you live in a world wherein conscience is like to cost you dear; if you will own any such thing as conscience, or conscientious walking, you are like to smart for it: look to it that your conscience be sound, such as is worth the suffering for. Look to it, that whatsoever you suffer for conscience, you suffer nothing from conscience for wronging, or abusing, or violating it. Sufferings for conscience, for an upright conscience, are precious: sufferings from conscience, from an evil and abused conscience, will be bitter. Let all the world be against you rather than conscience: whom the world smites for conscience, God will heal; whom the world judges, God will justify: but if our hearts condemn

us, who shall plead for us, or comfort us? Carry yourselves so, that conscience may be your comforter, not your tormentor. There is no torment like the stings and revenges of an abused conscience. Keep your conscience tender, and it will neither hurt you, nor suffer you to be hurt by others: keep your integrity, and it will keep you. Give the world leave to talk and do what they will; but when they have said and done their worst, keep yourselves honest, and you shall keep yourselves safe: your conscience will be your confidence and your security: "He that walketh uprightly, shall walk surely." Be not reproached out of your refuge: let not the world find you obstinate against duty, nor yet yielding to iniquity: be not stubborn, but yet be steadfast; yield to reproofs, while you slight reproaches. Let us be so gentle, flexible, and easy to be entreated, so fearful to offend, so ready to please all men in all things which are not against conscience, that we may convince them, that in those things wherein we fix and do not yield, it is because we cannot, not because we will not. And let us yet be so steadfast in those things which would be a wound and defilement to conscience, that we may let them see that it is but a vain attempt for them to think to reproach or persecute us out of our integrity. Let us be sincerely tender, not out of any fickleness or weakness of conscience, or from groundless scrupulosity, much less from sullenness or humour, but from a sound mind, and a pure conscience. Let us be universally tender of every evil, not only of the greatest and most scandalous, but of the smallest sins; not only of open sins, such as come to the view of men, but of the most secret sins, the most inward and spiritual wickedness, such as need fear no reprover but conscience. Let us be tender not only of committing sin, but of any omissions or neglects; not only of our neglects of duties, but of our negligences in duties, and of that deadness, formality, cursoriness, coldness, hypocrisy, distraction, which hence arise; of the neglects or negligent performances of our duty to God, to men, to our families, to our friends, to our enemies; of our not pitying them, not

praying for them, not wishing them well, not doing them good for their evil, and endeavouring, by our soft, meek, inoffensive, and loving carriage towards them, to win and gain upon their hearts. O, brethren, we have much to blame ourselves for, though evil men have little; or if they have more, they are so unhappy as not to hit upon the right things; judging us and condemning us, not for our faults, but for the good that is found in us. But, however, we have much to blame ourselves for: the LORD help us, for we have many haltings and many failings! O, it were well for us, if our hearts had no more to say against us than men can say. What unevenness and inequality is there in our goings! What intermissions in our care and watchfulness! Whatever our aims and desires are, whatsoever universal regard we have to the will of GOD, yet when we come to practice, in how many things do we halt and go away! We dare not lie, nor swear; but are we so watchful as we should be against idle and vain talking? It may be, that we cannot suffer any rooted malice to abide in our hearts; but are we not fretful and impatient? Doth conscience check us for, and make resistance against, every evil? Let us be universally tender, universally careful. O that our consciences were but as tender as our lusts! Our pride will not bear any thing that reflects upon our reputation; our covetousness will not bear any thing that is a hinderance to our gains; our passions will hardly bear the least cross or displeasing word; how touchy are we at every little thing that does offend us! O, if conscience were in every thing as tender as lust, what Christians should we be! But woe to us, whatever we should be, how short we fall! How unequal are our goings! How unsteady are our tempers; sometimes tender, sometimes hard; sometimes watchful, sometimes heedless; in some things careful, in some things careless! How do we too much justify the wicked, and harden them in their reproaches of us! Let us press on with so much earnestness to this evenness and exactness in all our ways, that it may be seen, that if we have not yet attained, yet we are following

after. Such a conscience as this, such a course as this, will plead for itself against all the calumnies of the world.

Our integrity is “removed,” also, by *belying* it. And that is the sense in which JOB says, “I will not remove my integrity ;” (*Job* xxvii. 5 ;) that is, I will never bely my integrity : call me a hypocrite, or what else you please, GOD forbid that I should justify you by belying myself, and saying as you say. Brethren, do not out of any base fear, or to make your peace with sinners, do not say of your tenderness and watchful walking, “This was my pride, hypocrisy, humour, or self-will ;” but stand upon your own uprightness : “Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go : my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.” (*Job* xxvii. 5, 6.) Thus we have shown how good men take care of Conscience. But we also observe,

(2.) They give good heed to conscience ; they will hearken to and follow conscience. The voice of a well-instructed conscience is the voice of GOD ; and to this voice they will hearken, without turning aside in any thing, either to the right hand or to the left.

By turning aside to the right hand, I mean, the making the narrow way narrower than the LORD hath made it. And this may be done, First, by putting religion in such things in which GOD hath put none ; laying other bonds and burdens on our necks than those which the HOLY GHOST hath laid on us : Secondly, By putting more religion in any thing than GOD hath put in it ; by laying a greater weight and stress upon the smaller things of religion than GOD hath laid on them. By the lesser duties of religion, I mean not any moral duties, (for the lowest of these, the lowest duties of mercy, justice, charity, and truth, are to be reckoned among the weighty matters of the law, wherein we cannot err by being too strict,) but the circumstantial of the worship of GOD, the outward forms of worship, and the gestures, &c., to be used in it. Let us not put more in these circumstantial, than the Scriptures have put : let us not be so zealous for or against

them as if religion stood or fell with them : “ Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.” (1 *Cor.* vii. 19.) These are not the things wherein religion stands ; keep the commandments, fear God, walk before God in holiness and righteousness ; let your zeal be spent that way ; but trouble not yourselves so much about these lesser matters. Yet these two things must be here added.

Firstly : This is not so to be understood, as if Christians were to swallow all things of this nature, without examining whether they be agreeable to the will of God or not ; a due regard must be had to the satisfying of conscience, even in the smallest things. We may not yield so as to practise any little things which are against our consciences, though we may not spend our zeal about them as if religion lived or died with them.

Secondly : Even against these lesser things there ought to be zeal expressed, if they should be likely to prove destructive to the substantials of religion, and hinder the main end which they pretend to promote.

By turning aside to the left hand, I mean all declinings to licentiousness : either, First, By making duties no duties, making sins to be no sins, and so making the way of life broader than CHRIST hath made it, throwing off those burdens which God hath imposed, making it no matter of conscience to be strict, not only in the circumstantial, but neither in the substantials of religion ; so blinding conscience, that it accounts it not a duty to be so strict and so precise in any thing, but that there may be a greater latitude allowed, especially in cases of danger : Secondly, By making bold with duties and sins, neglecting known duties, running upon known sins, and making shipwreck of conscience to satisfy lust ; when, though conscience stands convinced, that holiness, in the strictness of it, is our duty, and that licentiousness, and living after the flesh, are our sin, yet we will indulge ourselves in fleshly liberty.

Now this is another character of circumspect Christians ; they will walk according to conscience in all things,

without turning aside either way, either to the right hand, or to the left. They are not willing to turn aside to the right hand, either by putting religion in those things in which God hath put none, or by putting more of religion in any thing than God hath put : their zeal is for the substantials and weighty things of religion ; as for the circumstantial, though they will not act in these contrary to conscience, yet they will not be contentious about them, nor censorious of those who, agreeing with them in the main, differ from them in these things.

But their great care is, not to turn aside to the left hand. They will not, for fear of being too precise, grow profuse and profane ; but, as the Apostle PAUL, (*Heb. xiii. 18.*) they “have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly ;”—“denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present world ;” being “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.”

(III.) From this way they will not be withdrawn, either by any hopes or advantages on the one hand, or by any fears or dangers on the other : they have not taken up religion on such slight grounds, as to be either flattered or frightened out of it. Christians, at their first engaging in the way of the LORD, sit down and consider what it will cost them to be CHRIST’s disciples ; they count all the charges, they cast up beforehand all the damages to which they can be subject, and foresee, that there is enough in CHRIST to make amends for all, and to save them harmless at the last, whatever falls. They count upon tribulations, losses, reproaches, and the greatest of temptations ; and if they did not foresee that the gain of godliness would countervail all the inconveniences with which it is likely to be attended, they would not have adventured on it ; but seeing they can be no losers, hereupon they set up their staff, determining not to depart for ever. They take CHRIST, and his way, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in prosperity and affliction ; they resolve to stand or fall, to

suffer and reign, to live and die, with him. He that hath not thus engaged is no true Christian; this absolute resolution to be ever the LORD's, and never to forsake him, is the essence of true conversion. He is no true convert who is content to follow CHRIST in fair weather only, as far and as long as he safely may: a sincere convert will follow CHRIST absolutely and unalterably. Now, being thus engaged, whatever befalls them, it is no more than they looked for: they are called fools, and counted stubborn, self-willed, self-conceited; they look to be counted such, and so it moves them not: they are set upon by flatteries, and tempted by outward prosperity, but it cannot prevail; "Thy money perish with thee," says PETER. It may be said of the true Christian as it was said of LUTHER, "Money will do nothing with him; preferment will do nothing with him; prisons, banishments, death itself, can do nothing with him." "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy."

And as true Christians will not be drawn to a total apostasy from CHRIST, so neither will they be brought to allow themselves in any little deviation: "All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant: our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way." (*Ps.* xliv. 17, 18.) We read, that when a decree was made, that whosoever should ask any petition, for thirty days' space, either of GOD or man, save of the King of Babylon, should be cast into the lions' den, yet DANIEL would not forbear to pray to his GOD. When he "knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed." Carnal men would have been ready to have said, What a precise fool was this DANIEL? What great matter was it that he stood so much upon? He was not urged to the commission of sin; he was not required to fall down before an image, or to worship any false GOD; but only

to forbear for a time to pray to the true **GOD**. Was this such a crime, to forbear praying for a few weeks, for the saving of his life? Or, if he would needs pray, he might have done it secretly, and kept his devotion to himself: must he needs keep his hours, and open his windows too? Yea, he must do it, and he will do it. **DANIEL** would not only continue his course of prayer, but he would not give his adversaries occasion to think that he was afraid to pray; he held it his duty (being called out to a confession of his religion) to let his adversaries know, that he was not afraid to trust **GOD** with his safety, whilst he continued in the exercise of his duty.

In matters which **GOD** hath left to their liberty, they are willing to use their liberty. In matters that concern their personal interest, as men, they are not careful; they desire not to be contentious: spare them but the liberty to keep a good conscience; give them leave to fear **GOD**, and to worship **GOD**; give them leave to be holy and righteous, and to walk before the **LORD** in their integrity; and for any thing else you may persuade them to it with ease. But if you attempt to entice them away from their **GOD**, or to impose upon them to the prejudice of a good conscience, you might as well spare your labour; speak no more to them in such matters; they are at a point; **GOD** they will follow, and a good conscience they will maintain, whatever come upon them, to the end of their days.

Thus I have given you a description of the Scripture-Precisians, which is summarily this: They are the same with sincere and godly men, men fearing **GOD**, who are inwardly renewed after the image of **GOD**, who are adventurers for another world, are gotten into the way of life, and are walking on carefully and heedfully in that way; whose aim and endeavour is to live, not according to the wills and lusts of men, but according to the word and will of **GOD**; not according to humour and fancy, but according to conscience: a people that will neither make the way to heaven narrower than it is, by being scrupulous and nice, where **GOD** hath given them liberty, nor will

make it broader than it is by taking up looser principles, or allowing themselves in loose practices: a people who dare not adventure their souls upon that easy, formal, careless, outward way of religion, which the most do; but are willing to make sure work, by walking to the exactness of their rule, and living up to the height of their principles; and who in this holy course are steadfast and unmoveable, will neither be bribed off by the flatteries, nor beaten off by the frowns of the world; but will retain their integrity, hold fast their holy profession, and hold on in their holy course; and this to the death.

Concerning these men, I shall now make evident to the consciences of all impartial persons, in the second place, that they are no *fools*, but truly *wise men*.

In order hereto, I must first discover what is meant by fools. A fool is a man void of understanding, a man void of true wisdom.

Wisdom is of two sorts:—

1. *Fleshly wisdom or policy*; which consists in understanding where the interest of the flesh lies, and in the ordering ourselves and our affairs so that we may advance and secure this interest. By the interest of the flesh, I mean, all those things which please and gratify nature, as outward peace and quiet, plenty and prosperity, credit and reputation: he that can order his affairs, and steer his course, so as will most advance, and best secure these, that, which waysoever the world go, he may live in peace and quiet, and credit, and plenty, and pleasure, this is a *fleshly-wise man*. Concerning this wisdom, the question is not: it will easily be granted, that “the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.”

2. *Spiritual wisdom*; which consists, (1.) In understanding where our main interest lies; not in things temporal, meat and drink, clothes and money, houses and lands, pleasures and honours, but in things spiritual, in the love and favour of God, in a good conscience, in righteousness, peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST; and in

things eternal, in that glory, honour, and immortality, which shall be given of God : (2.) In ordering ourselves and ways so as to make the best provision for securing this great and eternal interest, that whatever miscarriages there may be in things of lower value, that wherein our eternal happiness stands may be secured ; this is called in Scripture, “ the wisdom which is from above,” “ wisdom to salvation ;” and this is the only true wisdom. God hath made, and will make, all fleshly wisdom appear to be but folly. Concerning this true wisdom, this spiritual wisdom, it is, that I shall now prove that circumspect, precise Christians are no fools, but the only wise men ; and that from these reasons:—1. God accounts them no fools. 2. They will not be accounted fools at last, neither by God nor men. 3. The properties of wise men are found in them. 4. The treasures of wisdom are found with them.

1. God counts them no fools. They are no fools whom the world counts fools, but they are such whom God counts fools. Beloved, whose judgment will you take? Will you stand to the judgment of God in this case? His judgment we have plain : “ Unto man he said, The fear of the Lord, this is wisdom ; and to depart from evil, this is understanding :” (*Job* xxviii. 28 :) “ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.” (*Ps.* cxi. 10.) The “ beginning” of wisdom : that notes either ; (1.) The entrance of wisdom : men never begin to be wise till they come to be godly. Look how long thou hast lived a stranger from God, so long thou hast lived a fool. When the repenting prodigal came to his father, he came to himself, his understanding returned to him ; he was beside himself before, but then he came to himself. (2.) The top or height of wisdom, *caput sapientiæ* : the word signifies a godly man ; for true wisdom is the head, and not the tail : “ excellent wisdom is found in him.” In these, and multitudes of other Scriptures, you have the judgment of God concerning these men : Are you wiser than he? Will you believe your own conceits and appre-

hensions before the word of the all-wise and true **GOD**? Either you must make sinners fools, or **GOD** a liar.

2. They will be accounted no fools at last, neither by **GOD** nor men: they only are to be accounted fools now, who will be accounted such at last. At present men's eyes are blinded; they cannot discern between light and darkness; but at last men's eyes shall be opened: this blind world shall then see, and look upon all the ways and transactions of men here below, and all the various states of the several sorts of persons in the world, with another eye than it does now. When the designs, and ways, and actions of men shall be brought to their issue; when all disguises shall be taken away, and all faces and hearts shall be made bare, and naked, and open; then every one will see who have behaved themselves wisely, and who have played the fool: "Every man's work shall be made manifest;" (1 *Cor.* iii. 13;) and thereby every man shall be made manifest; "The day shall declare them:" If you ask, "what day?" I answer, The last day, when every man shall have finished his work; the day of judgment, which is both a day of trial, when all shall be proved what they are; and a day of recompense, when every man shall be rewarded according to his work. Let this now determine the question; let those persons, who, both by **GOD** and men, by good men and evil men, will be accounted fools at that day, let them be accounted fools now; and let those men be accounted wise now, whom **GOD**, and all the world, will account such in that day of trial. Now the world are divided in their judgment; some think Christians fools, others think them wise; but at last all the world shall be agreed, and of one mind; and those that shall be judged fools then, by the common judgment of all, let them pass for such now.

But you will say, What is this to the satisfying of our present judgment? How can we tell now who shall then be accounted wise, or fools? I answer, Besides that the Word is before you, which is the law by which that judgment must proceed, let every man appeal to his own conscience. Here are two sorts of persons in the world. One

sort are such as own **GOD** in the world, and follow **GOD**, and follow the Scriptures, and withdraw themselves from the ways of the wicked, spending much time in praying, and hearing, and meditating of **GOD**, exercising themselves in holy watchfulness over their hearts, and over all their ways, and labouring in all things, that both here and hereafter they may be approved of **GOD**. The other sort live at their ease; they mind their farms and oxen, and fulfil the desires of the flesh; they hope that they shall do well enough hereafter, but do not much trouble themselves about it. Let every man ask his own heart thus, Which of these two sorts do I think in my conscience will be found fools, and which wise, in the day of judgment? Beloved, will you speak your consciences in this thing? If it were put to your choice amongst which of these you would be found, and take your portion at last, what choice do you think you should make? Whether would you be found amongst those who spend their days in ignorance, or amongst those who seek after the knowledge of **GOD**? Amongst those who labour and strive to make sure of the love and favour of **GOD**, or amongst those who take no care about it? Amongst the vain or the serious, the diligent or the slothful, the heavenly-minded or the earthly-minded? Dare any of you say, Let my soul stand among the drunkards and gluttons; among the covetous, and proud, and careless ones of the earth; among the formalists, the mockers, and the scoffers at the ways of the **LORD**: let my portion be with them; let my sentence be according to their sentence? If you dare not make this your choice, to be found amongst such at that day, you perceive what the verdict of your own conscience is in this case; whatever you say of them now, your conscience tells you, that these will be found the fools in that day, and those only will be found wise, amongst whom you would choose to stand.

3. The properties of wise men are found in them. Of these I shall give but two instances:—(1.) They understand themselves aright. (2.) They build surely.

(1.) They understand themselves aright : for,

First, They understand wherein their interest lies. We say of a wise man, He is a man who understands himself, who understands what he hath to do. Christians are men of understanding; they understand what that one thing is for which they live, in the securing whereof, if they prosper, they know that they shall be happy, whatever else they miscarry in; and upon their miscarriage wherein they know that they are undone, whatever else they prosper in : they know that there is but one thing needful, and that one thing is their eternal interest, the blessedness to come, the happiness of the other world, the obtaining and enjoying of God. This one thing is in their hearts; "One thing have I desired, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever:" and this one thing is in their hand too, the work and the business which they mind to carry on; "This one thing I do; forgetting that which is behind, and reaching forth to that which is before, I press to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in CHRIST JESUS." Sinners, you who imagine yourselves to be so wise, you are a company of poor mistaken creatures, mistaken in your interest; you are in the world, you know not for what; you know not what you have to do here; it is no wonder that you shoot so wide, when you mistake your mark; it is no wonder that you do you know not what, when you know not what you should do? Is this the work for which you came into the world, to eat and drink, and sleep, and buy, and sell, and marry, and bring forth children, and load yourselves and them with thick clay; to sport, and play, and riot, and laugh, and spend your days in mere vanity and foolery? Are there no higher things than these, which God hath set before you, and more worthy of your choice and labour? Have you no souls to mind which are of an immortal being? And are there not lasting riches, abiding pleasures, an enduring substance, that may be had, that must be had, for these souls of yours to live upon, or else they will be eternally miserable? And do you not understand that your souls are of more

value than your perishing carcases ; and that the making provision for your souls is of far higher consequence than the pampering of your bodies ? If you do not understand this, yet do not judge them to be fools that do.

Secondly, They understand their way. The wisdom of a merchant lies, not only in his skill, to choose the best and richest commodities, which will bring in the greatest and most certain gain ; but in his understanding the mystery of his trade, whereby he may upon the best and surest terms procure these commodities. Christians, by their being acquainted with the Scriptures, and having been trained up in the school of CHRIST, are come to understand their trade, the mystery of godliness ; they have not only learned to prize the salvation of GOD, and the glory and blessedness of the world to come, but are well acquainted with the way that leads to it. Carnal men are ignorant of the way ; though they understand in general that religion is the way to salvation, yet, poor miserable creatures ! they mistake their religion : and little smatterings of the knowledge of GOD, with some profession of faith and repentance, especially if it be joined with some little outward devotion, and with the now and then calling upon GOD for mercy,—this they count religion enough to bring them to heaven ; and any thing that is more than this, they think more than is necessary : these are the fools indeed, if we may believe the Scripture ; “ Surely they are poor, they are foolish, they know not the way of the LORD.” (*Jer.* v. 4.) Sinners are wise enough in their own ways ; the way of sin they know ; the way of lying, and oppression, and unrighteousness, the way to wealth, and honour, and temporal preferments, they sufficiently know ; they have studied and travelled these ways : but all this while they are foolish children ; “ Surely they are foolish, they know not the way of the LORD.” Christians are wise ; and herein their wisdom stands, “ they know the way of the LORD ; ” they have a light without them, showing to them this good way ; they have a voice behind them, saying to them, This is the way, walk in it : they have made it their business to inquire, and study, and travel this way ; surely

these are wise, they know the way of the LORD, they know their way to heaven. If they know not the way to be rich in this world, yet they know the way to be rich towards God. If they know not how to escape trouble and affliction, they know how to suffer it; if they know not how to escape the wrath of men, yet they know how to escape the wrath to come: if this be wisdom, to be skilled in the matters of religion and righteousness, in the matters of faith and a good conscience, to have found out the way of life, by which to escape from hell beneath, then these godly men are wise men; surely they are wise, "they know the way of the LORD."

But you will say, Why may not we be in the right way as well as they? Why may not our way of religion be as good a way, and as wise a way, and as safe a way as theirs? I answer: Will you make use of your reason? If you will, you shall answer this objection yourselves; the difference betwixt you and them is this: You take up but a little part of that religion which you both profess, and you will have but a little to do with that little of religion which you do take up; you little mind or study that which you count your religion: these precise ones take up the whole of religion, and they give themselves wholly to the study and practice of it; they make it their business to search the Scriptures, that they may understand the will and way of the LORD, and to govern their hearts, and order their lives, in all things according to it. So that now, if you will answer two easy questions, you shall yourselves answer the objection. The first question is, who are most likely to be in the right; those who endeavour to practise all that they profess, or those who, though they profess the truth, practise scarcely any thing, but a small part of it, and that the lower and less considerable part of it, the bare outside of it? I hope you will acknowledge that this is no hard question to be resolved; and the second question shall be as easy. Who is likely to be in the right; the diligent Christian who makes it his business to study his religion, or the careless Christian who seldom spends a serious thought about it? Answer but these two

questions, and then yourselves will be able to give a reason why it is more likely that they should be in the right than you. Brethren, show yourselves men; here are a company of poor creatures of you, who have spent your time in ignorance and idleness as to the matters of God and your souls, and who little meddle with that religion, which yourselves say you must do if you will be saved : you say you must believe, you must repent of your sins, you must pray to God for forgiveness, and yet what great strangers are you to these things ! It may be, if you consider it, you have often gone whole days and weeks together, and have scarcely ever prayed, not so much as after your own fashion, nor scarcely had any thoughts of repentance, or asking forgiveness of God ; you eat and drink, and go forth and come in, and lie down and rise up, and never so much as look up to God for his mercy and blessing : these others, in the mean while, make praying, and reading, and hearing, and minding God and their souls, their daily study and business. Now, what an unreasonable thing is it to imagine, that those who so little meddle with any thing of religion, should be as likely to understand it, as those who make it their daily work ! O beloved, how can you be so confident that you are in the right, when you never seriously inquire whether you be or no ? And how can you think you have any wisdom in you, when you trust a matter of such weight upon a mere presumption ? You are strongly conceited that you are as wise as others, and in as good a way ; and upon this conceit you venture your souls. Friends, you are a sad wonder to me. I wonder men should think, that carelessness is as good as diligence ; licentiousness as good as strictness ; that that loose, and blind, and easy way which men take up, is as good, and as sure, nay, a better and more certain way of life, than the strict and industrious way of the saints. I very much wonder, how men, who know any thing of the Scriptures, can make themselves think, that the foolish, sottish, dull, lifeless way, in which they endeavour to satisfy themselves, can give the least hopes of salvation.

(2.) They build surely, so that whosoever or whatsoever falls, they stand sure for ever. They are those wise builders of whom CHRIST speaks: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not. (*Matt.* vii. 24.) "My foot standeth in an even place." (*Ps.* xxvi. 12.) All other persons stand upon slippery places. When they are in the height of all their glory and confidence, they are often gone in a moment. A Christian stands sure; whichever way the wheel of Providence moves, it moves in favour of the upright; he is still uppermost, when he is undermost; all the vicissitudes and returns of prosperity and affliction make no change upon him as to the main; he is as happy under all his outward losses as in his greatest gains; he is as honourable under the greatest contempt poured out upon him, as under the highest applause; he is as safe in the greatest dangers, as when there is no danger appearing; he hath religion, righteousness, innocency, yea, the truth and strength of the Almighty God to uphold him; if a Christian falls, the Scripture must fall with him; that word, concerning which CHRIST hath said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." (*Matt.* xxiv. 35.) He shall never be disappointed of his hopes, unless faithfulness can disappoint; he shall never be deceived, till truth becomes a lie.

The men of the world build all their hopes on the sand, on the wisdom of the flesh, on riches, strength, and multitude; they bottom their very souls upon mere fancies and presumptions, upon that wood, hay, and stubble, the doctrines, inventions, and traditions of men: nay, they have their foundation in the dirt and mire; they strengthen themselves in their wickedness. If iniquity be able to support them, if unrighteousness be able to exalt them, if ungodliness can secure them, they have something to lean upon; but if righteousness, simplicity, and godly sincerity,

—if the favour of **GOD**, and an interest in **CHRIST**,—be the only sure refuge, then where are the generation of the ungodly? When they are in the height of all their glory, it is but one turn of the wheel, and they are thrown off their hopes, and their joys vanish, and all their thoughts perish. If **GOD**, and **CHRIST**, and the Scriptures, and conscience, be of any consistency, Christians have enough. If unrighteousness should carry it in this world ever so clearly, yet if holiness will but carry it in the world to come, Christians are safe enough. If men build their hopes on this earth, when the earth is shaken, their hopes are shaken, and their hearts are shaken, and they are even at their wits' end. But “we will not fear though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” Though all the earth should be in an uproar, though the whole world should be turned topsy-turvy, yet we will not fear; though the mountains shake, yet our hearts shall not shake. Are they not wise men who are gotten into such a case?

4. The treasures of wisdom are found with them. You will yet, it may be, be ready to say, “What have they gotten by their wisdom? If you were to give us an account of their losings, you might easily bring in a long bill; some of them have had so little wit, as to lose all they have; but, will you take your bill, and write down their gains?” Why if you will hearken to me a while, I will show you what they have gained: they have gotten great treasure; as poor as any of them seem to be, they are the richest men in the world. Particularly,

(1.) They have gotten the Pearl; **CHRIST** is theirs: they are those merchants, who have sought goodly pearls; and they have found the pearl of great price: that Corner-stone which is laid in Sion, which is a precious stone, is theirs; that pearl which is the price of souls, the ransom which was paid for them; which is the food of souls, their bread and water, the living bread, the water of life,

of which whoso eateth and drinketh shall live for ever ; He is theirs : **GOD** hath given them Him whom they sought. This is the richest of treasures, which comprehends all treasures in it ; this will supply all their necessities, and make up all their losses ; they who have **CHRIST** want nothing. When I look upon the pomp and the glory of the world, I must say, These are none of mine ; when I look upon the rich fields, the pleasant valleys, the fruitful hills, the oxen and the sheep, the gold and the silver of the earth, I must say, These are none of mine ; but yet the Pearl is mine, and that is all things.

(2.) They have gotten the “ White Stone,” the stone of absolution : “ I will give him a white stone,” (*Rev. ii. 17.*) which is a token of absolution. It was a custom among the heathens to absolve persons by giving them a white stone, and to condemn by giving a black stone. “ We have received the atonement ;” (*Rom. v. 11* ;) **GOD** is reconciled, our sins are forgiven, our souls are absolved from those black bills of indictment which were laid against us ; we have received the signal of this atonement, the Holy Dove, the **SPIRIT** of the **LORD** in our hearts ; and the sense of this atonement hence arising, the peace of **GOD** possesseth our hearts ; we taste and see what it is to be at peace with **GOD**, in those smiles from his face, in those dawns of the light of his countenance, and the shedding abroad of his love in our hearts. When you consider your own fulness, your dainties and delicacies, your ornaments and jewels, your possessions and honours, you are transported with pride, and have almost forgotten that you are men : but what means that black stone in thy breast, that guilt which thou carriest in thy conscience ? Consider, sinners, what it is to have **GOD** your enemy, wrath your portion, the curse cleaving to your possessions, the sentence of death written in your hearts ; and then you will think that those men have gotten something, who have gotten their absolution from all this.

(3.) Theirs is the White Robe, or Sanctification. Holiness is not only imposed on Christians as their duty, but be-

stowed on them as their privilege ; therefore the **LORD** promises to his people as their encouragement under affliction, that thereby they shall “ be made partakers of his holiness.” (*Heb. xii. 10.*) This is the precious treasure of the saints. A good man, though he hath no treasure in his house, nothing in his purse, nothing in the field, yet he hath a good treasure in his heart, a treasure of wisdom and knowledge, a treasure of grace and holiness, a treasure of faith, and patience, and humility, and mercy ; and this is a rich treasure. It is the man rich in faith, rich in grace and holiness, who is a rich man indeed ; a heart full of grace is a better treasure than a house full of gold. As much as strong men glory in their strength, as much as wise men glory in their wisdom, as much as great men glory in their greatness ; one grain of grace is more worth than all : as much as holiness is despised and trampled upon by the men of this world, it is of greater value than mountains of gold and silver.

Holiness is the health of our souls ; sanctification is the restitution of the soul, with all its faculties, to their rectitude and soundness. By holiness the soul is, 1, Made fit for service ; and that is a great blessing. What a misery is it to be a useless and unprofitable lump, good for nothing ? To be serviceable, and that to such high and noble ends, as honouring the name, carrying on the designs, and showing forth the virtues of the eternal God ; what a blessed thing is it ? 2. The soul by Holiness is made capable of enjoying the **LORD**, and all the gifts of **GOD**. What is the reason that Christians, under a decay of grace, and overgrown with corruption, can take comfort in nothing ? Tell them of the promises of the Gospel, of the privileges of the Gospel, of the joys, and hopes, and glory to come, they can take no pleasure, they can find no sweetness in them : promises do not affect them, privileges do not affect them, future hopes and expectations do not affect them : what is the reason of this ? Their souls are sick, and cannot taste any thing that is good. The more healthy men are, the greater delight they can take in their business, the greater comfort they

can take in their friends, the greater pleasure they can take in their meat and drink, or in any thing else which they enjoy : and so it is with a healthy soul ; by how much the more holiness, by so much the more sweetness : duties are sweet, ordinances are sweet, promises are sweet, the society of the saints is sweet, the meditations of God are sweet. They whose souls are in a holy, healthful state, can truly be said to enjoy their friends, to enjoy the promises and ordinances, to enjoy their very duties, to enjoy God in all they have or do. This is another of the treasures of wisdom which the saints have gotten ; they have gotten holiness.

(4.) Theirs is the Adoption. “ Who are Israelites, whose is the adoption.” (*Rom. ix. 4.*) There is a twofold Israelite ; an “ Israelite after the flesh ;” such were the natural posterity of ABRAHAM ; and an “ Israelite after the Spirit ;” such are all believers, the children of the faith of ABRAHAM. And according to this distinction of Israelites, there is a twofold adoption, outward and visible, which pertain to the natural seed ; inward and invisible, which is the peculiar privilege of the spiritual seed, the children of the faith of ABRAHAM. The adoption comprehends in it, 1. *The grace of Adoption*, whereby the LORD hath given us the relation of children, and a right to all those privileges and blessings that flow from that relation : “ To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of GOD.” (*John i. 12.*) 2. *The Spirit of Adoption* : “ And because you are sons, GOD hath sent forth the Spirit of his SON into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (*Gal. iv. 6.*) This Spirit is called, “ the Spirit of Adoption,” not only because it works in us the dispositions and dutiful affections of sons, but especially because it witnesses our sonship : “ Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father : the SPIRIT itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of GOD.” (*Rom. viii. 15, 16.*) The SPIRIT evidences and witnesses our sonship, and thereby enables us to cry, Abba, Father ; that is, to call God,

Father: the SPIRIT gives us the boldness and confidence of children, to come to him on all occasions; to make our complaints to him; to make known our wants, our fears, and our dangers to him; to make our requests to him; to depend upon him for provision and protection; to put in for a child's portion, for a share in his riches; to lay claim to, and to lay hold upon, the inheritance of sons; to cast our care upon him, and to comfort ourselves in the sufficiency of our Father. This is a blessed and glorious privilege which Christians have obtained, to be the sons and daughters of the LORD Almighty: "Behold what manner of love the FATHER hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of GOD!" (1 *John* iii. 1.) "Seemeth it a small thing unto you," said DAVID, "to be the son-in-law of a King?" Why, what King was it? It was one that was none of the best; and yet he was a King, and that was a great thing, for such a poor man as DAVID was, to be son-in-law to a King. But what is it to be sons and heirs to the King of Glory? The LORD says to all his sons, as the father of the Prodigal said to his eldest son, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine:" (*Luke* xv. 31 :) "Son, daughter," saith the LORD, "thou shalt be ever with me; all that I have in heaven and earth, all is thine." "Blessed are the peacemakers;" Why so? They are the children of GOD. GOD's children are blessed children; not one of them shall go without their Father's blessing: the LORD hath not only, as ISAAC, a blessing for one of his children; but as JACOB, he hath a blessing for every child: if thou be GOD's child, GOD, even thy GOD, will give thee his blessing.

(5.) Theirs is the Kingdom. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (*Luke* xii. 32.) To whom is the kingdom given? To the little flock, not to the herd of swine, the profane multitude, but to the little flock of CHRIST; those few whom he hath called out of the world, who follow him; theirs is the kingdom: What kingdom? Why, the king-

dom of heaven, a kingdom of glory, of righteousness, of peace, of joy and blessedness, the everlasting kingdom. And here we are fallen upon that height, and depth, and length, and breadth, which cannot be fathomed or measured. Here is the wisdom of Christians ; they have gotten the birth-right and the blessing, the sonship and the inheritance ; theirs is the kingdom of heaven : here is the faith, and patience, and hope, and prayers, and sufferings, and labours of the saints ; the riches of their faith, the fruit of their patience, the matter of their hope, the return of their prayers, the reward of their sufferings, the end of their labours, the everlasting kingdom.

Now judge whom ye will account the wise men. Shall those be accounted wise, whom God, or those whom men account such ? Shall those pass for fools now, who will be found wise at last ? Are those the wise men, who never understood what they had to do here, and so never minded that necessary work for which they were sent into the world ? Are our children, who mind nothing else but their play, and their meat, and their clothes, are those the wise ones of the world ? Are they the wise builders, who have laid their foundation on the sand ? When the winds, and the floods, and the waves, have blown away all you have been building, will you then boast of your wisdom ? You that count yourselves such wise men, and demand what the saints have gotten, tell us what you have gotten by all your wisdom. The saints have something to show for themselves, as witnesses of their prudence. CHRIST, the hidden manna, that living bread which they have laid up for themselves against a time of need ; that peace which they have gotten to support them in a time of trouble ; these are some things to show that they have not foolishly lost their time ; every grace which they have gotten, every comfort which they have treasured up. There is something more to show ; every dead lust pleads for them. SAMSON'S dead lion was not a greater proof of his strength, than the dead lusts of Christians are of their wisdom. They have gotten the birth-right and the blessing : who was the

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wiser of the two ; **ESAU**, who sold the birth-right, and lost the blessing, or **JACOB**, who got both ? They have gotten the kingdom too ; theirs is the kingdom of heaven : whilst others have been dividing the spoils here below, scrambling for shadows and fancies, the dignities, and preferments, and pleasures of this world, these have been laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come. Doth this speak them such a foolish company as you would make them ? Is this your serious and sober judgment ? Do you in earnest think, that in that change which the Gospel hath made upon them, they are changed for the worse ? That in the choice which they have made of **GOD**, rather than the world ; of **CHRIST**, instead of their lusts ; of things eternal, before things temporal ; they have chosen to their loss ? Is this your thought ? Will you write down this as your judgment, and put your hand to it, and be content that this writing should be produced at the last judgment, as the test by which you will be tried, whether you are wise or foolish ? Are you Christians, and do you believe the Scriptures ; and are you not yet ashamed that any such thoughts should come into your hearts ? Will you say, The Devil is the best master, and he is a fool that will not be his servant ; but **CHRIST** is a hard master, and no one who is wise will venture after him ? Will you say, that **MOSES** was a fool, in refusing “ to be called the son of **PHARAOH**’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of **GOD**, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; ” that the Apostles and the Disciples were fools ; that **PETER**, and **PAUL**, and **JOHN**, and **JAMES**, were fools ; with the rest of those holy men and women, who denied themselves, took up their cross, and followed **CHRIST** ; and that the Scribes and Pharisees, and publicans, and drunkards, and gluttons, had more wit than they ? Is not this the very thing you say, in charging folly upon those whose aim and desire is to walk in the same steps in which those primitive Christians walked ? Is this your reason, and religion, and honesty ? Speak out your hearts in plain terms :—“ No man would hearken to **CHRIST**, unless he were a fool ; no man would be holy,

unless he were a fool ; no man would leave his pleasures, and his liberties, and his vanities, unless he had first lost his wits : or, at least, no wise man would take up more of Christianity, than the name, and the shell, and the shadow ; none but a fool would make sure work for his soul, would go through with CHRIST and Christianity, would be an inward, hearty, resolved, universal, sincere Christian.” What do your brutish hearts and ways speak less than this ? Sinner, is this all the wisdom or honesty you have, thus to speak or think ? If it be, be it known unto you all, that these foolish saints have more wit than to count the reproaches of such brutish spirits to be any disparagement to them ; and therefore, if you will, mock on, and go on to admire yourselves, and the oak which you have chosen, and the gardens which you have desired, whilst you despise these, or their ways : but however, whilst they have this assurance, that GOD doth not count them what you call them, and that you will not call them at last what you call them now, you must give them leave, (though they think ever so meanly of themselves,) still to have the same high thoughts of their GOD, of their Gospel, and of that holy profession and way which they have chosen.

USE I. Let the ungodly world hence learn to have a better opinion of these men, and to forbear reproaching them. Think with yourselves upon what hath been said : These men may be wiser than we are aware of ; we may be mistaken ; these may be the Israel of GOD ; these may be those “ little ones,” concerning whom it is said, that “ whosoever offends one of these, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the midst of the sea.” And what if they should be so ? In what case are you then, who have reproached and persecuted them ? But I must be bold to say, there is no *may be* in the matter. I question not, but that if you would impartially weigh what hath been spoken, you will see, that if GOD hath any people in the world, these are they ; and therefore my advice is, that you refrain from these men, and let them alone, lest, if you go on, you “ be found to fight against GOD.”

But you will ask, "Where are there any such? There are some who make specious pretences to the strictness of religion, but they are hypocrites and deceivers; and these are they against whom we speak." I answer,

1. Let this be granted, that such men as have been described, if there be any such, are truly wise men; that men of such principles, that men of this profession, if they really be what they profess, and live according to their principles, are men of wisdom: do but grant that godliness is wisdom, and that "the fear of the LORD is understanding:" I would that I could bring you thus far, heartily to grant that godliness hath an excellency in it, and that a life led according to those principles of godliness which have been laid before you, is the most excellent life: Hence these two things will unavoidably follow: (1.) That the more exactly any persons live according to the principles of godliness, the more have they attained of true wisdom: if godliness be our wisdom and excellency, then the more precisely godly any persons are, the more wise and excellent they are; the more precise a Christian any one is, the more he is a Christian; and therefore let never any man be blamed for being so much, but for not being more precise. (2.) The more loosely persons live from the rules of religion, and the more liberty they take to walk after the flesh, the more foolish they are; and so you may without controversy conclude, that whatever these precise people be, you that are libertines are fools.

2. Are there none such? What, hath God no people in the world? Hath the Devil gotten all? God hath a people somewhere, and a peculiar people, whom he hath chosen to salvation, whom he hath redeemed, and called, and justified, and sanctified, and set apart for himself from the rest of the world. All are not Israel, all are not disciples; but there are some whom God hath peculiarly set apart to himself, from the rest of men; and where are these to be found, if not among these precise walkers? The people of God are, as hath been proved, a holy people, a hearing people, a praying people, a zealous people. a

watchful, painful, industrious, sober, meek, merciful, and patient people. Now, where shall we look to find out such a people? Must we rake the kennels, and search the sinks of the earth? Must we seek in the ale-houses, or taverns, or play-houses? Shall we take out the drunkards and riotous, the swearers and liars, the covetous and oppressors, the blind people, that brutish generation, that know not, and mind not, the LORD or his ways; and say of any of these, Surely here they be; these are the people of GOD; here be the men that are no hypocrites; these are that royal priesthood, that holy nation, that peculiar people, whom GOD hath called to show forth his praise before the world? Sinners, if you have so much reason or conscience, as to conclude that none of these are they, then tell us farther, who, or where they are; or else at last acknowledge, that if GOD hath a people any where, it is amongst those whom you have reproached.

3. If you say, "There are hypocrites amongst them; and these are they against whom you speak, and not against those who are upright," let me give you this double advice.

(1.) Take heed you mistake not your mark; do not shoot at Saints indeed, under the name and disguise of hypocrites; do not count that hypocrisy, which GOD accounts sincerity: you may be mistaken, (as I told you before,) and what if you should be mistaken? What if it should prove, not only that the men whom you reproach for hypocrites, GOD should account sincere; but if the very thing which you call their hypocrisy, the LORD counts their excellency: what if it should be so? then you have shot a fair shot! Every reproach which you have thus cast out is as so much dirt which you have thrown into the face of GOD, so many darts which you have shot into the apple of GOD's eye: you who are so free in reproaching professors, take heed that it be not found, that the ground of all your evil language against them, and evil usage of them, be, not because they *are*, but because they *are not* hypocrites.

(2.) If they be hypocrites, and only such, against whom you speak, take heed that you mistake not your arrow; do not cast that upon them for a reproach, which is good; do not take good names to reproach evil men. If they be hypocrites, any of them, and you know them to be such, call them hypocrites; but do not take the name of Saint, or Precisian, or Holy Brother, and put *them* as marks of disgrace and scorn upon them: he that calls a saint hypocrite, reproaches the Christian; he that in scorn calls a hypocrite saint, or holy brother, reproaches christianity itself.

USE II. But I have yet a greater request, than that you should merely have a good opinion of these men, and no longer reproach them; my request to you farther is, That you would come in, and be of this number. Some of you, it may be, will be ready to reply, "He shall have hard work to persuade me to be a Precisian;" and truly I am afraid so too, if all that the Devil can do will hinder it; if all that your carnal reason and fleshly lusts can do, if all that your sinful companions can do will hinder it, I shall be sure enough not to prevail: yet know that the motion which I make to you is from the LORD; and if you deny me, you therein deny Him; and if you deny Him, there is a day coming when He will deny you. You say, you will not be persuaded; but what is it to which you will not be persuaded? Why, this is it. You will not take the yoke of CHRIST upon you; you will not be ruled by him, so as to live as he would have you live, but you will still walk according to your own mind and heart; that is, you will not be Christians. Will you not? Are you in good earnest? Are you content that the LORD should take you at your word, and for ever give you up to your hearts' lusts, and let you alone to walk in your own counsels? Are you content from henceforth to give up your hope in CHRIST? Are you content to be damned? Brethren, this is the choice which you are called to make; either a holy life, or everlasting death; either you must submit to the yoke of CHRIST, or you can have no benefit by the Cross of CHRIST; either you must kiss his golden sceptre, or be

broken in pieces with his rod of iron. Refuse to follow him in his kingdom of grace, and you thereby shut yourselves out of the kingdom of glory: Whereof, that I may the more effectually convince you, I shall yet farther prove to you, both by Scripture and reason, that this strict and precise way of life is so absolutely necessary to salvation, that whosoever doth not thus walk cannot escape the damnation of hell.

I know that men are confident that they shall be saved without so much ado; and that this it is which hardens them in their sins,—their strong conceit that the way is not so narrow as many would make them believe: they doubt not but they have found out an easier way than this; and what is this easier way? Why, it is but this, “Call upon God for mercy, attend the church, do nobody any wrong, be no drunkard, no swearer, no adulterer; or if you be sometimes overtaken, ask God forgiveness, and then hope well; never despair of God’s mercy, fear not, you shall be safe enough.”

Now I shall make it plain to you, that this way of religion will certainly leave every soul, which goes no farther, to perish everlastingly; and that this strict, holy life, which hath been described, is indispensably necessary to salvation. Beloved, the matter upon which I am discoursing is weighty; a mistake in your religion is mortal; if that which you have taken up for the way of life be not so, you are undone for ever; and that this your easy way is not it, I shall now make evident.

1. From Scripture. Let us but seriously examine and weigh those many high expressions which we find in Scripture,—in the commands, exhortations, instructions, instances, promises, and prayers recorded in it,—in all which, the one way of life is described; and then let any reasonable man judge, if all this amount to no more than that poor, and pitiful, and empty thing, which carnal men count religion.

(1.). For Scripture Commands, consider these:—Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God. Work out your salvation

with fear and trembling. Fervent in spirit, serving the **LORD**. Put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and put on the new man, which after **GOD** is created in righteousness, and true holiness. Wash thine heart from thy iniquities, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee? Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that may minister grace to the hearers. Walk in love, love one another, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that persecute you; render to no man evil for evil, but overcome evil with good. Mortify your members which are upon the earth. Walk in the Spirit. Abstain from all appearance of evil. Be watchful. Stand with your loins girded, and your lights burning."

(2.) For Scripture Instructions, consider these:—"The grace of **GOD** which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, godly, and soberly, in this present world. They that be **CHRIST**'s have crucified the flesh with its afflictions and lusts. He that is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart. Of every idle word men shall give account at the day of judgment. If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain."

(3.) For Scripture Instances:—Of **JOSIAH** it is recorded, that his heart was tender, and perfect with the **LORD** his **GOD**, and that he turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. **PAUL** professes that he served the **LORD** instantly, night and day: and that forgetting those things which are behind, he reached forth to the things that are before, pressing to the mark. "The life," said he, "which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the **SON** of **GOD**. To me to live is **CHRIST**, to die is gain. I so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any

means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.”

(4.) For Scripture Promises, consider these :—“Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, the merciful, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, the pure in heart, they that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake ; for they shall see **GOD**, theirs is the kingdom of heaven ; they shall be comforted, filled, and great is their reward in heaven.”

(5.) For Scripture Prayers, consider these :—“The **GOD** of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray **GOD** that your whole spirit, soul, and body, may be preserved blameless, until the coming of our **LORD JESUS CHRIST**. Now the **GOD** of peace make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight.”

Multitudes of such like Scriptures might be added, but these may suffice. Now, wherefore are all these things written ? Wherefore are these strict commands given, these holy lives of Saints left upon record, these promises made, and these prayers kept upon the file ? Are they not all written for our instruction, to let every man and woman understand what manner of persons they must be, what manner of lives they must live, if they will be saved ? If a lower religion would serve, to what purpose is this waste ? People may forbear to charge Precisians with keeping more ado than is necessary ; and lay in their charge against the Scriptures, for requiring more than is necessary. But do you think, indeed, that the Scriptures have spoken these things in vain ? If it be not in vain ; if all this be comprehended under the “one thing needful ;” if all this do but show us the one and only way of life ; if we must be thus renewed and changed in our minds, and must thus holily and unblameably order our lives, or else we cannot be saved, then what will become of that poor confident multitude, with whom we are now dealing ? Does all this amount to no more than attending your church, saying your prayers, learning and repeating the Creed and Ten Commandments, living peaceably with your neighbours, paying every man his own, crying to **GOD** for mercy, when you have committed a sin,

and the like? Can you call this cold, lifeless way, your striving “to enter in at the strait gate?” Is this your “working out your salvation with fear and trembling?” Is this all that is meant by “fighting the good fight of faith,” by “wrestling against flesh and blood, and against principalities and powers,” by “being instant in prayer, fervent in spirit, watching and running, and pressing towards the mark?” Brethren, if there be one way of life; if all this which hath been represented to you out of the Scriptures, be to show you from the LORD what a strait way this one way of life is; and if you will compare with this the way upon which you depend; methinks you should need nothing more to convince you of your dangerous mistake hitherto, and to leave you more ready to embrace the exhortation which I am pressing upon you; namely, to come in among the number, and take the holy course, of these circumspect Christians.

2. But if this be not sufficient, I shall yet make it more evident by reasons, drawn from the Scriptures, which I shall give you in these six propositions.

(1.) The Gospel requires, as indispensably necessary to salvation, inward holiness, or the renewing of the heart. Does this need any proof to them who understand the Scriptures? There must be “a new heart;” (*Ezek.* xxxvi. 26;) “a clean heart;” (*Psa.* lxxiii. 1:) “a true heart,” or an upright heart, “sprinkled from an evil conscience;” (*Heb.* x. 22;) “Make you a new heart, and a new spirit: for why will ye die? (*Ezek.* xviii. 31;) “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.” (*Jer.* iv. 14.) What do these Scriptures, especially the addition in the two last,—“For why will ye die?” and, “that thou mayest be saved?”—what do these import less than this, that there is no salvation possible, that there is nothing certain but death and destruction, to those whose hearts are not washed and made new.—“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (*John* iii. 3.) “Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Some there are, it is true, who interpret this conversion, which is made so necessary to salvation, to be nothing else

but the coming of persons from Judaism, or Paganism, to Christianity, to the owning and embracing the Christian Faith. But if this be true, then all who believe CHRIST to be the MESSIAH, and who are baptized, and live in the profession of the Christian faith, shall be saved. Come ye drunkards, come ye adulterers, liars, covetous, with all the profane rout of nominal Christians, and keep a holiday to the memory of these new Doctors, who bring you such a large and easy Gospel, as will carry you all to heaven, with all your lusts and lewdness upon your backs! But is this true? Is this Gospel? Is this all the conversion that is necessary to salvation? It cannot be: For, First, There are many that embrace the Christian Faith who are hypocrites: and shall hypocrites be saved? Secondly, There are many such converts who walk disorderly, "whose GOD is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things;" of whom the Apostle tells us, that their "end is destruction." (*Phil.* iii. 19.)

(2.) This inward holiness, which the Gospel requires, stands not in some sudden good thoughts, or some transient good affections, but is a holy frame or habit; thus much is intimated in the before-mentioned expression, "a new heart." A holy thought, a good desire, is another thing from a new heart. True holiness is not a fit, but a frame: there may be fits of devotion, fits of zeal sometimes, in a sinner, and yet he is a sinner still. Holiness is the temper and constitution of a Christian, his new nature which abideth in him.

(3.) This inward habitual holiness stands in a universal compliance of the heart with the whole will of GOD; the heart which is formed after the image of GOD, is conformed to the will of GOD: "Thy law is within my heart;" (*Ps.* xl.) not a piece, but the whole; every word and tittle of it. "Thy law is within me." The law is said to be within the heart of a Christian, in a double sense. First, It is published, and revealed, and made known in the heart; it is understood by the soul; there is the light of the word shining in every Christian. Secondly, It is embraced, approved, consented to; there is the love

of the law in the heart of a Christian; the heart closes with it, and with all that it requires, as a good word, and worthy of all acceptance.

A Christian doth not only accept the promises of the Gospel as good and comfortable words, but can heartily write, "Good is the word of the LORD," upon every precept; he likes his duties as well as his privileges, his work as well as his reward. This is set forth in those expressions of a willing mind, a ready mind, a forward mind. And as his heart is towards his work, so is it ready for any work to which the LORD calls him; he hath respect to all the commandments; he would not be without one leaf, no, nor one line, of the whole word of GOD: he is ready to every good work; he would not have one duty abated to him of all which GOD hath required; he would not have one sin allowed to him of all which GOD hath forbidden. He that says concerning any one word in the whole will of GOD, "This I must have dispensed with, ere I can be a Christian," his heart is not upright. He that would have any one sin to be no sin, any one duty to be no duty, any one sin to be allowed him, or any one duty to be abated him, is no Christian.

(4.) This inward habitual holiness is such as bears the sway, and hath the pre-eminence in the heart: though sin may be there still, yet where there is true grace, sin is an underling, and brought into captivity; it hath lost that power which it had in the soul before, and the heart is now given up to GOD: the stream runs heaven-ward; the stream of the thoughts, the stream of the affections, run that way: GOD and the way of holiness have a greater share and greater power in the heart, than all the world; there is more love to GOD, stronger resolutions for following GOD, than can be balanced by the highest interest of the flesh.

(5.) This inward, habitual, prevailing holiness, wherever it is, will infallibly bring forth a strict, precise, and holy life. For, First, That holiness in the heart will bring forth holiness of life, is as naturally certain, as that a root will bring forth such branches and fruit as partake of the

nature of the root, as that “a fig-tree will bring forth figs,” or that “an olive-tree will bring forth olives.” Secondly, It is as certain, that according to the proportion of holiness in the heart, such will be the proportion of it in the life: if holiness bear the sway in the heart, it will bear the rule in the life; if that little good which is in the heart be held as an underling in the soul, thereafter will the life be. Thirdly, It is no less certain, that the lowest degree of prevailing holiness in the heart will bring forth this precise holy life, in the sense which I have described: that is, though there be not perfect holiness brought forth; though he who hath a lower degree of true grace fall much shorter of that perfection than he who hath a higher degree, though there be many failings, and wanderings, and weaknesses, through corruption and temptation; yet thus far the lowest of Saints has arrived, that his aims, desires, and endeavours, are after a perfectly holy life: he hath a respect to every commandment, to every duty; he doth not habitually allow himself in any iniquity; there is some change in his course actually appearing; and this he purposes to himself, and sets his heart upon, to grow up daily to a more thorough and universal conformity to all the principles of godliness which are set before him in the Scriptures. This is as certain as the two former: He that is sincere would be perfect. In the true love of holiness, are necessarily included a love and longing-for it in the perfection of it. He that loveth holiness for itself will love it most when it is most itself, in its perfection; and love and longing will infallibly bring forth labouring, and following after. Therefore,

(6.) Whosoever is not a person of a precise life is certainly in a state of damnation. This so clearly follows from the former propositions, that it needs no farther proof. He who is not inwardly, habitually, universally sanctified; he who loves any thing more than God or Godliness, that is, he who is not new-born, and so become a new creature, is actually in the state of damnation: and he who is not a precise walker, is not thus new-born or sanctified; for whoever is made this new creature, will in-

fallibly make it appear, as hath been proved, by this newness of life.

You see, Beloved, to what issue this matter is brought ; —either you must take up this strict way of holiness, or be reprobates from God. Whosoever there be amongst you, that have the most rooted enmity in your hearts against this holiness of life, and have cast the greatest slight and contempt on it, and on those who thus live, and, as MICHAEL did DAVID, do despise them in your hearts ; whoever among you are most peremptorily resolved against hearkening to any farther treaties about this thing, casting them off with the greatest scorn and indignation ;—I must be bold to tell you from God, that if you live and die in this mind, God must cease to be true, the Scriptures must be proved to be a lie, the doctrine of the Gospel a mere forgery or falsehood, or you will be shut for ever out of the Kingdom of God.

And do you not yet see enough to persuade you to come in and be of this number ? Are you not yet convinced that it is your duty, and that it will be your wisdom to be such ; and that none but fools and brutes will continue to be libertines ? Whilst you charge folly on the Saints, will you, at the last, prove yourselves to be the only fools ? And will you verify that proverb, “ Bray a fool in a mortar, and yet his folly will not depart from him ? ” Shall it be said of you, “ Let them be instructed, let them be convinced, let them be warned ; yet still all is one ; fools they are, and fools they will be ? ” O ye fools, when will ye be wise ! Search the Scriptures, and learn of them ; come unto CHRIST, and learn of him ; and if he do not speak the same things which have been here spoken, if he do not teach you the same lesson which you have been here taught, then go on and take your liberty still. But if CHRIST says, “ Be holy ; ” if CHRIST says, “ Be circumspect ; ” if CHRIST says, “ Be perfect ; ” and you still refuse to hearken, then carry this inscription upon your foreheads, “ We have rejected the word of the LORD, and what wisdom is there in us ? ”

DISCOURSE II.

JOHN i. 47.

Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

WE need not go far back to find out the sense of these words. The occasion of them was this: PHILIP calls NATHANAEL to come to CHRIST; NATHANAEL being called comes; and coming to CHRIST, our LORD gives his judgment of him.

In these words we have, 1. A Note of observation, “Behold;” this hints to us two things: (1.) That a NATHANAEL, a true *Israelite*, is a worthy sight, worth the observing; “Behold an *Israelite*.” (2.) That a Nathanael is a rare sight: We do not use to say, “Behold,” to that which we see every day.

2. A Description of NATHANAEL, and in him, of a sincere good man.

(1.) He is “An *Israelite*.” ISRAEL was first the name of JACOB, who upon his wrestling, and, as a Prince, prevailing with GOD in prayer, had this new name given him of GOD, and was thenceforth called ISRAEL: from him, afterwards, the whole generation of the *Jews* was called ISRAEL. In the New Testament, all the people of GOD were called ISRAEL. Both in the Old Testament and New, *Israelites* were the people of GOD, whom GOD had separated for himself out of all the rest of the world; so that an *Israelite* here designates one who belongs to GOD.

(2.) “An *Israelite* indeed;” Ἀληθῶς, one that is truly an *Israelite*, “not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;”

not in show and appearance, not in conceit or in his own or others' opinions, but in reality.

(3.) "An *Israelite* in whom there is no guile;" who is no dissembler, not one who only bears the face, and acts the part of an *Israelite*, but an honest, downright, plain-hearted *Israelite*.

In all this we have a full description of a sincere good man: he is an *Israelite*, one separated to God; an *Israelite* indeed; not in fancy, but in truth; not in guile, but in singleness of heart.

That phrase which I intend for the foundation on which to build my Discourse, is, "An *Israelite* indeed." Thence let the Doctrine be, That a sincere good man is no enthusiast; and that Godliness is no fancy. As there is an *Israelite* in conceit, so there is an *Israelite* indeed; as there is Godliness in show, so there is Godliness in truth.

The great design of SATAN and his instruments is against Godliness, to resist it, to disgrace it, and, if possible, to root it out from under heaven: and because whilst Godliness appears in its own lustre, glory, and excellency, all such attempts against it are vain and ineffectual, therefore the plot is, to cast a mist before the eyes of this purblind world, and to make them believe that there is no such thing, or that it is not what it is; that it is a mere fancy, and that there is nothing in it; that what men call Godliness is but a conceit, a mere dream of some brain-sick persons, who, thinking themselves wiser and holier than the rest of the world, and being strongly opinionated of their ways, and intoxicated with their own imaginations, whilst they would persuade others that they are in the dark, and under strong delusions, are most of all mistaken and deluded themselves.

Now, because this is such a mischievous engine to hold men back from that true Godliness which is necessary to salvation, I shall, through the grace of God, make as evident as the light the truth of the doctrine proposed, That Godliness is no fancy; and that the sincerest and

strictest godly men are, of all persons in the world, most unjustly termed enthusiasts.

By Godliness I mean that sincere and strict profession and practice of religion, which are above the size, and beyond the measure, of that sort of people who commonly call themselves Christians;—that which the Scripture calls “pure Religion, the power of Godliness, walking with God, walking in the Spirit, and living in all good conscience.”

By a sincere godly man, accordingly, I understand the same person with a precise or circumspect Christian; one that will not adventure his soul on that cheap, easy, outward, careless way of religion, which the most do, but labours to make sure and thorough work, by setting himself to live up to the height and exactness of those principles of religion which he hath received from the Scriptures.

When I say, that Godliness is no fancy; by a fancy I mean that which hath no being but in the imagination; that which hath no foundation in the Scriptures, but is a mere conceit or airy notion; a figment of men’s own brains. This is the reproach which the profane world cast upon strict Godliness, that it is a mere fiction, or a dream of men’s own hearts; that the inward likeness to God, the exact walking with God, living in fellowship and communion with God, the joy of God, the life of faith, the soul’s exercising itself upon God and the LORD JESUS, and the like, are mere conceits; that there are no such things, but that they are men’s own dreams and delusions.

Now this is that which I shall prove, That this Godliness, in its greatest purity, preciseness, and spirituality, is not such an empty thing, but is fully and really that which it asserts itself to be; and that it hath clear foundations in, and an evident conformity to, that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, which is revealed in the Scriptures.

The proofs which I shall bring shall be such as have respect to the special parts of it; where I shall make it manifest, I. That the Doctrines and Principles of Godliness

are real Truths, II. That the Duties and Comforts of Godliness are no fancies, but real Duties and Comforts.

I. The Doctrines and Principles of Godliness are real Truths. Wisdom hath her pillars: Godliness is not a castle in the air, but is a building which hath foundations. I shall instance in some of the chief of these Principles, and show you,—

1. The Doctrines concerning the Being of God, and his Holiness, are real Truths. This is a certain truth, that there is a God, and that he is a holy God, and a friend to holiness. If there be any real and evident truth in the world, this is a truth, That there is a God. Either there is a God, or there is nothing: we may as well say, when we see the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the motions of them; when we see the earth, and the several creatures upon it; when we see ourselves, men and women, walking up and down thereon, that all this is but conceit, that our eyes deceive us, that ourselves, and all the things we see, are but phantasms and apparitions, as we may question whether there be a God. “The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” (*Rom. i. 20.*) And to question whether God be a holy God, is the same in effect as to question whether there be a God: to conceive that there is a God without holiness, is to imagine that there is a God who is no God. Sin is such a defect as is utterly inconsistent with such an infinitely perfect being; and to question whether God be a friend to holiness, is to question whether he be a friend to himself.

2. The Doctrines concerning Sin are certain Truths. I shall mention but these four:—(1.) That man is a sinner: (2.) That sin is the greatest of evils: (3.) That spiritual sins are the greatest of sins: (4.) That sin is the root of all misery.

(1.) Man is a sinner; a sinner by nature, a sinner by practice; in a sinful state: “The whole world lieth in wickedness.” (*1 John v. 19.*) Running on in a sinful course: “They are all gone aside;” (*Psa. xiv. 3.*;) that is,

man is universally sinful; this sour leaven hath leavened the whole lump; every part of man, head, heart, hands, inside, outside, all are "full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Man is a great sinner: "The heart of man is desperately wicked;" (*Jer. xvii. 9.*) it is become like those bad figs which JEREMIAH speaks of; those that were good were very good; and those that were bad were very bad. "Their inward part is very wickedness." (*Ps. v. 9.*) It is expressed in the abstract, not wicked, but wickedness, and in the plural number, wickednesses: there is a complication of all sorts of wickednesses; and sin is so rooted, and (as it were) incorporated into the hearts of men, as if their natures were even transubstantiated into a mass of corruption. Is all this but conceit? "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually." (*Gen. vi. 5.*) "God saw:" God's eyes cannot be deceived: men may think that they see what they see not, and may not see what is before their eyes; but can God's eyes fail him?

(2.) Sin is the greatest of evils. The Apostle, to set forth the formidable appearance which sin had by the law, expresses it thus: "That sin might appear to be sin." (*Rom. vii. 13.*) He could find out nothing more evil and odious to express it by, than itself. If he had said,—that sin might appear to be a snare, a serpent, a viper, a devil, a hell,—that had been much, but yet not enough to set forth this evil of evils: sin never is seen in its perfect odiousness, but when it shows its own naked face: we can never know how great an evil sin is, till we know how good the LORD is, how precious CHRIST is, how precious the soul of man is; to all which sin is so contrary and destructive. In *Rom. viii. 7*, it is said to be "Enmity against God." God hath no enemy in the world but sin, and those whom sin hath made. Sin hath set all the earth against the God of glory. From this enmity, with which sin hath filled the hearts of men, arise all their rebellions against his word and government, all their averseness from his ways, their weariness of his service, their frowardness, murmurings,

impatiences, and frettings of heart against his dispensations and providence. The unruliness and stubbornness of the wills of men; the distemper and disorders of their passions and affections; the vanity, vileness, and confusion of their thoughts; the defilement and deadness of their consciences; the ebullition of so many hellish lusts, setting men's hearts upon all mischief;—whence is all this, but from sin which dwells in them?

Sin hath made men very devils, set upon all manner of mischief; devils against GOD, hating, reproaching, blaspheming, cursing, fighting against GOD. There should quickly be no GOD, nor heaven, nor being left, if the wickedness of man's heart had power answerable to his malice. Sin hath made men devils against themselves, set upon the destruction of their own souls: there needed not another Devil to tempt and devour them; if GOD should but let them alone, they would quickly make their destruction sure of themselves. Sin hath made men devils one against another: there is not one sinner, but if GOD should pull up the sluices, and let his wickedness have its full course, would do his utmost to damn all the world; enemies, friends, husbands, wives, children, all should be destroyed.

And now, can a greater evil be imagined than this? Aye, you will say, if all this be true, it is a great evil indeed: but, it may be, for all these great words, there may be no such great matter in it. Why, do but consider what sin hath done, and then you will see reason to believe all that hath been said. Go to Mount Calvary, and see what hath been done: what was it that slew the LORD of Glory, that put CHRIST to death? Was it not those sins that were laid upon him? These were his betrayers and murderers. These were the thorns, the nails, the spear, which wounded him; the gall and vinegar which were given him to drink. Let the sweat, the cries, the groans, the blood, the soul, which were pressed and poured out by sin, let these speak if too much hath been said!

Turn aside from Mount Calvary, and go down to the Valley of Hinnom ; lay your ear to the mouth of Tophet, and hearken what work sin hath done there. What is it which hath filled hell so full already, which hath sent down CAIN and JUDAS, with those millions of damned souls that are already tormented in those flames ? Did GOD damn so many souls for nothing, or for a trifle ? did he inflict so great a torment for a small offence ? What is it which hath cast them in thither ? Was it their righteousness ? Was it not their iniquities ? If you could step down into those chambers of death, and ask those wretched creatures, " Friends, how came you hither ? " What would they answer ? " Oh, it is our sins that brought us into this place of torment. " " Oh, it was my covetousness brought me hither, " would one say : " Oh, it was my lying brought me hither, " would another say : " Oh, it was my pride, or my passion, or my wantonness, or my slothfulness, that brought me hither, " would a third say. " O sin, sin ! this is it for which we burn, we roar, we rave, we die, we die eternally ! " Can there be too much said of the evil of sin, which hath done all this mischief ?

(3.) Spiritual Sins are the greatest of sins. By how much the more excellent the soul is above the body in its nature, by so much the more vile and mischievous it is, being depraved with sin. The soul of man is the prime subject of the image of GOD in man : there was much of GOD to be seen in the body, or externals of man ; but the face of GOD, the glory of GOD, was stamped upon his soul ; the soul being corrupted, it became the express image of the Devil. SATAN is rudely limned, and some darker shadows of him drawn, on the outward man ; but he is drawn out to the life in the soul : the very face, the heart of SATAN, his pride, malice, envy, and falsehood, are engraven on the heart. A proud heart hath more of the Devil than a proud look ; a wanton heart is more vile than a wanton eye ; a murderous or adulterous heart is worse than a murderous or adulterous act. It is true, when sin is committed without, it is worse than when it

sleeps in its causes within ; and sin in its birth is worse than in its bare conception : and the reason is, because when sin is committed, there are both parts, the outward and the spiritual together : there is the sin of the hand, and the sin of the heart too, to make up the murder ; but then, if you should distinctly consider what the heart hath done towards the murder, and what the hand hath done, the heart's part would appear to be incomparably the worst. The sins of the heart are the root-sins, the spring which sets all the wheels on going, the fountain which sets all the streams on running, the fire which sets all the furnace on smoking. Carnal men make little of outward sins, and nothing of spiritual. If they would not be extortioners, or oppressors, or swearers, yet evil thoughts may lodge in them ; lust may bear the rule in them ; pride, envy, ignorance, heart-blasphemy, these are scarcely accounted evils. "What are thoughts," say they, "a little inward discontent, anger, and the like, that we should trouble ourselves with these?" Oh ! you do not know what there may be in a thought, or a secret lust ; there may be a thousand evil words and actions in the bowels of a few evil thoughts : lusts are prolific ; a world of monstrous births are continually springing forth from them. Beloved, if you should examine all the wickednesses of your lives, drunkenness, whoredoms, lying, oaths, perjuries, and ask them one by one, Drunkenness, whence art thou ? Adultery, whence comest thou ? Oaths, curses, lies, whence are all ye ?—would they not all answer, with the Apostle, "Come we not hence, even from those lusts that war in your members?" Blame not Christians because they are so much afraid of their own hearts, or because they take so much pains, and spend so much time, in purging, and washing, and watching these, in keeping their thoughts, governing their passions, and mortifying their lusts : he that makes nothing of an evil thought, the Devil is like to bring him to something in a little time.

(4.) Sin is the root of all misery ; of all the miseries of this life, of all the diseases, pains, torments, tumults, com-

motions, quarrellings, contentions, murders, oppressions, wars, famine, poverty, pestilence, and all sorts of calamities under which this world groans. "Hast thou not procured all these things to thyself?" (*Jer. ii. 17*;) that is, by thine iniquities? What a world would this world have been had it not been for sin! All the earth would have been a Paradise, as the garden of the LORD. How great peace would there have been, had it not been for this make-bate! How great joy, had it not been for this tormentor! How great beauty and order, had it not been for this, which is the deformity and confusion of all things! What a world is this become by sin! How full of violence! What lions, tigers, and wolves, are the inhabitants thereof become one to another! What thorns and briars are they, scratching and tearing one another! What lying, and slandering, and defaming, and defrauding, and quarrellings, and fightings, are broken forth! This earth is even almost become a hell! Whence is all this? The Apostle tells us; "From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?" (*James iv. 1.*) Sinners lay the blame of all upon righteousness, and holiness, and the knowledge of God, and conscience, and on such persons as exercise themselves in keeping a good conscience, and walking holily, and working righteousness. These are the troublers, these are the disturbers, these are the fire-brands that set all in a combustion! But they little think what it is they say. To affirm, as many do, that it would have been a better world, if it had not been for so much preaching and praying, and keeping such ado about nothing, is as much as to say, It would have been a better world, if God had not been in fault; we may thank God and his Law, we may thank CHRIST and his Gospel, for all our troubles. But let such blasphemers know, that it is themselves and their wicked hearts, their atheism and ignorance, their idolatries and adulteries, their pride and their covetousness, their lewdness and licentiousness, to which they owe all their troubles and miseries. "Jerusalem hath grievously

sinned ; therefore is she removed : her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper : her filthiness is in her skirts." (*Lam.* i. 5, 8, 9.)

Now from all this it evidently follows ; First, That no sin can properly be called little : Secondly, That mourning for sin, praying, watching, fearing and shunning sin, with its occasions, temptations, and very appearances, are not enthusiastical, but reasonable services.

Notwithstanding all this evil which is in sin, this is it which carnal men make matter of no account : they say, "It is every man's case ; we are all sinners ; and why should we trouble ourselves at that which we cannot help ?" And what a wonder do they make at those who are so fearful, and so watchful, and so tender, and so much troubled when they fall into sin ; counting their fear their folly, and their mourning madness, as if it were a mere scarecrow or a bugbear, about which they thus trouble themselves ? If the veil were taken off from your eyes, if you did but see sin as it is, you would cease your wondering.

Is sin nothing ? Is enmity against God, his government, his being, nothing ? Are the fruits of sin nothing ? Is poverty nothing ? Is sword, and famine, and pestilence nothing ? Are all the bodily diseases which come upon you, and the torment of them ; are the gout, and the stone, and the strangury, and the pains of child-bearing, nothing ? Are death, and hell, and the vengeance of eternal fire, such slight matters ? Is the fruit so bitter and deadly, and do you think there is so little hurt in the root ? You may as well count these torments, which sin hath brought upon the world, to be conceits or slight matters, as have such thoughts of sin.

Whosoever makes nothing of sin makes light of CHRIST ; whosoever fears not, feels not, flies not, mourns not for sin, as the most dreadful of evils, regards not God nor his soul. He that hath so much wit as to dispute sin into a trifle, hath but little understanding, and less religion. He who imagines that a cold "*God forgive me,*" carelessly uttered, will make him whole in his inward diseases, or make amends

for his actual wickedness, if he prove not himself an enthusiast in the end, let the most circumspect Christians pass for enthusiasts now!

Sinners, if you will not be convinced; if the Scriptures do not convince you; if your eyes and ears do not teach you to understand sin better; take heed lest God teach you hereafter, as GIDEON taught the men of Succoth, "with briars and thorns, with fire and brimstone," and fetch his proof from your bones and from your bowels, and cause the avenging worm, when your pangs shall come upon you, to bring back upon you the memory of your slighted sins.

3. The Doctrine of Redemption is a real Truth. Need I prove this,—that CHRIST is true, the true MESSIAH, true God, and true man, had a true body, and a true soul; that his sayings were true, he was a true Prophet; that his sufferings were true, he was a true Priest; that as he truly died, so he as truly rose, ascended, and is the LORD both of the dead and of the living, and is a true KING; that he hath truly and fully accomplished his whole undertaking? Am I speaking to Jews or Pagans, that I need prove this? Am I not speaking to Christians, who must prove themselves liars if they deny these things? But wherefore was all this? For what end did CHRIST come into the world? Wherefore was he born? Wherefore did he live, die, rise, ascend? What was the intent of all this? Why, it was to make a total and blessed change in the miserable condition of whomsoever of this sinful world shall embrace him: it was to make this old world new, this crooked world straight, this miserable world blessed: it was, "to bring deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound:" (*Isa. lxi. 1:*) it was "to make an end of sin, to finish transgression, and to bring in everlasting righteousness:" (*Dan. ix. 24:*) it was to undo all that mischief which sin and the Devil have wrought, and brought upon this world; "For this cause the SON of GOD was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil:" (*1 John*

iii. 8 :) it was to “abolish death,” and to “bring life and immortality to light :” it was “to redeem from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works :” (*Titus* ii. 14 :) it was, “that being delivered from our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives.” And lastly, it was to redeem us “to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us :” (1 *Peter* i. 4 :)—

(1.) “To an inheritance.” Christians are not brought out of Egypt, and redeemed from their house of bondage, and then left to shift for themselves, or to perish in the wilderness ; they are redeemed to an inheritance ; they are a purchased people, and there is for them a purchased possession.

(2.) An “incorruptible” and “undefiled inheritance,” an enduring possession, and a holy habitation. Holiness is a great part of the blessedness of the Saints. You that despise holiness, despise one of the richest jewels in the crown of glory.

(3.) “Reserved in heaven.” There is the good land, where their inheritance lies ; that is the country which **CHRIST** hath purchased for his ransomed ones : the whole land is theirs ; “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

This is that redemption which by the Gospel is preached unto you ; and if **CHRIST** had failed of performing and accomplishing any of this, he had been but an incomplete and imperfect Redeemer.

By the way we learn, what great reason there is, that the Gospel should have better entertainment than for the most part it meets with in the world. If **CHRIST** had come to destroy the world, could he have been less welcome ? If the Ministers of the Gospel had been messengers, sent up from the bottomless pit, to destroy souls, and to drag them down to everlasting darkness, there could hardly have been a greater hate and outcry than there is against it and them. Surely such a message, and such a messenger, deserve better welcome, and better usage.

But to our purpose. You have heard what that redemption is, which the Gospel brings us: now doth CHRIST do his work by halves? Does he deliver out of prison, and leave his ransomed ones in their vile prison-garments? Does he redeem them from death, and not redeem them from iniquity? Was this the intent of CHRIST in dying for sinners, that they might play the beast and the rebel more securely? Does the law of faith make void the law of righteousness? Doth it not establish it?

Hath he died to purge, and purify, and wash, and cleanse his people; and when all comes to all, is this nothing but a cheat? As certain as it is that CHRIST did not barely personate a Redeemer, so certain it is that his redeemed do not barely personate Saints. Let all the world be judges what regard those persons have for CHRIST, who have no better opinion of the fruits of his death. Hence it appears, First, That the redemption of a sinner is the destruction of sin; CHRIST died to save men from their sins, not in them; to redeem from all iniquity as well as from wrath: Secondly, That redemption and regeneration are linked together: he that is bought from being a slave, is born a son; he that is not a partaker of the renewing of the HOLY GHOST, is not a partaker of the redemption of CHRIST.

The doctrine of redemption by CHRIST is abused by wilful sinners, and made to serve as their great plea against the necessity of holiness. Convince them of sin, of the necessity of turning, of the danger of continuing and going on in it, yet here they presently take sanctuary, "CHRIST died for sinners;" and here they think themselves sufficiently secured, not only against all the threatenings of wrath, but against all exhortations to holiness. Argue with them from the command of GOD, "Cast away your transgressions; why will ye die? turn and live;" or from the threatenings of GOD, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die;" yet this they think will answer all your arguments, "CHRIST died for sinners; I put my trust in CHRIST that I shall be saved." What, trust in CHRIST,

and not turn to **CHRIST**? Hope to be saved by **CHRIST**, and refuse to be sanctified? Will **CHRIST** redeem those from the curse, who will not be redeemed from iniquity? Will you walk in wantonness, lasciviousness, lust, and excesses, and then come and take hold of a Redeemer, as if you were delivered to do all this wickedness? Is **God's** house become a den of robbers? Are the redeemed of the **LORD** a generation of rebels, liars, proud and covetous persons, or blasphemers? Are these the followers of the **LAMB**? Christianity without godliness! This is a fancy indeed. "Let every one that nameth the name of **CHRIST** depart from iniquity:" either turn from iniquity, or talk no more of **CHRIST**!

Take heed, sinners, and let not the Gospel undo you; let not mercy damn you; put not your faith to do the sad office of infidelity. Beloved, let it never be said that while the just live, you must die by your faith: this is likely to be your case; you would never have dared so to have slighted holiness, and persisted in sin, had it not been for your trust in **CHRIST**.

You must have another **CHRIST**, another Gospel, ere you can be saved in your sinful state. "There is no condemnation to them which are in **CHRIST JESUS**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the **SPIRIT**." (*Rom. viii. 1.*) This is the Gospel, wherein you have the Believer's Charter, and the Believer's Character: his Charter, He shall not come into "condemnation;" his Character, He "walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," that is, he is a man of a godly life. Whom doth the Gospel secure from condemnation? Why, those who are "in **CHRIST**." But who are they? Why, only those "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit:" those who walk otherwise can have no benefit by the Gospel. You all stand as convicted malefactors, guilty of death. You have sinned, and what have you to say, why you should not die, and have the sentence of condemnation passed upon you? It may be that you will say, "The Gospel will, I hope, secure me." No, sinner, thou canst not have it; thou art one that livest after the

flesh, and canst not have the benefit of the Gospel. This is the Law, and the Gospel says not one word to reverse it,—“If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.” CHRIST never intended the benefit of his redemption to any of you, whether you would repent or no, be holy or no: you may as well write this for Gospel, He that believeth shall be damned, as this, He that obeyeth not the Gospel shall be saved: and you may as well say, that sinning is serving of CHRIST, as that those who live after the flesh obey the Gospel.

4. The Doctrine of Regeneration is a real Truth. There are three things most evident concerning this:—(1.) That there is such a change, and that it is necessary to salvation: (2.) That this is a great and mighty change: (3.) That this is an inward change.

(1.) There is such a grace as regeneration, and it is necessary to salvation: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (*John* iii. 3.)

(2.) The change which is wrought by regeneration is a great and mighty change. It is as great as the making something of nothing: Regeneration is a new creation. It is as great as the raising up of persons from death to life: Regeneration is a resurrection; “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” (*Eph.* ii. 1.) There is as great a power, as much of Divinity, manifested in quickening a dead soul, as in raising a dead body.

When God would confirm the faith of the Jews concerning their restoration, after their cutting off, which the Apostle tells us shall be as life from the dead; he evidences that he was able to accomplish it by his making dry bones to live: “Son of man, can these bones live? Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.” (*Ezek.* xxxvii. 3.) It was a strange service, to which the Prophet was put, but yet he prophesies; and behold there was a great shaking, and bone came to his bone, and they were covered with sinews and with flesh; and the breath of life was breathed into

them, and they stood upon their feet an exceeding great army: "These bones," saith the LORD, "are the whole house of Israel;" that is, as they lay in their state of rejection from God: and if the LORD could not have made these bones to live, he had failed of his confirmation of their faith, touching the restoration of this dead people.

When the Ministers of the Gospel are sent forth to preach to sinners, it is even as likely a service. [if we look *only* at the *human instruments employed*,] as if they had been sent among the tombs and the graves, to prophesy to the skulls, and the bones, and the dust of the dead! And if there were not a Divine and Almighty Power accompanying their ministry, their success would be the same, as if they had been preaching the beasts of the field into men, or attempting from stones to raise up children unto ABRAHAM.

(3.) It is an inward change. Regeneration is the uniting of dead souls to CHRIST; "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until CHRIST be formed in you." (*Gal.* iv. 19.)

Here note three things:—*First*, That the result of this union with CHRIST is a new life. "He that hath the Son hath life." (1 *John* v. 12.) In this generation, there is a death and a life:—A *death*; "Ye are dead;" (*Colos.* iii. 3;) that is, your sins are dead, your old man is dead; "Our old man is crucified with him;" (*Rom.* vi. 6:)—A *life*; there is a new sense and motion; there is a living power communicated to souls united to CHRIST, whereby they are enabled to move and act in such a holy, spiritual, and heavenly way, as was impossible before. Grace is a living thing, which spirits and animates all the faculties anew; which puts life into all the duties and performances of the Saints; which though for the matter of them they might have done before, yet they were but the dead carcasses of duties, rather than the things themselves.

Secondly, This new life is a new nature. The Saints participate of the nature of CHRIST, by a change of the qualities

of the soul : they are new creatures, who have passed the new birth. The second ADAM, as well as the first, brings forth his children in his own likeness : the divine birth is the bringing forth of the divine nature. (2 *Peter* i. 4.) As they said vainly, “The gods are come down in the likeness of men,” it may be here said truly, Men are raised up in the likeness of God, renewed after his image, and made partakers of his holiness. Those who put any thing less in this change make regeneration to be as very a contradiction as the Popish transubstantiation. Bread is made a god, and yet is bread still : a brute is made a saint, and yet remains a brute still : a god under the accidents of bread, and a saint under the qualities of a swine !

Thirdly, This new creature is a glorious nature, comprehending in it that divine light, whereby the Saints are enabled to understand and look into the depths of eternity, the invisible things of God, the mysteries of the glorious Gospel ;—that divine love, and faith, and hope, and the whole train of glorious graces, together with those principles of righteousness, truth, mercy, and charity, whereby they are made capable of enjoying communion with God, of bearing his name, of showing forth his virtues and praises before the world, and of doing his will : in sum, it is the image of God,—the Epistles of CHRIST, written upon the tables of their hearts.

What a strange piece of vanity should we make of the Scriptures, if all these high and various expressions should signify no more than that empty and pitiful thing which carnal men count religion ! That ever that ignorant, sottish, formal, brutish generation, which have no more of the knowledge of God than a heathen, no more of the life of God than a stock, no more of religion than to say over a prayer by rote ; and are so far from being partakers of the new nature, that they know not whether there be any such thing, or what it is ; that ever such a blind, senseless multitude should be imagined to be the persons whom the Scripture means by “new creatures, the children of God, the children of light, the images of God,”—and much more,

that those who live after the flesh, who are proud, covetous, sensual, filthy, and beastly in their conversations, yet, if they have been baptized, and passed under the *sacramental* regeneration, and do but say now and then, “I repent,” or “God forgive me,” that these also are the children of God, and have all that new birth which is necessary to their seeing the kingdom of God,—who can with any colour of reason imagine? Such as can make themselves believe this, have made such a forfeiture of their understandings, that they may be like in time to believe that the Devil is God, and that hell is heaven; and may even take up the Koran for their Bible.

Sinners, consider with yourself, is there any such thing as the New Birth? Can there be a new birth, without a new life? Doth CHRIST bring forth dead children, or do dry bones live? Doth the Gospel bring forth monstrous births, children without eyes, without a head, without a heart, or with the heart of a beast under the face of a man? Doth it bring forth serpents, vipers, dogs, or swine, for its children; and must the kingdom of heaven be peopled with such inhabitants as these? If these be children of the kingdom, where, or who are the children of this world? Are the NATHANAELS, the Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile? Are these the true seed, and the saints spurious? Are these the sons, and the saints bastards?

Or if you will let these vile ones of the earth go, as none of the seed; take the best, that have the fairest face of religion without the inside, the new nature; are these they? Is the shadow the substance, and the substance but a shadow? To say that the inward life of godliness, the spirit and soul of Christianity, is but a conceit, and that this outside is all, that this is Christianity, is as good reason as to affirm, that a picture is a man, and that a living man is but a picture.

Hence it follows:—(1.) That regeneration is not the mere counterfeit of a change: there is some difference hereby

put betwixt persons and persons : the regenerate and the unregenerate are not one and the same, no more than the living and the dead.

(2.) It is not a barely relative change ; as justification and adoption are held to be : there is a change of nature wrought by it, and not barely of relation.

(3.) It is not a superficial change ; or a merely outward change, which goes only skin deep. It is not, as it is said concerning baptism, only the washing away of the filth of the flesh, the cleansing of the outside, leaving sin to reign within. Regeneration is the change of the man, and not barely of the manners.

(4.) In this change we may read all godliness ; we may understand much of our work, by observing God's work upon us. As God, in making men living souls, does thereby tell us, that he expects other things from them than from dead stocks and stones ; and in making them reasonable souls, intimates that he expects they should live other lives than dogs or swine ; so in making them Christians, making them partakers of the divine nature, he makes it evident, that he expects they should live another life than other men.

The new life, or life of godliness, may be read in our new birth, or new nature. The regenerate are said to be "created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (*Ephes. ii. 10.*) "Created unto good works." This notes two things :—Intended to good works ; And, Fitted to good works.

In their new making, they were *intended* to good works. This was God's mind and meaning : he fore-ordained that they should walk in them : he did not set up such a light in man, to be put under a bushel : he bestowed not such a talent on man, to be bound up in a napkin.

In their new making, they were *fitted* to good works : "created to good works ;" that is, they were endued

with such a divine light, such holy principles, powers, affections, dispositions, and inclinations, as fitted them for a holy, active life. **GOD** did not new-make men for nothing ; but for something of worth, and real excellency, or else he would not have been at much cost in preparing men for it : if there were no other godly life than that which the world count godliness, there needed no new creation to fit man for it. What is there in the whole frame of the religion of the vulgar, to which a carnal man may not reach ? For the devotional part of it, as saying or hearing of a prayer, and observing of days, rites, and customs ; what great difficulty is there in that ? May not even a publican do the same ? Yea, may not a harlot, a drunkard, an idiot, do the same ? Such devotions will neither disturb their lusts, nor yet will their lusts distaste or disable such devotions. And for the righteousness of it, to love those that love them, to be good neighbours, to be no extortioners, no adulterers, there is not so very much in that : “ Do not even the Pharisees the same ? ” “ What do ye more than others ? ” said **CHRIST** to his Disciples. What singular or excellent thing do you ? **GOD** hath done singularly well by you ; you are fearfully and wonderfully made, (as it is true of the natural, so much more of your new birth,) and curiously wrought, not in the lower parts of the earth, but in the highest heavens ; you are born from above ; **GOD** hath done more for you than for others ; “ What do ye more than others ? ” Some, it may be, would have answered, “ Why, there is no more to be done ; all that is done more than others do is mere fancy.” But, beloved, when you look upon that sapless, lifeless, empty way of religion, which others are content with, methinks your reason should demand, What, hath **GOD** new-made me, made me partaker of the divine nature, and of the life of **GOD**, for no more but this ? Hath **GOD** given such a glorious Gospel, raised up such a mighty **SAVIOUR**, who hath shed such precious blood, sent forth such a glorious **SPIRIT**, and given commission to such multitudes of

heavenly Ambassadors, to preach, persuade, beseech, and exhort, and to travail in birth with me till CHRIST hath been formed in me,—and all this to bring me to no better a life than this? Surely there is something farther, for which the LORD hath built this structure, and been at all this cost.

Study this new birth, study the new creation more thoroughly; and if you see not the most holy, heavenly, spiritual conversation, that is pleaded for, radically and seminally in the bowels of it, then let Godliness pass for a fancy for ever. Let the regenerate but live according to their new nature; and if that be not the very godly life about which we contend with you, then call us what you will.

5. Faith is no fancy; and the Doctrine of Faith is a real Truth. “Faith is” the ground, or “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” (*Heb.* xi. 1.) It hath a sure foundation on which it is bottomed; that “sure word of promise, to which,” saith the Apostle, “ye do well that ye take heed.” (*2 Pet.* i. 19.) There is a believing on CHRIST for [present] salvation, and a believing that we shall be [eternally] saved by CHRIST. The former is called the direct act of faith, and is the soul’s acceptance of CHRIST for its LORD and SAVIOUR, and resting upon him for life; this is founded on the rock of ages, on the veracity and faithfulness of that GOD who cannot lie, and who hath said, that “whosoever believeth” on his SON “shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” (*John* iii. 16.) The latter is called the reflex act of faith, and hath its foundation partly on the word of GOD without them, partly on the work of GOD within them; and this faith, or rather this act of faith, if the former hath been first put forth, is such also as will never deceive. As those who trust in GOD, because they have the word and oath of GOD, shall not be confounded, but have strong consolation; so those that believe they shall be saved, because they find their hearts purified; who believe that their names are written in heaven, because they find the law and image of GOD written on their hearts; who believe

that they shall not come into condemnation, because they are in **CHRIST**, and “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;” who believe they shall overcome death, because they have overcome the world; those who on such grounds as these believe they shall be saved, it shall certainly be unto them according to their faith. If it be thus with them indeed, if they “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;” if their hearts be purified; the word of the **LORD** stands good and sure to them, that “they shall not come into condemnation:” and they shall as infallibly be saved, as if their particular names had been written in the promise. The veracity of **GOD** stands as firmly engaged to make good conditional promises, where the condition is fulfilled, as if the promise had been absolute.

There is a faith which is a mere fancy: such as the faith of enthusiasts, who believe above and besides what is written; the faith of ignorant persons, whose belief is (according to the worship of the Athenians) on “the Unknown **GOD**;” the faith of idlers, who believe that they shall rest with **CHRIST**, though they never laboured with him; and the faith of the profane, who believe that they shall be saved, though they be not sanctified. Such faith is mere fancy; opinion or presumption you may call it, rather than faith. You that are ignorant, idle, profane, and unsanctified, and yet believe that you shall be saved, you believe a lie; you believe that which **GOD** hath never said shall be; nay, you believe that which **GOD** hath said shall never be: “They are a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not save them:” (*Isa.* xxvii. 11.) “Such shall never inherit the kingdom of **GOD**.” (1 *Cor.* vi. 10.) **Hear**, sinners, hear; **GOD** must be a liar, or your faith a lie.

But the faith which hath been before described, is that precious tried faith, by which whosoever believes shall not be confounded. Christians, you that have obtained such precious faith, a Christ-embracing faith, a heart-purifying, a flesh-mortifying, a world-conquering faith, you may venture safely upon it; if ever this faith deceive you, **GOD** hath deceived

you, the Scriptures have deceived you, CHRIST hath deceived you. Let the enthusiastic world laugh, and mock, and call your consolations delusions, your confidence conceit, or what they will; let them alone,—you must give losers leave to talk and laugh; yet, “Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.”

6. The Doctrine concerning Good Works is a certain Truth. In this I shall show,

First, What we are to understand by good works. A good work, in general, is a holy or gracious action; to the making up whereof these four things are necessary:—(1.) The principle must be good from which it proceeds; it must be from an honest and upright heart, from a pure conscience, from faith unfeigned. (2.) The matter must be good; something which is commanded; “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.” (3.) The form or manner of doing must be good; it must be well done. This takes in the consideration of all its circumstances, of time, place, &c. (4.) The end must be good; it must be done “to the glory of God.”

As to the particular kinds of good works, they are not easily reckoned up. The Papists talk little of any good works, but the exercises of bounty and liberality, in giving alms, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting and relieving the afflicted, building of alms-houses, colleges, and the like; upon which they insist so much, as if there were scarcely any other good works but such as these. But we may not confine them within so narrow a compass. Good works signify the same with a good life; the doing and observing all things which God hath commanded us. Our living holily, honestly, circumspectly, fruitfully, imports the same with our doing good works. The exercising of all the graces of CHRIST, faith, love, hope; the subduing and mortifying of lust and corruption; the governing of our hearts and tongues; the ordering of our carriage towards God and men; all acts of religion, righteousness, mercy, and charity; praying, fasting, hearing, sanctifying the sabbath, lending, giving, forgiving, peace-making, instructing, ex-

horting, reproving, comforting, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, following CHRIST, fighting the good fight of faith, laying up treasures in heaven, and the like;—these are good works. Every thing is a good work, concerning which GOD will say at last, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” In all these the LORD requires; (1.) That we act to our utmost. “What thine hand findeth to do,” and so what thy head or heart findeth to do, “do it with thy might.” Be “zealous of good works, not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the LORD, abounding in the work of the LORD.” (2.) That we act in these to the end of our days. “Fear the LORD thy GOD, and keep all his statutes and commandments all the days of thy life.” (*Deut. vi. 2.*) (3.) That we be doing without intermission. There must not only be well-doing, but a continuance in well-doing. GOD will not have any chasms or vacuities in our lives, but every day must be filled up with the duties of it. Christians must not think of getting to heaven *per saltum*; they must not leap, but walk; they must not leap over a duty, or leap over a day; *nulla dies sine linea*. The law of GOD doth not allow a day to sin, nor abate us one day’s work. To demand a breathing-time from the service of GOD, is to desire so much time for the service of sin. We are ever serving one master or the other; we are certainly serving sin, when we are not in one way or other serving the LORD.

Secondly, That good works are necessary to salvation; so that though we are not likely to be saved by our works, yet we cannot be saved without them. He that works not shall not eat bread in the kingdom of GOD. The everlasting rest is not for loiterers, but for labourers. “Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Faith cannot save us without works. The Apostle tells us, “Faith without works is dead;” (*James ii. 26*;) and a dead faith cannot bring us to life. Therefore the Apostle PAUL so vehemently charges; “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; for these things are good and profitable to men." (*Tit.* iii. 8.) Here observe the Preface to the charge; "This is a faithful saying;" that is, a true saying, and a great truth, a worthy saying, worthy to be delivered, worthy to be received: "And these things I will that thou affirm constantly," or teach constantly, or strenuously, or resolvedly; be not beaten off from it. Why, what is this great truth? This is it, "That they which have believed in God," as ever they would that their faith should stand them in any stead, "must be careful to maintain good works:" not only to do good works, but "to maintain," or to excel and abound in "good works." "These things are good and profitable unto men."

Now let me demand of all the world, where lies the enthusiasm of all this? Which of these doctrines is it that is but a conceit? Is it this, That Christians must not only be believers, but must do good works? Is it this, That they must work with all their might, that they must be doing to the end of their days, that they must continue at their work without intermission; that is, that they must bestow none of their time on the Devil, but all on God? Or is this the conceit, That this well-doing is necessary to our well-being? Let this be granted, that there is no fancy in all this, and I have at once dispatched my whole undertaking; and if I had no more to say, I have sufficiently proved to you, that strict godliness is no fancy. For this doctrine of good works, which I have laid before you, this is Godliness; Godliness in the greatest severity and strictness of it: grant a necessity of such a life as this, and you grant all that is desired. And can any of this be denied? Must we serve the LORD? To be doing good is the same with serving God. Must we serve the LORD only and wholly? May not sin claim a share, and now and then something be done for the Devil? Must we serve the LORD with all our might, or may less serve? Consider that Scripture, "When ye shall have done all those things

which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants : we have done that which was our duty to do." (*Luke* xvii. 10.) When we have given unto God all that we owe him, then let the flesh and the Devil take the rest.

Beloved, consider what I have said, and observe whether all that diligence, faithfulness, zeal, tenderness, and preciseness, which the strictest Christians either practise or profess, be not included in these three things, to serve the LORD with all our might, to the end of our days, and in a constant and continued course of Godliness.

Christians, now that you see how little weight or reason hitherto there appears in this charge of the world against us, let us be encouraged to hold fast, and hold on our holy course : let our practices be exact according to our principles, and let our principles alone to plead for themselves ; God will plead for them against all the world. Let us not give occasion to evil men to charge us with looseness, and then we may give them leave to charge us with over-much strictness.

But, Oh, how much reason have we to blame ourselves on the one hand, whilst they injuriously blame us on the other ! Too strict, too precise, too painful in the work of the LORD ! Oh, how sadly deficient rather are we ! How spare are our duties ! How little is our care ! We need not fear any excess, where we feel so many defects. Oh, how scanty are our services for our God ! How barren are our fields ! How thin do our good fruits spring up ! Sinners ! charge us with our barrenness, and we will join with you in the charge ; the LORD pardon us, it is but little that we have brought forth ; our good fruits are but like the gleanings of the harvest, here and there an ear, or a poor handful ; or like " the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches." (*Isa.* xlvii. 6.) Blessed be God for any thing ; but woe to us that there is no more ; it is but " here a little and there a little," here a line and there a blank, that we have to show. O how

many chasms and vacuities are there to be found in our course ! How many empty hours, and empty days, have we lived, concerning which, if we should have asked, *Anima, quid fecisti hodie ?*—"Soul, what account canst thou give of this day's work ?"—instead of giving in our bill, we must give in a blank, and write down nothing but *Perdidi, perdidi*, I have lost a day more ! O brethren, let us take heed of giving in any more such blank accounts, lest from our *Perdidi* we should at last come to write down *Perii* : I am lost, I am undone ; I have lost so much time, that now I have lost my soul !

Beloved, whilst others bespatter our diligence, let us bewail our negligence ; let us bewail it, and amend. If to be strict, and watchful, and fruitful, be to be vile and foolish, let us resolve with that holy King, We "will be more vile than this : " we will be more foolish than this, if this be folly. Whilst men charge us that our religion is fancy, we have no such way to vindicate it, and prove it a reality, as by being more religious, more strictly so, more fruitfully so. Our fruitfulness in good works will be the proof of our sincerity, and will silence the calumnies of our adversaries.

But you will ask, "Is there so much in this doctrine of good works, and all necessary to salvation ? Who then can be saved ? May not a good will serve to make up the defect of good works ? We have heard that God accepts the will for the deed ; and we hope, that though we have done little, yet this will be accepted, that we have a willing mind."

Though this be a truth in many cases, that "a willing mind is accepted with God," where there is little done ; yet because it hath been by many persons much mistaken and abused, and this mistake hath proved fatal to many a soul, being made use of to serve for an excuse of a lazy heart, and barren life ; give me leave, before I proceed, to turn aside a little ; and to show you in what sense the will may be accepted where the work is not done.

There is a question put amongst the school-men,

“Whether a will to sin, where the act follows not, contracts not as great a guilt in the sight of God, as both the will and the act?” And DURANDUS determines it thus; “The reason why the will to sin brings not forth the act may be two-fold; either because the will is not so fully and peremptorily resolved; or else, because though the will be fully resolved upon it, yet there is something which hinders the execution. Now, in the first case,” says he, “where the reason of not acting the sin is the incompleteness of the will, there the will without the act is not as great a sin as the will and act together; but if the will were so fully resolved, that it would have brought forth the act if it had not been hindered, there the guilt is as great, if the sin be not committed, as if it had been committed.”

There may be use made of this to the determining the present question. Where there is a will to perform a duty, and yet it is not done, if the reason of the failing be not from the incompleteness of the will, but from some unavoidable hinderance, there the will is accepted, as if the work had been done. When the will is so strongly set upon a duty, that it would have brought forth the performance, had it not been for some invincible hinderance, it shall not fail of acceptance: the reason is, because where the defect is not in the will, God hath the heart; and wheresoever God hath the heart, there is certain acceptance with God. And so in all other the like cases, “If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.” (2 Cor. viii. 12.) He that gives according to what he hath, he that does according to what he hath, and does it heartily, shall be accepted. It may be that thy case may be such sometimes, that *to will* may be all thou hast towards a duty: as for instance, when thou hast a will to show mercy, to give an alms, if thou hast nothing to give, thy will is all thou hast. It is true, there may be mistakes, and we are too apt to make such mistakes, and to impute our

failures in duty to want of ability, when they are from want of will. How ordinarily do men thus excuse their grossest neglects, even when they yield themselves over to a universal, careless, and idle life, wherein there is not the least care or pains taken to please or follow God! You say, "Why, I do what I can; I can do no more than I can; I would live a better life, but I cannot;"—when yet the will only is in fault: though you can do no more than you can, yet if you had a good will to it, you might do more than you do.

But still the great question will be, How may I know (in case of failures in performance) whether my will be so fully set upon my duty, that there would be performance if it were not hindered, if it were not for want of power or opportunity? I answer,

First, There is no pleading want of ability to excuse a total neglect of Godliness. If the pretence be, want of ability to live a godly life in general;—"I am willing to live a godly life, but cannot;"—there it is certain the defect is in the will: the SPIRIT of Sanctification is a SPIRIT of Power; and where the will is once renewed by that mighty SPIRIT, there is certainly such a power communicated, as will bring on the soul to follow God in a course of Godliness, whatever particular weaknesses and failings there may be.

Beloved, you that say you would fain follow God, but cannot; you would fain live a godly life, but do nothing towards it; you would willingly leave off your worldly life, or your fleshly life, or your idle life, you would fain leave off your drinking, and gaming, and wantonness, and betake yourselves to praying, and repenting, and denying yourselves, and minding your souls, but you are not able;—the meaning is this, you are not willing; you cannot find in your hearts to take up such a course; you have some wishes, and weak inclinations to Godliness, but no *will* to it. If there were a willing mind within, doubtless there would be some sign of it in your course without.

Secondly, For particular duties, when we are willing to

them, and yet fall short of performance, we may know, that the will would bring forth the acts, were it not for some great impediment, by such marks as the following :—

(1.) When the non-performance of duty brings forth sorrow and trouble of heart ; when it is a grief of mind to us that we cannot do what we would. As to those who in case of failures are quiet, and well enough contented,—and much more as to those who are glad of an excuse, who, when they are put upon difficult or displeasing duties, are glad they have so much to say for themselves, that they are not able, or have not opportunity ; it is an argument, that little would have been done, had they had ever so great ability

(2.) When if we cannot do the duty, we do what we can towards it. A man that is poor, and cannot give an alms to his brethren in distress, yet he can pity them, pray for them, and make their case known to others that can relieve them. If he do not what he can, if he do not open his bowels to them, though he cannot open his hand, though he had ever so much, his poor brother would be likely to be little the better. The poor widow cast her mite into the treasury, which was all she had : it was a sign that she had a large heart. though she gave so small a gift.

If thou art but a babe in CHRIST, hast had but a little time, and hast yet but a little understanding, and a little strength ; though thou canst not follow the LORD in such exactness, nor attain to such a fruitful life as grown and experienced Christians, yet, if whilst thou art but a child thou dost follow the LORD as a child, according to the measure of thine understanding and ability, and performest thy duties in a broken manner, but yet thou dost perform them ; if thou art weak as a child, but yet art tractable as a child, and willing to be led where thou canst not go ; if it be thus with thee, thou needest not be discouraged. He that whilst he is but a child follows GOD as a child, according to his measure,—it is a sign that, if he were a man, he would follow him as a man.

Perhaps you labour under some sinful desire, or violent

passion, which, it may be, flows from your bodily constitution : and notwithstanding you know it is your duty to mortify and crucify it, you find that you can hitherto do little to it. But if your will to be rid of it bring forth a continual watching and praying against it ; if, though you cannot overcome it, yet you are still fighting against it ; if, though it will live in you, yet you will not let it live in peace with you ; and especially if your striving against it be not altogether without success, but brings forth actual restraint of it, as to those outward acts by which it would vent itself ; (as if, though you cannot overcome passion, yet you can restrain your tongue from uttering it in angry words ; or if, though you cannot overcome your inward pride, yet you do forbear those self-exalting words, and vain boastings, by which that lust is fomented ;) you may be sure, that if you could have your will, it should not be suffered to lodge one night more within you.

Or, perhaps, you have a slothful heart, and are naturally, or by occasion of some bodily distemper, dull, and heavy, and inactive, and are still wishing for a more active lively spirit, but cannot hitherto attain it. Yet though your heart be heavy and sleepy, if you will not let it sleep in quiet, but are frequently jogging and awakening it, by the most quickening considerations ; if you endeavour to serve the LORD with the best you have ; if what you want in quickness and sprightliness you labour to make up in seriousness ; if though you make on by a slow pace, yet you do go on ; then know, that you have to do with a GOD who knows and considers your frame, and in this case also will accept you according to what you have, and not according to what you have not.

(3.) If there be some duties which you are unable to do, yet are you faithful in others, which you can do ? If you have not an alms to give to one that is poor, yet do you give counsel to him, and therein show kindness to his soul ? If you cannot so well compose your thoughts to any fixed meditation, but are unavoidably perplexed with confusedness and distractions, but can pray, or can spend the more time in reading ; do you do that ? If you

cannot so profitably improve christian society, do you do the more in private, in your immediate converse with **GOD**? If you want courage or boldness to appear for **GOD**, in exhorting or reproofing others, especially such as are above you, but yet have families wherein you can be bold; what do you do there, to your children, or to your servants? Do you instruct, warn, and reprove them? Though, as before, you cannot extend mercy to others, in their necessities, yet are you just, and righteous, and honest, and peaceable, in your dealings with and carriage towards all? If you are just, and would be merciful, if you had wherewithal; if you are profitable in conversing with your families, and would be so to others, if you could get courage and boldness; if you are serious, and spiritual, and affectionate in secret, and have a will to be so in society; that is an argument that your will would bring forth performance there also, if it were not hindered.

(4.) If at those times, when there are not such impediments, we then do what at another time we cannot: for that which cannot be done at some times, as in sickness, or in times of temptation, may be done at another time, when we are not under such disadvantages.

Now, gather up all these together, and then the question will easily be determined. He that hath a will to walk in all the duties of godliness; he that does ordinarily walk in the practice of those holy duties which he hath power to do; he that does what he can towards those duties which he cannot fully reach to; he that mourns, and is grieved in his heart, under his failings;—this man may have ground to conclude that his spirit is sincerely willing, though his flesh be weak, and that this willing mind is accepted with **GOD**, as if it did really perform. But those that pretend to have a good will to godliness, yet in their general course are carnal and careless; those that do not what they can; that do not endeavour to do what they cannot; that do not mourn under their failings, but are contented and quiet, and satisfy themselves in this, that their will is good, and that **GOD** accepts their will for the

deed ;—such as these do but deceive themselves ; they are not upright before God, nor accepted with him.

7. The Doctrine of the Last Judgment, and the different Rewards which shall then be rendered, is no fancy, but a real Truth. I am dealing with Pharisees, not with Sadducees, and therefore shall not need to prove either the Resurrection or Judgment. My main business here will lie in the proof of the latter part, “That the sincerely godly shall have in the Judgment a far different reward from all other men.”

That God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, I hope you are already satisfied. When all the men of this world shall have run their course ; when the courtly gallants, the proud minions, and wanton mimics, shall have acted their glorious parts ; when the condemned Christians shall have run their race ; when the last scene shall be over, the stage cleared, the curtains drawn ; when the beggars’ rags, and the great men’s robes, when the warriors’ swords, and statesmen’s gowns, shall be put off, and the oppressed shall stand upon even ground with their mightiest oppressors ; when the Kings of the earth shall have laid down their crowns, and the Princes their sceptres ; when the Judges of the earth shall have broken up their courts ;—then shall the God of glory erect his tribunal, before which, all persons, from the least to the greatest, must appear, have all their ways and acting examined, and receive their doom. “Then shall men return, and discern betwixt the righteous and the wicked ; betwixt him that served the Lord, and him that served him not.” Then shall men say, “Verily there is a reward for the righteous ; doubtless He is a God that judgeth in the earth.”

Do you ask, What shall this reward of the righteous be, and what shall be the difference betwixt theirs, and the rewards of others ? Let the Scripture answer : “Who will render to every man according to his deeds : to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life : but unto them that

are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." (*Rom.* ii. 6—9.) These words refer to the last Judgment, as appears by the former part of them, "Who will render." In the following part, we have the dividing the sheep from the goats, and their distinct rewards appointed to them.

First, We have a description of the sheep, and what their reward shall be ; and, according to their description, these sheep must be the very same with Precisians, or circumspect Christians. 1. They are such as "seek for glory, honour, and immortality;" that is, they seek for a portion of glory and immortality in the world to come ; they leave the kingdoms of this world to be shared among the men of this world, "and seek for that kingdom which cannot be shaken." 2. They are well doers ; good men, and holy men, men of a good and holy life. 3. They "continue in well doing ;" they are not good for a fit, but it is the way of their life. 4. They patiently continue. Patience is either, (1.) Of labour : they do not complain, nor are weary of their work : Or, (2.) Of sufferings : they can bear as well as do : Or, (3.) Of delay : they are content to stay for their reward until hereafter ; let others take their portions and rewards here, they are content to stay for theirs.

This is the description of the sheep : And of all the men in the world, who should these sheep be ? Can they be any other than those godly men who have been before represented to you ? Well, but what is the reward which the LORD will render to these ? It is eternal life, eternal glory and blessedness. This is true, sinners, this is no deceit ; it is a certain truth, and such a truth as you yourselves must believe, before ever you can come to GOD : "He that cometh to GOD must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (*Heb.* xi. 6.) Mark it, of them that *diligently* seek him. They are the same men you see, who are spoken of here, and in the

former Scripture. Of these God is the rewarder; that is, with a special and glorious reward.

Sinners, you will not be persuaded now but these people are foolish, a self-deluding people, and that the heaven, the joy, the glory, and the blessedness, with the hope of which they feed themselves, are only in their own fancies. But yet, if ever you come to any thing, if ever you be brought home to God, this is that which you must believe, "that He is a rewarder," and a glorious rewarder, "of them that diligently seek him." Thus we have the description of the sheep, and of their reward, and the certainty thereof.

Next, we have the description of the goats, and their reward. Of them there is a general description; they are the men that do evil: and this three-fold:—First, They are contentious. Secondly, They obey not the truth. Thirdly, They obey unrighteousness. These, for method's sake, I shall reduce to two heads. They are described, 1. By their contention. 2. By their conquest.

1. By their contention. There is a two-fold contention: 1. Of man with man. 2. Of man with God.

This latter is expressed in Scripture by "gain-saying;" (*Rom. x*;) by "resisting;" (*Acts vii. 51*;) "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart, ye do always resist the HOLY GHOST;" and by "kicking." (*Deut. xxxii. 15*.) This kicking implies, (1.) Opposition against God: (2.) Opposition joined with scorn and contempt,—putting a slight upon God, and all his counsels and ways. Now this latter is the contention meant in the text, contention against God; they will not hearken to his voice, nor be obedient to his truth. The LORD commands, and calls them to accept of his grace, and to be obedient to his law; but they reject God, kick against his word, and refuse to hearken to him.

2. By their conquest or victory in this contest. After all the strivings of God with them, they still stand it out, and overcome; "they obey not the truth," but persist to "obey unrighteousness." Here, (1.) By "the truth," we are to understand "the whole word of God," both the

word of righteousness, the Law ; and the word of faith, the Gospel : by “obeying the truth,” we are to understand submitting to the government of the Law, and accepting the grace of the Gospel. (2.) By “unrighteousness,” we are to understand all those corrupt principles, according to which the lusts of men govern them.

To reckon all these corrupt principles, would be as great a task as to reckon up all the doctrines of truth, and the righteous commands of GOD ; to each of which holy doctrines and commands there are, in this law of sin, principles directly contrary. However, to help sinners to understand themselves, I shall mention some of the chief of them, in number ten ; which, if you will, you may call, *The Devil’s Ten Commandments.*

I. *Live to thyself.* Mind thine own things. This is the first and great commandment, on which all the rest hang, and to which they serve, and is the same as, *Be thine own god.*

II. *Let thy will be thy law.* Thou art thine own ; thy tongue is thine own ; thy time is thine own ; thy estate is thine own ; mayest thou not do what thou wilt with thine own ?

III. *Make the best of the time present, and of present things.* Lose not a certainty for uncertainties ; who knows what may be hereafter ? “Eat and drink, for tomorrow thou diest.” Be merry while thou mayest ; spend while thou hast it ; make hay while the sun shines.

IV. *Stand fast in the liberties of thy flesh.* Come not into bondage. Be not a slave to a strict life, when thou mayest use thine own liberty.

V. *Continue in sin because grace hath abounded.* CHRIST died for sinners ; GOD is merciful ; why shouldest thou then fear to take thy course ?

VI. *Do as others do.* Go along with the multitude ; fashion thyself to the times ; be not singular ; why shouldest thou think thyself wiser than others ?

VII. *Do no more religion than is necessary : be not*

righteous overmuch. Be not over forward ; a little faith, a little repentance, will serve thy turn.

VIII. *Do not trouble thyself about small offences.* Thoughts are free ; words are but things of course. What man is there that lives and sins not ? Why shouldest thou make such ado about thy sins ? Are they not little ones ?

IX. *Be not over hasty.* If thou must repent, it is time enough yet ; torment not thyself before thy time : when thou art old, thou wilt have little else to do : be not old whilst thou art young.

X. *Trust God with thy soul, rather than man with thy body.* That is, choose iniquity rather than affliction. Venture no farther in matters of religion than thou mayest with safety.

These are some of those corrupt principles to which all others may be reduced ; and living under the power of any of these, or any others of the like nature, is obeying unrighteousness. As the Apostle says, “He that breaks one of the commandments of God, is guilty of all ;” so he that lives under the power of any one of the commandments of the Devil, is as sure a slave to the Devil, as if he were guilty of all. He whose foot is entangled in one cord of the net, is as fast as he who hath the whole net spread over him. If a bird be held but by a leg or a wing, it is as sure as if the whole body were in the net. Here you have the description of the goats ; those who are contentious, resisting the LORD and the word of his grace, and who, after all the strivings of the LORD with them, overcome, and persist in disobeying the truth, and obeying unrighteousness, or living under the dominion of those corrupt principles.

Let me here demand of you these three things.

First, Are not these principles, which I have mentioned, every one of them evidently principles of unrighteousness ? And may they not as well be called the Devil’s Commandments, as the Devil be called a Devil ?

Secondly, Are not all those who live under the power of these principles, the very men meant in the text, by those who obey unrighteousness? May they not as well be called the Devil's Servants, as those wicked laws, the Devil's Commandments?

Thirdly, Are not all persons who are not precisely godly, evidently held under some of these corrupt principles? Is it not this which you in reproach charge upon the Saints, that they will not live under these, or some of these rules; that they will not take their liberty; that they will not do as others, but must be singular, forsooth, as if they were wiser than their neighbours; and that they stand upon every trifle and small matter?

Some of these Anti-Precisians, if they be laid to these black lines, touch them in every point throughout; you may well style them, Hell's thorough Conformists, or the Devil's best Subjects.

Sinners, the whole generation of you that are of such a spirit, even every one of you that have a word to speak against the preciseness of godly men, come and look into this glass, which is set before you. Do you know your own faces when you see them? Are not these principles the very pictures of you? If you say they are not, it is because you do not know your own faces. But if you be, even all of you, these very men, then look a little further, and you may see your reward in the judgment: "To them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil."

Perhaps you say, This is but your opinion, and you may be mistaken; we hope to fare as well as you, the best of you, notwithstanding all your great words. But *our* opinion? Is it never *your* opinion too? Do you never doubt? Are you never afraid that this may be, that this will be, your portion? Did your own consciences never preach to you the same things? But whether they did or no, this is as true, that indignation and wrath will be the portion of every soul of you thus living and thus dying, as that God

is righteous. The righteousness of GOD is engaged to render to every man according to his works; and so "to them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath."

And have you not yet done with talking of our fancies and conceits? Is it but a conceit, that there shall be a judgment? Or is this a conceit, that it shall then fare better with the sheep than with the goats? Or that those are CHRIST's sheep, who hear his voice, and follow his steps? Is this a conceit, that it shall fare better with the friends of CHRIST than with his enemies? Or that those are the friends of CHRIST, who are the friends of holiness? Is this a conceit, that it shall fare better with the servants of CHRIST than with strangers? Or are those the best servants who waste their talents, or bind them up in a napkin? Will CHRIST say in that day, "Away, thou faithful servant; away from me, ye workers of righteousness: you have loved me too much; you have pleased me too well; you have followed me too closely; you have given yourselves to too much praying, too much praising, too much fasting; you have been too conscientious, too tender, too watchful, too holy; you would not be merry, and idle, and vain; you would not go along with your neighbours to their sporting, to their revellings, to their pleasures, but must needs deny yourselves, and take up your cross and follow me; you could not be content with an earthly happiness, but you must have glory, and honour, and immortality: away from me, ye workers of righteousness; you that have followed me in the regeneration, get ye gone, get you down to everlasting destruction:"—will this be the voice of the Judge at that day? Will he call to sinners, "Come, ye wantons; come, ye wine-bibbers; come, ye swearers, liars, scoffers, whore-masters; come, ye blessed crew, inherit the kingdom?" All this must be so, if Godliness be but a fancy; and do you not yet see, what men of reason you are, what men of judgment you are, and how much truth or weight there is in your charge against the Saints? O Christians, you see, I hope, suffi-

ciently, how little ground you have to take the least notice of, or discouragement from, these confident adversaries, who, in proclaiming you enthusiasts, must proclaim themselves either infidels or idiots? Thus I have showed, that the Principles of Godliness are not enthusiastical.

II. The Duties and Comforts of Godliness are no fancies. I shall instance in such duties, and those parts of duties, which are most obnoxious to this censure;—the most spiritual duties, the most spiritual parts of duties, which being most out of sight, and above the reach of the world, are most of all thus censured by them. I shall mention only two, which indeed are comprehensive of all;—Worshipping GOD in the SPIRIT, and Walking in the SPIRIT.

First, Worshipping GOD in the SPIRIT. If this be a fancy, the Apostle PAUL, with the Christians his contemporaries, were the great enthusiasts of their time, who says thus of himself and them, “We are the circumcision, who worship GOD in the SPIRIT” (*Phil.* iii. 3.) “We are the circumcision:” that is, we are the people of GOD; we are they who are circumcised with the circumcision which is without hands; the circumcised in heart; which is all one, as if he had said, We are Christians, “who worship GOD in the SPIRIT.” Worshipping GOD in the SPIRIT notes, 1. The worship of the soul, or heart-worship. 2. The worshipping GOD through his SPIRIT, or in the HOLY GHOST.

1. The worship of the soul, or inward worship; and that, (1.) As it stands in opposition to mere bodily worship; I say not, as it is opposed to bodily worship, but to *mere* bodily worship: (2.) As it stands in opposition to the antiquated Jewish worship, which was more external, pompous, and ceremonious. “We worship GOD in the Spirit;” that is, we worship GOD in the heart, and in the simplicity and plainness of Gospel-worship.

Heart-worship is the true worship; the worship of the soul is the soul of worship. The body without the soul is dead; and bodily worship without spiritual is dead worship: “GOD is a Spirit: and they that worship him

must worship him in spirit and in truth." (*John* iv. 24.) The latter word, "truth," is exegetical of the former, "Spirit;" signifying, that worshipping in spirit is worshipping in truth; this is true worship, worship indeed. The worship of the body, the uncovering of the head, the bowing the knee, the lifting up of the hands or voice, these are but the outside and carcass of worship, and so far only capable of being accounted worship, as they are helpful to, and expressive of, the devotions of the soul. As bowing of the knee signifies the bowing of the heart, as the uncovering of the head either expresses or helps towards the inward reverence of the soul, so far are they worship, and no farther, and even then but improperly so called: but as they stand single and separated from the inward worship, they are no worship, no more than a carcass is a man. There is no such enthusiast as the formalist; who, whilst with those heathens, he thinks to "be heard for" his "much speaking," (*Matt.* vi. 7,) doth but play the hypocrite and liar. Look what the courtier's compliments are, such are the formalist's devotions, smooth words, tongue-courtesies, flattering salutes, fawning cringes; "Your servant, sir; command me what you please; I am ready to serve you." Here is a great show of respect and kindness, but what is there in it? What wise man will regard it? And what more is there in the formalist's devotions? What is it but mere complimenting with the holy God? Very devout, and lowly, as to all appearance; and a great noise it is, which such devotion makes; but what is there in it? What awe and soul-reverence of God; what heart striving and wrestling with God; what lifting up of the soul to God is there in all this? Is there no such thing as heart-striving, and soul-reverence, required in the worship of God; or are these but shadows of worship, and is the soul of it only in the lips or knees? Doth he whose soul is poured out in prayer, whose spirit strives with the Lord, doth he but pray in conceit, and worship God in conceit? And those whose eyes, and tongues, and hands only pray, have they gotten the substance; or are these the

true worshippers? Beloved, be not deceived, God sees not as man sees: He sees what is within man; he sees what is within our duties; shows or sounds cannot blind his eye, or please his ear.

“Be ye filled with the SPIRIT; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the LORD. (*Ephes.* v. 18, 19.) Believe it, Christians, heart-music is the best church-music; heart-praying, and heart-singing, make the best melody in the ears of the LORD of Sabaoth. My intent is not to decry all external worship, as useless or unacceptable: we must glorify God “in our bodies, as well as in our spirits:” our lips must bear their parts in our prayers and praises: But I would not that you should take the body of worship to be the soul, and the soul to be nothing. Think not that the outward part is the worship, and that the inward is but a conceit. Brethren, the living God will have living services; the God of our spirits will have the service of our spirits; the worshipping God in spirit, this is the true worship. God will not be deceived; and take heed that you be not cheated with shows. When all the men of the world, with their wits, parts, and interests, have commended, garnished, and magnified the carcass of religion, and decried and disgraced its soul and life, yet this shall stand as an irrefragable truth, ‘They “are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in CHRIST JESUS, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

2. Worshipping God through the SPIRIT, through the assistance of the SPIRIT of God. We may instance in prayer: “Praying in the HOLY GHOST:” (*Jude* 20:) “The SPIRIT itself helpeth our infirmities.” (*Rom.* viii. 26.) The SPIRIT of God affords a threefold help in prayer.

(1.) He indites our requests; or suggests matter of prayer to us, who, as the Apostle tells us, “know not what to pray for as we ought.” Men’s lusts do often make their prayers, and then no wonder they ask amiss: when they should be seeking the death of their lusts, they ask meat for their lusts. We often, not knowing what to ask, ask we know

not what; we ask a stone, a serpent, a scorpion sometimes, when we think we ask bread. If GOD should always give his people their prayers, their prayers would undo them. When we are poor, we ask riches; and it may be, if GOD should give us them, our riches might undo us: sometimes we ask ease, or credit, or liberty, and if we had what we ask, it might be our ruin. The SPIRIT of GOD knows what is fit for us, and accordingly guides our prayers. He helps us to understand our sins, and so teaches us what confession to make: carnal men will confess sins, but any sins rather than their own. He helps us to understand our wants, and so teaches us what to ask. He helps us to understand our mercies, and so teaches us what to give thanks for. Carnal men often come before the LORD with mock praises, and give thanks for their justification, sanctification, and hope of glory, when, it may be, the power of sin, and the wrath of GOD, abide upon them, and they remain “without CHRIST, without hope, without GOD in the world.”

(2.) He excites, and quickens, and enlarges our hearts in prayer. The SPIRIT of GOD comes in, influences the heart, and draws forth the soul; and this is the import of the following words, “The SPIRIT itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered;” that is, he sets us on groaning and sighing after the LORD. Groaning denotes the strength and ardency of desire, which, through the fervency of it, puts the soul to pain, and a holy impatience, till it be heard; in which sense it is used in Rom. viii. 23,—“For we ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the SPIRIT, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” It works such “groanings which cannot be uttered;” it sometimes makes the hearts of Christians too big for their mouths, and their desires larger than their expressions; however much warmth, and life, and strength of affection, appear without, there is more within. O, how flat and dead are our hearts oftentimes! How much are we straitened in our prayers! We stand as men struck dumb, when we come before the LORD: or if there be words in our mouths,

there is scarce any word in our hearts ; sometimes we cannot speak, or if we can speak, we cannot groan : the SPIRIT doth either put words in our mouths, or else supply the want of our words, by kindling and enlarging inward desires ; helping us to groan out a prayer, when we cannot speak it out ; and silent groans will sound in the ears of the LORD, when the loudest cries may not be heard.

(3.) He encourages and emboldens the heart in prayer, enables us to call GOD, Father, to pray to him, to cry to him, and to be confident of audience and acceptance with him, upon this ground ; “GOD hath sent forth the SPIRIT of his SON into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (*Gal. iv. 6.*) And hereby he furnisheth us with a mighty argument to plead with GOD ; “Father, hear me ; Father, forgive me ; Father, pity me ; Father, help me : Am not I thy child, thy son, or thy daughter ? To whom may a child be bold to go ? With whom may a child have hope to speed, if not with his father ? Father, hear me. The fathers of our flesh are full of bowels, full of pity to their children, and know how to give good things to them when they ask them. When they ask bread, will they deny them ? When they ask clothes, or any thing they want, will they deny them ? And is not the Father of Spirits more full of bowels, more full of bounty, than the fathers of our flesh ? Father, hear me.”

This is praying in the SPIRIT ; and if this be a fancy with you, I must tell you, sinners, that it is such a fancy, as experienced Christians, who have most proved it, would not lose for all your substance. But will you stand to it ? Is this praying indeed a mere fancy ? Then bring your *Index expurgatorius*, and expunge these texts out of the Scriptures ; or else, if you let them stand, and look over them again, you will next say. “Their Bible is as enthusiastical as themselves.”

But let me add one word, to convince you from your own judgment, (if you understand what you do,) that praying in the SPIRIT is no fancy ; and this, by putting this one question to you : Dare any of you all, when you

go to God in prayer, deliberately refuse to beg the assistance of his SPIRIT? Whether you use a form, or pray without a form, that is not so material: the assistance of the SPIRIT is needed as well by those that use a form, as by those who pray without it: Now dare you, I say, when you go to pray deliberately, refuse to beg the assistance of the SPIRIT? Dare you say, "LORD, I need not, nor desire, any such assistance: I will not ask it of thee, that thy SPIRIT may be given me to help mine infirmities!" If you beg the assistance of the SPIRIT, you hope to have it; and if you have it, there is that praying in the SPIRIT, which you cry down for a fancy: judge now, whether you do not condemn the things which yourselves allow, and in your judgment and practice justify the reality of that duty, which with your mouths you decry as enthusiastical. Will you also be his disciples? Will you also be enthusiasts?

But, Secondly, Walking in the SPIRIT is no fancy. "If we live in the SPIRIT, let us also walk in the SPIRIT." (*Gal. v. 25.*) In the prosecution of this I shall show, 1. What is meant here by the Spirit. 2. What by walking in the SPIRIT. 3. That this is no fancy.

1. What is meant here by the SPIRIT. That being something that is opposed to the flesh, or corruption, as appears from *ver. 16, 17*, must of necessity be one of these two things, possibly both, either the HOLY GHOST, and the influence, assistance, and operations of that HOLY SPIRIT; or else that new nature which is begotten in us by the SPIRIT,—the grace of the SPIRIT infused into our hearts, and abiding in us. Whichsoever of the two we understand it of, the difference will not be considerable.

2. What is meant by walking in the SPIRIT. Some there are, who, by SPIRIT, understand the doctrine of Christianity; and accordingly would have this walking in the SPIRIT to be nothing else but the embracing of the Christian Religion. But if this be so, then what is to be understood by flesh, which in *ver. 17*, is said to be contrary to this SPIRIT? Why, by flesh, they will tell us, we are to under-

stand Judaism. But then let me ask, (1.) What is meant by the **lusting** of this flesh, which was now dead, against the **SPIRIT**? Is that the meaning of it,—Judaism lusteth against Christianity? (2.) How can this dead flesh have such a numerous offspring, as is mentioned in *ver.* 19, “The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatries, witchcraft, hatred, variance.” Must all these brats be laid at the door of the synagogue? Are these the brood of that ceremonious law of carnal commandments; or are they not manifestly the fruits of that corrupt law of carnal concupiscence? I know not with what shadow of reason we can understand by the flesh any thing else but lust or concupiscence; and then by the **SPIRIT** we must understand grace, or the **SPIRIT** of grace, which bid defiance, and are contrary to it.

Let us consider further, what is meant by that expression of being “led by the **SPIRIT**.” (*Rom.* viii. 14.) Why, possibly the same men will tell us, that there is no more in this than in the former; and that it imports no more than the **SPIRIT**’s leading us into all truth, the truth of the Gospel. If this be granted to be all, yet here we have gotten something, *viz.* That the **SPIRIT** of **GOD** is acknowledged to be our leader. But let us consider one Scripture more: “I will put my **SPIRIT** within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.” (*Ezek.* xxxvi. 27.) What are those statutes of **GOD**, but the whole will and word of **GOD**? One or two of them I shall mention: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me: Work out your salvation with fear and trembling: Quench not the **SPIRIT**: Abstain from all appearance of evil: See that ye walk circumspectly.” Are not these, and many more such, found in this great Statute-Book? What is it to walk in these statutes, other than to live in the sincere obedience of the whole will of **GOD**? Now, says the **LORD**, I will give them my **SPIRIT**, and he shall cause them, or help them, to walk in my statutes, or to live a holy life. Let these things be considered.

and see if they will not help us to a better interpretation of those words, "Walk in the SPIRIT." To walk in the SPIRIT, signifies, (1.) To live under the conduct of the SPIRIT. (2.) To live in the power of the SPIRIT. (3.) To live a spiritual life.

(1.) To live under the conduct and guidance of the SPIRIT. "As many as are led by the SPIRIT of GOD, they are the sons of GOD." (*Rom. viii. 14.*) There is a double guide, whereby the LORD leads his people; the guide of his Word; "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel;" (*Psal. lxxiii. 24*;) and the guide of his SPIRIT; "He shall lead you into all truth." (*John xvi. 13.*) There are two things which the SPIRIT doth in leading on his people. First, He enlightens their eyes, and opens their understandings, that they may understand the Scriptures, which point out to us our way: "Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures." (*Luke xxiv. 45.*) Secondly, He takes them by the hand, as it were, and leads them: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (*Isa. xl. 11.*)

(2.) To live in the power of the SPIRIT, or of that inherent and assisting grace which we receive from him; to be carried on in a holy course, and all the duties of it, both from the intrinsical power of the life of GOD begotten in us, and by the concurrent influences and assistance of the HOLY GHOST, whom GOD hath given us, to help our infirmities. As in the duty of prayer, so in all other Christian duties; "Without me," (says CHRIST,) that is, without the assistance of my SPIRIT, "ye can do nothing." (*John xv. 5.*) Therefore the Psalmist resolves, "I will go in the strength of the LORD, and by thee I will make mention of thy name." (*Ps. lxxi. 16.*) And this living in the power of the SPIRIT is no other than is signified (if we understood what we say) in those common expressions which we ordinarily have in our mouths; "By the grace of GOD, or by the good help of GOD, I will do this, or that." What the Apostle speaks of himself as a Minister,

is applicable to Christians : “ I laboured more abundantly than they all ; yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me. (1 *Cor.* xv. 10.)

Thus, to walk in the SPIRIT, is to follow those directions and intimations of the will of God, which he gives us out of the Word ; and those impulses of the SPIRIT upon our hearts, whereby, as by a gale of wind filling our sails, he moves and helps us on. When you find any clear light breaking in from the Word upon your consciences, and thereupon some stirrings upon your hearts, either by way of check, restraining and calling you back from any irregular or disorderly walking, or quickening and encouraging you on in a way of duty, this you may safely take to be from the SPIRIT ; and when you entertain this light, obey these checks, and follow these holy impulses, this is your walking in the Spirit.

(3.) To live a spiritual life. Those in whom the SPIRIT hath begotten another heart, he leads on in another life. He that is born of the SPIRIT is a spiritual man, and those that are led by the SPIRIT walk on in a spiritual course ; that is, they live a more noble life than the rest of the world. Men who are governed by that evil Spirit who is in the world, live an evil life ; worldly-spirited men live a worldly life ; sensual men live a sensual life. “ Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience : among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” (*Eph.* ii. 2, 3.) Whilst we were in the common state, we took the common road ; whilst we were in the flesh, fleshly men, we lived a fleshly life. To serve our bellies, to serve our appetites, to serve our pride, our covetousness, and other lusts, this was our life. And this life was suitable to that spirit which was within them, and to that evil Spirit, the Prince of this world, without them, who governed and steered their course. Accordingly, the saints having a new heart within, and a new leader without,

lead a new life: as the flesh and the Devil carry evil men on in a course suitable to their leaders, so the SPIRIT and grace of GOD carry on the saints in a course suitable to theirs,—a holy, spiritual, and heavenly life. So that this is to walk in the SPIRIT, to live holily and spiritually; this is that life which is called, “the life of GOD,” (*Eph. iv. 19,*) “the conversation in heaven.” And a spiritual and heavenly life this may be called, upon a three-fold account.—Their dealings are about spiritual and heavenly things: Their delights are spiritual and heavenly: And by these spiritual dealings and delights, themselves become daily more spiritual.

Their *dealings* are about spiritual and heavenly things. GOD, and heaven, and everlasting glory, and those spiritual exercises, whereby GOD is served, and glory obtained, these are the matters about which this life is spent. They live with GOD; they hold daily intelligence with heaven; they are much employed in contemplating, and admiring, and adoring the infinite beauty and incomprehensible perfections of GOD, and his unspeakable love, and grace, and goodness towards them. They are searching into the mysteries of CHRIST, and studying the riches of the glory of the mystery of the Gospel: they live amongst angels; their hearts and their eyes are daily in that “general assembly and church of the first-born.” When they sleep, they lay them down under the wings of their LORD; and no sooner are they awake, than they get them up to the top of Pisgah, to take a view of the promised land. “When I awake, I am ever with thee,” says the Psalmist. When the covetous man awakes, he is with his god; when the epicure awakes, he is with his god; when the adulterer awakes, he is with his goddess. Christians are presently above the clouds, above the stars, falling down before the throne of the Almighty: their work is to seek, and serve, and praise, and please the LORD; to carry themselves so, that they may be accepted of GOD; to be washing their robes, and making them white in the blood of the LAMB; to be minding their souls, consciences, affections, and thoughts,

that these may all, in their several capacities, exalt and enjoy the LORD. Their trading is for the pearl, whilst the merchants of the earth are trading for gold, and silver, and spices. Whilst the muckworms of the world are dealing in corn, and sheep, and oxen, and asses; whilst the wantons of the earth are dealing about fashions, and feasts, and sports, trading in toys, feathers, “apes, and peacocks;” Christians are trading in promises and prayer, in faith and repentance, in patience and humility, in mercy and charity, that by these they may make their “calling and election sure, and so an entrance may be administered unto them abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST” These are the businesses of christian lives; their dealings are about spiritual things.

Their *delights*, also, are in spiritual things. The LORD is the delight of their hearts. “Delight thyself in GOD,” says the Psalmist. And what he bids others do, he does himself: “I have set the LORD always before me; therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.” The thoughts of GOD are dear and precious to them; the word and law of GOD is their delight: “His delight is in the law of his GOD.” The courts of the LORD, his ordinances, worship, and sabbaths, are their delight: “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts.” His work is their delight: “I delight to do thy will.” Their hardest work is fasting, and watching, and wrestling. fighting against sin and temptations, crucifying and mortifying their own flesh, denying themselves, and mourning for sin; yet there is much sweetness in these; yea, in their very travails, and tears, and sorrowings: “As sorrowing,” says the Apostle, “yet always rejoicing;” in the midst of sorrow the heart is joyful; the heart of a saint is never in so sweet a frame as when it is melted into godly sorrow. But especially, CHRIST is their delight: he is the *Delicia Christiani orbis*. “I sat down under his shadow with great delight.” (*Cant.* ii. 3.) Carnal men are ready to say to them, as the daughters of Jerusalem to the Spouse,

“What is thy beloved more than another beloved?” (*Cant.* v. 9.) What beauty is there in Him, that thou shouldest thus desire him, or take such pleasure in him? They see no beauty in him; he hath no form or comeliness in their eye, and therefore they think there is none. O sinners, you do not know CHRIST; you have had no acquaintance with him; you have not tasted of the fruits of this tree, of the clusters of this vine. “I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” Saints have tasted of the sweetness of CHRIST; they have tasted that the LORD is gracious, and therefore can take great delight in him. The delight which they take in CHRIST, is that which puts such a delight into every ordinance, into every duty; therefore praying and reading are so pleasant to them, because there they meet with their Beloved. CHRIST appears to them in his word; CHRIST meets his Saints in their prayings and fastings; and this makes all sweet to their souls. Carnal men think the life of Saints to be a heavy, sad, and troublesome life: they count, that themselves have the merry and pleasant lives; that their hounds, their cards and dice, their drinking and dancing, their stews and plays, are the only heaven. This is all one as to say, that God hath put more sweetness into creatures, than is in himself; that the basest and vilest use of the creatures doth yield more true content than the soul’s exercising itself on God; as if the thorn should yield more sweetness, and the bramble more fatness, than the fig-tree or olive. Where are the understandings of these men? I tell you, sinners, when you have gone from flower to flower, from creature to creature, from pleasure to pleasure, and sucked out all the fatness and sweetness which these will yield, a poor Christian will get more real pleasure out of one chapter of his Bible, out of an honest sermon, out of one hour’s converse with God in prayer, than your whole life will bring you in. The Gospel, with its breasts of consolation, yield him sweeter milk, and those clusters of Canaan, on which he lives, yield him richer wine, than the whole world will afford to you.

The gleanings of a Christian's joy are better than the vintage of sinners ; and you cannot so much slight the glory of their sun, as they despise the glory of your sparks.

Again, by these spiritual exercises and delights, they become *more and more spiritual* themselves. By beholding the face of God, they are changed from glory to glory, into his image and likeness : by living so much in heaven, the temper and frame of their hearts become heavenly. Men's ordinary company and exercises have such an influence upon them, that they change their dispositions. Carnal men, by being continually conversant about their earthly affairs, have nothing but earthliness left upon their spirits ; their thoughts, their affections, their souls, are become earthly ; their duties are earthly, their prayers, their praises, their hearings, all are earthly : when they go to church, and when they go to their closets, they must carry their earth along with them, or leave their hearts behind them. On the other side, Christians, by having their dwellings with God, their delights, their recreations, their daily business with God, have the SPIRIT of glory and of God resting upon them.

And thus you see what it is to "walk in the SPIRIT." Look how far a Christian lives in the SPIRIT, so far doth he live such a life as this.

3. This is no fancy ; and if I fail not here, if I prove this, I hope, sinners, you will then see reason enough to take the enthusiast upon yourselves.

Christians, (you that hear me this day,) will you help me in this proof ; this once help me, and the cause will go clearly on the LORD's side ; come, and be living instances of this truth. Will you live according to your principle,—that life of God which is within you ? Will you live according to your rule,—that word of life which is before you ? Will you follow your leader, that HOLY SPIRIT which is given to conduct you ? Will you apply more closely to the practice of that Godliness which you profess ; will you live in the obedience of that SPIRIT which you have received ; will you show yourselves a pattern of faith, of

patience, of righteousness, and holiness? Will you be dealing less about these earthly vanities, and be less earthly in your dealings? Shall your dealings be wholly about heaven, and heavenly things, and will you make these your dealings, and your delights? Will you labour, by being more conversant about spiritual things, and in spiritual exercises, to become more spiritual, more spiritually-minded, more spiritually-tempered? Will you get more clear from the love, and lusts, and fashions, and ways, and joys of this world? Will you suffer the eternal SPIRIT to fill you with his love, and fashion you into his likeness? Will you forbear from any more resisting, grieving, slighting, or quenching his holy motions; will you hearken to his counsels, and answer his impulses? Will you grow on to be more Christians daily, more saints daily, saints in heart, saints in tongue, saints in the general frame of your course? Will you make your graces more visible, your comforts more visible, your spiritual joys and delights more visible? Will you let your light so shine before men, that they must either put out their own eyes, or else be forced to acknowledge that GOD is in you of a truth?

Brethren, we may much thank ourselves for all the slanders of our adversaries; we have furnished them with accusations; by our walking so much in the flesh, and so little in the SPIRIT, we have taught them to question whether there be any such thing as, "walking in the SPIRIT." The LORD pardon us, the LORD make us sensible of it, that we have brought up an evil report upon our GOD, upon his SPIRIT, Gospel, and ways; and, for ought we know, have undone many poor wretches, by hardening them in their misconceptions of religion! There hath been so much dross in our gold, so much ashes upon our fire, so much earth upon our spirits; our light hath been so dim, our graces have been so low, our good works have been so spare and so thin; that we have made them bold to say, that we are not what we are, but are a mere lie and deceit; and we have now no such way to vindicate ourselves and our religion, or to justify our GOD and his Gospel, as by

blowing up the coals, shaking off our ashes, stirring up the graces of **God** within us, and letting them have their perfect work in us. Will you hearken to me in this? Then I shall be bold to bring you forth as witnesses for **God** and his truth. However, though upon your account it would be the more comfortable; yet if you should fail me, I have sufficient proof at hand. For, if this walking in the **SPIRIT** be a fancy, then these damnable absurdities will unavoidably follow: (1.) That the **SPIRIT** of the **LORD** is unfaithful in his office. (2.) That **God** himself is false in his promise. (3.) That the Devil doth more to the damning of souls, than the **SPIRIT** of **God** to the saving of them. (4.) That **God** hath no people, no peculiar people, in the world.

(1.) If walking in the **SPIRIT** be a fancy, the **SPIRIT** is unfaithful in his office. That the **SPIRIT** of **God** is given to the people of **God**, to every one of them, is so plainly asserted, that he must deny the Scriptures who doth not grant it: “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the **SPIRIT**, if so be that the **SPIRIT** of **God** dwell in you. Now if any man have not the **SPIRIT** of **CHRIST**, he is none of his.” (*Rom.* viii. 9.) That there are certain operations of the **SPIRIT**, which he is by office to perform, is also certain; as, 1. To enlighten: therefore he is called the “**SPIRIT** of wisdom and revelation.” (*Ephes.* i. 17, 18.) 2. To sanctify: therefore sanctification is called, “the sanctification of the **SPIRIT**.” (2 *Thess.* ii. 13.) 3. To lead: “He shall lead you into all truth.” (*John* xvi. 13.) 4. To assist and help: “The **SPIRIT** also helpeth our infirmities:” (*Rom.* viii. 26:) “I will put my **SPIRIT** within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.” (*Ezek.* xxxvi. 27.) 5. To comfort: therefore is he called, “The Comforter.” Now, if the **SPIRIT** of the **LORD** doth this office, then there are persons who are enlightened, sanctified, led, assisted, comforted by him. If there be none such; if the comfort of Christians be but pretended; if their light, their help. their quickenings, their encouragements, be all fancies, if they be but led in conceit, quickened in conceit,

comforted in conceit, then where is the SPIRIT's faithfulness? See what blasphemies men run themselves upon before they are aware! Sinners, take heed what you do! you are bold to reproach the Saints with the SPIRIT, but take heed meanwhile of reproaching the SPIRIT with unfaithfulness. Blasphemy against the SPIRIT is no small sin: though every blasphemy of the SPIRIT be not that unpardonable sin, yet it is a fair step to it: look to yourselves!

(2.) If "walking in the SPIRIT be a fancy, then God himself is false to his promise: "I will put my SPIRIT within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." (*Ezek. xxxvi. 27.*) If there be no such thing done, then where is the promise of God? He that makes "walking in the SPIRIT" to be nothing but talk, makes the promise of God to be nothing but words.

(3.) If walking in the SPIRIT be but a fancy, then the Devil doth more to the destroying of souls, than the SPIRIT of the LORD doth to the salvation of souls. Let us consider again that scripture, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (*Ephes. ii. 2.*) There are two things there observable to our purpose; 1. Sinners are led by the Devil. 2. They are assisted and excited by the Devil.—1. They are led by the Devil. They walk on "according to the Prince of the power of the air," according to his guidance, according to his mind and will; he hath them at his beck. When he says, "go," they go; and when he says, "come," they come; and when he says, "do this," they do it. But how comes this to pass, that the Devil can hold such a hand over them, and can lead them thus at pleasure? Why, 2. They are assisted and excited by the Devil; that evil Spirit works in them, suggests evil thoughts to them, and thereby excites, and provokes, and sets them to work. The Devil is said to have filled the hearts of ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA "to lie to the HOLY GHOST;" (*Acts v. 3;*) and when he had once put a lie

into their hearts, their hearts presently put a lie into their mouths. When the Devil hath wrought wickedness in the hearts of sinners, then they presently fall to working it out. When wicked men lie, it is the Devil that lies in them; when they curse and rage, and swell with madness, the Devil rages in them; when the lusts of men bring forth adulteries, riot, revellings, the Devil lies within, blowing up the coals. Is this but a conceit, that wicked men “walk in the Spirit,” that unclean Spirit; or that the Devil draws them on, and drives them on, and helps them on, and hardens them on in their wickedness? Now if it be no fancy, that wicked men “walk in the Spirit,” can you conceive it to be but a fancy, that the Saints “walk in the SPIRIT?” If the Devil works lies, and oaths, and curses, in the hearts of sinners, you may well allow, that the SPIRIT of GOD works duties, prayers, and praises, in the hearts of the Saints. Could a poor Christian, who hath so many corruptions within, so many temptations without, so many weaknesses and discouragements, ever follow the LORD against them all, if he had no other spirit than his own to carry him on? The Saints surely have as much need of that help which is from above, to carry them on in holiness unto life, as sinners have of that which is from beneath, to carry them on in iniquity to destruction; and methinks you should not question but the SPIRIT of GOD will be as active to save, as the Devil is to destroy.

(1.) If “walking in the SPIRIT” be but a fancy, then God hath no people in the world. “As many as are led by the SPIRIT of GOD, they are the sons of GOD.” (*Rom.* viii. 14.) “As many,” that is, just so many, and no more: GOD hath no more children in the world than there are persons who are led by the SPIRIT: to be “led by the SPIRIT,” and to “walk in the SPIRIT,” signifies one and the same thing. If then there be no such thing, nor any such persons in the world to be found, where then are GOD’s children? GOD hath no child, if this be so: you must write the GOD of all the earth childless: a father without a child, a king without a people: if these wise men be true

men; but true men you can hardly call them, who have robbed the King of Saints of all his subjects, and the Father of Lights of all his children.

You see now to what a plain issue this matter is also brought. If you be in the right, then the SPIRIT of GOD must be unfaithful in his office; GOD must be false in his promise; the Devil doth more to the damning, than the SPIRIT of GOD doth to the saving of souls; and one of these two things will follow hence, either that the Devil is of more might than the Almighty SPIRIT, or that the GOD of love hath not so much love as the Devil hath malice; and lastly, GOD hath no people in the world.

But it may be you will yet reply, Well, we grant there are those that are led by the SPIRIT, and walk in the SPIRIT; but when you talk of so much spirituality, and of such high notions, as living in the fellowship of the SPIRIT, and living in heaven; when you tell of such glorious light, such raptures of joy, such spiritual delights;—here are the fancies; these are the things which we cannot but account foolish dreams.

And now you think you have hit it at last. But is not this what you say, The SPIRIT enlightens, but gives no light: the enlightened see no more than the blind: the SPIRIT renews men, and yet they are not changed: the SPIRIT leads the Saints, and yet they follow him only just as fast as those that have no legs: the SPIRIT dwells in them, and yet they have no more fellowship or acquaintance with him, than those who never saw him: the SPIRIT assists, and yet gives no help: the SPIRIT comforts, and yet gives no joy; but after all he hath done, leaves them just as other men; and whatsoever they pretend to have more, is a mere cheat and delusion. The sum of all comes to this, The SPIRIT doth, and yet doth not;—doth something, some great thing, and yet that something is just nothing.

But is there no such life of GOD, wherein the LORD, having gotten the chief interest in the heart, hath also the dominion of the life? Is there no such life, the business whereof is the pleasing and honouring GOD, and the

seeking that glory and honour which are from him? Must **God** be an underling to the world, and be put off with our spare hours, which the world will allow him? We might even as good profess downright that we own no **God** at all; or if we must have one, a **Baal**, a **Nisroch**, an ox, or a calf, may serve us well enough for a **God**; a **God** to be so trampled on, or to be said unto, "Stand aside," whenever the world hath any thing for us to do.

Is there no such spiritual life, the comforts whereof are spiritual comforts, the pleasures and delights spiritual pleasures and delights? Are there no delights in **God**, who is a well of life, and the fountain of all blessedness? Have the creatures their several sweetnesses issuing from them, the sun its light, the fire its warmth, the fig-tree its sweetness, the olive-tree its fatness, the fruits of the earth their pleasant tastes and smells, the instruments of music their melodious airs and sounds to please our senses; and is the fountain only a dry and unsavoury thing, when the cisterns are so fresh and full? Have fleshly exercises their several pleasures? Are the labours of the husbandman, and the travels of the merchant, so strangely sweetened by their gain and income? Are sports and plays so delightful to men, that they will sell their souls for such pleasures? And have the exercises of religion, only, no sweetness in them? Is it godliness only which hath no bud, and the stalk whereof yields no meat? Or are the delights and comforts hereof such light and airy things, that we cannot tell, when we taste them, whether we be awake or in a dream?

Once more consider the Scriptures: "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, **O God**! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures: for with thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light. Delight thyself in the **LORD**, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their

corn and wine increased. With joy shall they draw water out of the wells of salvation. Whom having not seen ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts." Let him that readeth understand: do all these speak the life of Saints to be such a dry, and dark, and unpleasant life?

Let me further ask you these two questions.—1. Are there any delights in heaven? Is there any joy before the throne, and in the face of God? Are there any pleasures at his right hand? Doth the tree of life, which stands in the midst of the paradise of God, yield any pleasant fruit? Doth the crystal river, which runs through the city of God, yield any pleasant streams? Are the exercises of glory, blessing, praises, and singing *Hallelujah*; and are there any pleasures in these? Speak, sinners, what do you think, are there any delights in heaven?—2. Is there not something of that heavenly joy and delight let down to the Saints here? Whilst they bear a part in the same exercises, have they not a share in the same pleasures? What means then "the earnest of their inheritance," which is given here? The Apostle tells us, that the Saints, "after" they "had believed, were sealed with that HOLY SPIRIT of promise, which is the earnest of" our "inheritance." (*Eph. i. 13, 14.*) An earnest is a part of that, whereof it is an earnest, given in hand: "The earnest of our inheritance," is a part of the inheritance.

Believe it, sinners, God's earnest is no jest; God will not mock his Saints, though you do. As sinners, to their cost, so Saints to their comfort, feel that God's earnest is in earnest.

As the LORD sometimes causes some flashings of his wrath to fly out in the faces, to kindle in the souls, and burn in the bowels of incorrigible sinners, as an earnest of those everlasting flames prepared for them, beginning their hell upon earth; so doth he let fall some handfuls of that harvest, some drops of that new wine, the fuller draughts

whereof are reserved to that time when they shall sit down with him in his kingdom ;—and this as the earnest of their inheritance : something of the same joys, the same pleasures (for kind) with those that are laid up for them, and thereby assured to them.

And you will still hold on, and persuade us that all this is but fancy? Then we must give the same credit to you, which yourselves would give to a man that was born blind, and had never seen either sun or star, and, hearing you discourse of them, should laugh at you, and tell you there were no such things as sun, or stars, or light. You would believe your own eyes before the blind man's conscience ; you would pity rather than credit him ; and so must we pity you.

Do ye wonder there should be such things, and you not see them? The riches of Christians are hidden riches : the manna of Saints is hidden manna : “ the white stone, and the new name ” are not within the ken of vulgar eyes. Think not that it is our pride, or vanity, thus to speak ; doth not our LORD say the same things? “ No man knoweth it, but he that hath it : ” (*Rev.* ii. 17 :) “ A stranger shall not meddle with his joy. ” The sweetness of religion lies deep ; the rich wines are in the cellar ; the rich mines are in the bowels of the earth : the best of sin is in sight ; the flower and the cream is at the top, and the bran and the lees at the bottom ; sin is honey in the mouth, but wormwood in the belly.

Sinners, you have not gone deep enough in religion, to come to the pleasure of it ; and will you therefore say, There is none in it? You may as well say, There is no gall and wormwood in sin, because you have not met with a bitter drop ; that all the anguish, and horror, that all those pangs of misery, those gnawings and torments, which are said to be in sin, are mere fancies, because you have not yet felt them. But stay awhile, you are not yet at the bottom, the dregs are yet some draughts lower. O the under-ground fruits of sin ! When these shall come up, then you shall taste what gall and gravel there is in it

Never think you are secure from sorrow ; a draught or two deeper may confute you with a witness. And so, on the other side, there is no ground to suspect that the sweetness of religion is nothing, because some smatterers about it, who have only trifled upon the surface of it, have not had the least taste of any such thing.

If you would be persuaded to go deeper, to set in more closely and thoroughly with a godly life, your own senses would at length confute your censures ; and, whatever you have heard spoken concerning the comforts and delights of holiness, you would say with the Queen of Sheba, “ The one half was not told me.”

We will freely grant, that all is not gold that glistens ; there are false fires, false joys, false comforts, which many pretenders to Christianity have boasted of, who yet have had “ no part nor lot in this matter ;” and to such as these, both saints and sinners have but little beholding : the calumnies that light upon the former, and the blindness that abides on the latter, lie much upon the score of such false lights. But because some men dream that they are eating and drinking, or that they are rich, or making merry, will you therefore who are eating, or drinking, or rich, or rejoicing, conclude that you also are but in a dream ? Because there are comets that shine amongst the stars, are they all comets ? Are there no stars ? Because there are glow-worms that shine, is the sun but a glow-worm ?

Shall I add one word more ? You that yet hold the same tune, and still cry out, “ Fancy, fancy, all is but fancy ;” tell me, that I may know that you are in earnest, and believe your own talk ; tell me, Dare any of you come and subscribe this with your hand ? “ This godliness which you have been here commending to me, with all its comforts, joys, and delights, I do utterly renounce for ever ; let me never know what any thing of this means, nor have my part hereafter with this people :” Dare you put your hand to this ? It is some comfort to us, to hope that religion hath an advocate in the consciences of its adversaries.

But if it have not, yet know, sinners, that “Wisdom” shall be “justified of her children.” And as for you, beware lest that come upon you, which is spoken by the Prophets: “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, which you will in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”

THE APPLICATION OF THE WHOLE.

HAVING thus, by the help of God, vindicated the good ways of the LORD from the cavils and reproaches of unreasonable men; and proved that the precisest Christians are the wisest men, and that the Godliness, which is cried down for folly and fancy, is indispensably necessary to salvation; I shall now take you by the hand, and lead you on (as many of you as are willing to follow me) to the practice of it. And in this undertaking, I shall apply myself, First, To the Ungodly; Secondly, To the Godly.

FIRST, I shall speak a few words to the Ungodly. Speak now, O ye foolish sinners; Is Godliness of GOD? Is Christianity of CHRIST, or is it not? Is holiness the way of life, or can you hope to see life without it? If you say it is not of GOD, and will stand to it, produce your cause, bring forth your strong reasonings: only I must tell you, if you say any thing, you had need look to it, that it be something of weight that you allege in a matter of such importance.

Let your consciences speak, for to them I appeal. Whose voice is this;—“See that you walk circumspectly: Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life: GOD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: Follow holiness, without which no man shall see GOD:”—Speak, sinners, whose words are these? And what do we speak more, or other than this? Dare you say concerning the

way of life, as it hath been described to you, If this be Godliness let me never see GOD? But if your consciences tell you, that this is of GOD, that this strait way is the only way of life; then, O consider, what is it that you have done, and whom is it that you have reproached? Mean you still to hold your course, be it right or wrong,—come life, come death?

Is there any among you, whose heart smites him on the mouth, and whispers him thus in the ear: “Blasphemest thou GOD, revilest thou his servants, and wilt thou still go on to pervert the good ways of the LORD?” Is there any among you that doth inquire, “What must I do to get into this way of life?” Let such of you hearken unto me, whilst I give these following directions.

Consider, that I am now dealing with you about your entrance upon a godly life: my present business is to help you over the threshold; for you must first be Christians, ere you can follow CHRIST; you must first enter in at the strait gate, ere you can walk in the narrow way. Now if ever you would attain to the beginning of Godliness, take this course.

I. Get these three principles deeply fixed in your hearts:
 1. That the things which are eternal are unspeakably more considerable than the things which are but temporal.
 2. That things not seen are as infallibly certain as the things which are seen. 3. That according to your present choice must be your eternal lot.

1. That the things which are eternal are unspeakably more considerable than the things which are but temporal. —It is not so considerable, what men enjoy or suffer in this world, as what they shall enjoy or suffer in the world to come. There are good things temporal, and good things eternal; and there are evil things temporal, and evil things eternal. The good things temporal are meat, and drink, and money, and clothes, and ease, and pleasures, and credit: and the good things eternal are glory, and joy, and rest, and everlasting blessedness. The evil things temporal are the sufferings, losses, wants, sorrow,

shame, scorn, and torments, which men fall under, or lie under, in this life: the evil things to come are, in one word, the vengeance of eternal fire.

The good things and the evil things of this life are more perceptible, having the advantage of their presence, and obviousness to our senses. The good things and the evil things to come are less understood, having the disadvantage of their distance, and those clouds that yet keep them out of sight; and hereupon those are slighted, and these are looked upon as the only considerable things. And till men be set right in these apprehensions, it will be a fruitless attempt to persuade them to come to CHRIST.

The difficulty of persuading sinners to come to CHRIST lies mainly here;—there is so much to be lost and left for CHRIST, so much to be suffered and undergone, so much labour, so much hardship and trouble, that they cannot see how Christianity can ever make them amends for what they are like to suffer; they will not be made sensible, that things eternal will balance the things that are before them; they will not be persuaded, but that they shall be great losers by hearkening to CHRIST. Now, whence is it that men are thus foolish? If they did but clearly understand the vast difference there is betwixt the vain glory of the world, and the weight of that glory that is to come, betwixt the light afflictions of this life, and the astonishing torments of the other world, they would be of another mind; and the great objections against godliness would then be all answered and removed.

Thou sayest, sinner, that it is hard to part with thine ease, and thy pleasure, and thy liberty, and thy delights, which, if thou wilt follow CHRIST, thou seest must all go. But how wilt thou bear it, to be shut out of the everlasting kingdom, to be shut out from the presence of God? Art thou indeed of the mind of that Atheist, who said, “He would not leave his part in Paris, for his part in Paradise?” Thou canst not endure the trouble and persecution of this world; but how wilt thou endure the torments and plagues of the other world? O, if thou wert but sensible what that

exceeding great and eternal weight of glory is, or what thou wilt find everlasting death to be, then what insignificant things would all things that are now before thee appear to be! SATAN would then want arguments to dissuade sinners from CHRIST: his tempting trade would quickly grow to be a poor trade, if the concern of eternity were clearly understood, and duly regarded.

When the LORD hath once showed you the wonderful things of eternity, the true riches, the enduring substance, together with the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never shall be quenched; when the LORD hath showed you, what a heaven he hath prepared for the saints, what an oven he hath prepared for sinners; then neglect CHRIST if you can; then neglect holiness if you dare; then look down and see, what poor contemptible things the pleasures and the sufferings here appear to be. O study things eternal more, launch forth into these deeps, and dwell upon the meditations of them, till your hearts, and all that is within you, confess that things present are nothing in comparison with things to come.

2. That the things which are not seen, are as infallibly certain as the things that are seen.—There is much Atheism and infidelity in the hearts of men; and more than they are aware of. If they do not peremptorily conclude that there are no such things, yet are there not many whose hearts question, at least, whether there be any such things or no? “We have read and heard of another world, but no mortal ever saw it: Who ever hath ascended up to heaven, and hath brought us word what he had seen there? Who ever hath descended into the deep, and brought us up tidings thence? It may be there may be no such matter. If we could speak with one that hath been there, that would be something to assure us.” But what if it appears, that you may have as great certainty of these things, as if one should rise from the dead, and come and tell you? Do not the Scriptures tell you of such things? The Scriptures are a sure word; and there is as unquestionable evidence of the truth of what they speak, and you have as great reason to

believe them, as if you had the testimony of one raised from the dead.

Beloved, if you should see before your eyes persons rising from the dead;—if one should come down from heaven, and come in here into this congregation, in all his glorious robes, with his palm in his hand, his crown on his head, the joy and glory of the LORD shining forth in his face, and should declare unto you wonderful things which his eyes had seen, and with which his heart had been ravished in the presence of GOD;—if you should see another coming up out of the deep, with his chains and darkness upon him, with the smell of that infernal fire and brimstone about him, with the print of the Dragon's claws appearing in his flesh, and the blackness of that smoking furnace sticking on his face, and, hideously roaring out the anguish which he feels burning in his bowels, he should tell you, “This is the estate of them that know not GOD;”—if you should see two such sights appearing this hour here in the midst of you, would you not think you had reason to believe that there are a heaven and a hell? This word, which is before you, is a far greater, and a more certain evidence, than if tidings were thus brought to you by persons rising from the dead: and if you will not give credit to this testimony of GOD, neither would you give credit to any such testimony. Sinners! believe GOD, believe Him who was once on earth, and now daily speaks to you from heaven; believe that word which is before you, in which appear such beams of divine light, such an impress of divine purity, and which hath been so attested by a divine power, in mighty signs and wonders, that you may as well question whether the sun hath light, as whether his word hath truth; believe this word to be certain, and then question, if you can, whether the things not seen are certain or no.

Let these two things sink into your hearts, sinners; be once settled and established in the importance, and the truth, and the certainty of these eternal things; and then you are gotten fairly onwards in your way towards CHRIST and a godly life.

O brethren, if you were once brought to this pass, if your unbelief were removed, your darkness taken away, your souls awakened, your eyes opened to see these marvellous things as unquestionable truths; would you then mock at godliness? Would you then slight reproofs, or need any further conviction of your folly? You would have an admonisher within you, a remembrancer within you, a reprover within you; your own consciences would plead with you, and would continually cry in your ears, "What meanest thou, O fool? Dost thou not see a kingdom before thee, which may be thine, and art thou willing to lose it? Dost thou not see that gulf of misery gaping to devour thee? Arise, sluggard, look to thyself, lest thou be undone before thou art aware."

3. That according to your choice in this world, your lot must be for ever in the world to come.—Your choosing or refusing CHRIST and his holy ways, is that which doth determine your eternal state; choose CHRIST, and you make heaven sure to you; refuse CHRIST here, and you will be rejected of him for ever.

GOD doth offer you this choice; either the strait and the narrow way, with that life of blessedness which is at the farther end of this way; or the broad way, with that death and destruction to which it leads;—CHRIST with his yoke, his cross, and his eternal crown; or the Devil with his golden mines, his paradise, and eternal prison: and all the parts of each of these offers are linked together. Choose the Devil's golden mines, and fleshly paradise, and you must have his prison too; take CHRIST's yoke and his cross, and you shall have his crown: You cannot take the Devil's paradise and CHRIST's crown; you cannot obtain life, without choosing the narrow way that leads to it.

Here is the choice, sinners, which GOD puts you to: it is the business of this world to choose for eternity; and that which is the business of this life is the business of this hour. This very little piece of your time, and the choice you make now, may be that which will give a final determin-

ation as to what your eternal state shall be : if you make an evil choice now, you may never have a minute's time to choose again for ever. If your hearts were sensible of this, that there is so much depending upon every hour of your lives, as life or death, heaven, hell, or eternity, surely you could not but reason thus with yourselves : " Is it a time for me to stand all the day idle, to be laughing or sporting, or to be drudging and scraping for the dirt of this earth ? Is this a time for me to stand trifling with CHRIST and the Gospel, to make so many delays, to make so many excuses, —the terms are too high, the way is too strait, the yoke is too heavy ; this I cannot part with ; that I cannot bring my heart to subscribe to ? Is this the business that is now under debate,—what my everlasting state must be, in which of the two regions of eternity my lot shall fall, whether I shall be a saint or a Devil, a vessel of honour or a vessel of wrath, whether my dwelling shall be in everlasting blessedness, or in everlasting burnings ? Which way soever the scales turn, either for CHRIST or the world, do they turn for everlasting ? Surely, if matters stand thus, I ought to be serious, and consider what I do."

This is the first direction, Get these three principles fixed in your hearts : that things eternal are much more considerable than things temporal ; that things not seen are as certain as the things that are seen ; and that upon your present choice depends your eternal lot. Choose CHRIST and his ways, and you are blessed for ever ; refuse, and you are undone for ever. And then,

II. Make your choice. Turn either to the right hand or to the left. Lay both parts before you, with every link of each ; CHRIST with his yoke, his cross, and his crown ; or the Devil with his wealth, his pleasure, and his curse ; and then put yourselves to it thus : " Soul, thou seest what is before thee, what wilt thou do ? Which wilt thou have, either the crown or the curse ? If thou choose the crown, remember that the day thou takest this, thou must be content to submit to the cross and yoke, the service and the sufferings of CHRIST, which are linked to it. What sayest thou ? Hadst thou rather take the gains and plea-

tures of sin, and venture on the curse? Or wilt thou yield thyself a servant to CHRIST, and so make sure of the crown?" If your hearts fly off, and would fain wave the business, leave them not so. If you be unresolved, you are resolved: if you remain undetermined for CHRIST, you are determined for the Devil. Therefore give not off, but follow your hearts from day to day; let them not rest, till the matter be brought to an issue; and see that you make a good choice.

This is your choosing the good part, GOD and the blessedness of the world to come, for your portion and happiness; and in this is included, your renouncing the world, and worldly happiness.

III. Embark with CHRIST. Adventure yourselves with him; cast yourselves upon his righteousness, as that which shall bring you to GOD. As a poor captive exile, who is cast upon a strange land, a land of robbers and murderers, where he is ready to perish; and having no hope, either of abiding there, or escaping home with life; and meeting at length with a pilot, that offers to transport him safely home, he embarks with him, and ventures himself and all he hath in his vessel; do you likewise. You are exiles from the presence of GOD, and fallen into a land of robbers and murderers: your sins are robbers, your pleasures are robbers, your companions in sin are robbers and thieves: if you stay where you are, you perish, and escape home of yourselves you cannot: CHRIST offers, if you will venture with him, he will bring you home, and he will bring you to GOD. Will you say now to him, "LORD JESUS, wilt thou undertake for me? Wilt thou bring me to GOD? Wilt thou bring me into the land of promise? With thee will I venture myself; I cast myself upon thee, upon thy blood, upon thy righteousness; I lay up all my hopes, and venture my whole interest, soul, and body, with thee."

This is closing with CHRIST as your Priest. And in this is included your renouncing your own righteousness; for you can never, you will never, cast yourselves on him alone, till all your hopes in yourselves have given up the ghost.

There are two things which must necessarily be supposed, in order to a sinner's coming to CHRIST: 1. A deep sense of his sin and misery. 2. An utter despair of himself, and of all things else besides CHRIST.

1. A deep sense of his sin and misery. No man will regard a Saviour, that doth not see himself a sinner: the whole regard not the physician. Therefore it is said, that the SPIRIT of GOD, when he should come to christianise the world, should, in the first place, "convince the world of sin." (*John* xvi. 8.) He shall convince the world of sin; he shall demonstrate them sinners, bring up their sins before their eyes, bring home their sins upon their consciences, and make them see themselves, and feel themselves, the most vile and abominable of creatures. Sin hides itself from the sinner's eyes, and all its vileness and deformity: but the SPIRIT of GOD plucks off the mantle, and makes sin appear to be sin; makes all the sinner's gods appear to be so many devils; brings forth the blackness and filthiness of sin into sight; and makes the sinner see himself an unclean and abominable thing. And withal, he brings forth the guilt of sin, and sets all these devils on tormenting the sinner; filling him with fear, and terror, and amazement. In this respect he is called the SPIRIT of Bondage, that works fear and trouble in the heart. The SPIRIT's awakening a sleepy sinner, is a kind of awakening in hell. "LORD, what am I! What mean these legions round about me; these chains and fetters that are upon me? What means this black roll, before mine eyes, of curses, and wrath, and woes? LORD, where am I! Have I been playing, and sporting, and making merry, and my soul in such a case as this? But is there no hope of escaping out of this wretched state? I see there is no abiding thus: I am but a dead man if I continue as I am. What may I do to be saved?"

When he is brought to this, there is some way made for his entertainment of CHRIST: yet this is not all that is needful, but he must further be brought to,

2. An utter despair of himself, and all things else beside CHRIST. Being made sensible of his sin and his danger,

a sinner will look for help and deliverance; but he will look every where else, before he look unto CHRIST. Nothing will bring a sinner to CHRIST, but absolute necessity: he will try to forsake his sins; will think of leaving his drunkenness, and becoming sober, or of leaving his adulteries, and becoming chaste; and so see if by this means he may not escape. He will go to prayers, and sermons, and sacraments, and search out if there be no salvation in them. But all these, though they be useful in their places, yet looking no further, the sinner sees there is no help in them: his righteousness cannot help him, this is but rags; his duties cannot help him, these may [on account of his frequent defects and short-comings in them] be reckoned among his sins; ordinances cannot help, these are but empty cisterns; and all tell him, "You knock at a wrong door, salvation is not in us." "Well, the LORD be merciful to me," saith the sinner, "what shall I do? Abide as I am, I dare not, and how to help myself I know not; my praying will not help me; my hearing will not help me; if I give all my goods to the poor, or if I should give my body to be burned, all this would not save my soul: Woe is me, what shall I do, and whither shall I go."

And now, being brought to this distress, to this utter loss, his despair drives him to the only door of hope that is left open. Then CHRIST will be acceptable, when he sees that none but CHRIST can help him. The Apostle tells us, "We were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." (*Gal.* iii. 23.) All other doors were shut up against us; there was no hope of escaping, but by that one door that was left open, "The faith that was afterwards to be revealed." Thus the besieged in a city, who have every gate blocked up, and but one difficult passage left open by which there is any possibility of escaping, thither throng for the saving of their lives; and so they are shut up unto that door, to which (if there had been any other way open) they would never have come.

And as CHRIST will never be accepted, so can the sinner never be received of him, till he lets go all other props, and trusts on him alone. CHRIST will have no sharer with

him in the work of saving souls. "If ye seek me, let these go their way;"—as he said in another case. "Let not only your sins go, but let your righteousness go, all the refuges of lies wherein you have trusted; let all go, if you will have me to be a refuge to you. I came not to call the righteous; if I should, they would not come; or if they come, let them go as they came; let them go to their righteousness in which they trust; and let naked, destitute, distressed sinners come to me, who am come to this end, to seek and to save them that are lost."

Sinners, will you come now? Will you venture here? For this your adventuring on CHRIST, you have this three-fold warrant:—1. GOD's Ordination. This is he whom GOD the FATHER hath appointed, and sent into the world, to bring back his exiles to himself, and to save sinners. This is he whom GOD the FATHER hath "sealed;" hath marked him out for that chosen person, in whom is salvation; hath sealed him his commission, for redeeming and reconciling the world to himself. As GOD said unto the three friends of JOB, when he was angry with them, "Go to my servant JOB, and he shall offer sacrifice for you; he shall pray for you, for him will I accept:" (*Job* xlii. 8:) so to sinners, "Go," saith the LORD, "to my servant JESUS: He shall offer sacrifice for you, he shall make reconciliation for you:" "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my SPIRIT upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the gentiles." (*Isa.* xlii. 1.)—2. GOD's Command. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his SON JESUS CHRIST." (1 *John* iii. 23.) 3. The Promise of GOD. "Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." (1 *Pet.* ii. 6.)

Now having this three-fold warrant, the warrant of GOD's Ordination, Command, and Promise, you may be bold to adventure on CHRIST, and to apply yourselves to him thus: "LORD JESUS, here I am,—a poor captive exile, a lost creature, an enemy to GOD, under his wrath

and curse: wilt thou, LORD, undertake for me, reconcile me to GOD, and save my soul? Do not, LORD, refuse me; for if thou refuse me, to whom then shall I go? Art not thou he, and he alone, whom GOD the FATHER hath sealed the saviour of sinners? The LORD GOD hath sent me to thee, and hath bid me come; he hath commanded me to believe, and cast myself upon thee. LORD JESUS, wilt thou refuse to help a distressed creature, whom the FATHER hath sent to thee for thy help? If I had come on my own head, or in my own name, thou mightest well have put me back; but since I come at the command of the FATHER, reject me not. LORD, help me; LORD, save me. Art thou not he, concerning whom the FATHER hath promised, "He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded?" I come, LORD; I believe, LORD; I throw myself upon thy grace and mercy; I cast myself upon thy blood and bowels; [upon thy mercy, and atoning blood;] do not refuse me. I have not whither else to go; here I will stay; I will not stir from thy door; on thee I will trust, and rest, and venture myself; GOD hath laid my help on thee, and on thee I lay my hope, for pardon, for life, for salvation: If I perish, I perish on thy shoulders; if I sink, I sink in thy vessel; if I die, I die at thy door; bid me not go away, for I will not go.

IV Resign, and deliver up yourselves to GOD in CHRIST. "Yield yourselves to the LORD," that is, as his servants: give up the dominion and government of yourselves to CHRIST. "Neither yield your members, as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves to GOD, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto GOD." "To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are, to whom you obey." Yield yourselves so to the LORD, that you may henceforth be the LORD's. "I am thine," saith the Psalmist. Those that yield themselves to sin and the world, say in their hearts, "Sin, I am thine; world, I am thine; riches I am yours; pleasures, I am yours." "I am *thine*," saith the Psalmist; devoted to thy

fear, dedicated to thy service; "I am thine, save me." Give yourselves to CHRIST, sinners; be devoted to his fear.

And this giving yourselves to him must be such, as supposes that you be heartily contented, 1. That he appoint you your Work: 2. That he appoint you your Station.

1. That he appoint you your Work; that he put you to whatsoever he pleaseth. Servants, as they must do their master's work, so they must do that work which their master appoints them; they must be for any work their master hath for them to do; they must not pick and choose, saying, "This I will do, and that I will not do:" they must not say, "This is too hard, or this is too mean, or this may be well enough let alone:" good servants, when they have chosen their master, will let their master choose their work, and will not dispute his will, but do it.

CHRIST hath many services to be done. Some are more easy and honourable, others more difficult and disgraceful; some are suitable to our inclinations and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please CHRIST and please ourselves, as when he requires us to feed and clothe ourselves, and to provide things honest for our own maintenance: yea, and there are some spiritual duties that are more pleasing than others; as to rejoice in the LORD, to be blessing and praising God, to be feeding ourselves with the delights and comforts of religion; these are the sweet works of a Christian. But then there are other works, wherein we cannot please CHRIST but by denying ourselves, as giving and lending, bearing and forbearing, reproving men for their sins, withdrawing from their company, witnessing against their wickedness, confessing CHRIST and his name, when it will cost us shame and reproach, sailing against the wind, swimming against the tide, steering contrary to the time, and parting with our ease, our liberties, and accommodations, for the name of our LORD JESUS.

It is necessary, Beloved, to sit down and consider what it will cost you to be the servants of CHRIST; to take a

thorough survey of the whole business of Christianity; and not engage hand over head, to you know not what. See what it is that **CHRIST** doth expect, and then yield yourselves to his whole will: do not think of compounding, or making your own terms with **CHRIST**; that will never be allowed you. Go to **CHRIST**, and tell him, "**LORD JESUS**, if thou wilt receive me into thine house, if thou wilt but own me as thy servant, I will not stand upon terms; impose on me what condition thou pleasest, write down thine own articles, command me what thou wilt, put me to any thing thou seest good; only let me come under thy roof, let me be thy servant, and then spare not to command me; I will be no longer mine own, but give up myself to thy will in all things."

2. That he shall appoint you your Station and Condition; whether it be higher or lower, a prosperous or afflicted state. Be content that **CHRIST** should both choose your work, and choose your condition; that he should have the command of you, and the disposal of you. "Make me what thou wilt, **LORD**, and set me where thou wilt; let me be a vessel of silver or gold, or a vessel of wood or stone, so I be a vessel of honour; of whatsoever form or metal, whether higher or lower, finer or coarser, I am content. If I be not the head, or the eye, or the ear,—one of the nobler and more honourable instruments which thou wilt employ,—let me be the hand, or the foot, one of the most laborious, and lowest, and most contemptible, of all the servants of my **LORD**. Let my dwelling be on the dunghill, my portion in the wilderness, my name and my lot among the hewers of wood, or drawers of water, or among the door-keepers of thy house;—any where, where I may be serviceable. I put myself wholly into thy hands: put me to what thou wilt; rank me with whom thou wilt; put me to doing, or put me to suffering; let me be employed for thee, or laid aside for thee; exalted for thee, or trodden under foot for thee; let me be full, or let me be empty; let me have all things, or let me have nothing: I freely and heartily resign all to thy pleasure and disposal."

This is closing with **CHRIST**, as your King and Sovereign Lord; and in this is included, your renouncing the Devil and his works, the flesh and its lusts; together with your consenting to all the laws and ordinances of **CHRIST**, and his providential government.

Beloved, such a closing with **CHRIST** as you have here been exhorted to, is that wherein the essence of Christianity lies. When you have chosen the incorruptible crown, that is, when you have chosen **GOD** to be your portion and happiness; when you have adventured and laid up your whole interest, and all your hopes with **CHRIST**, casting yourself wholly upon the merits of his righteousness; when you have understandingly and heartily resigned and given up yourselves to him, resolving for ever to be at his command and at his disposal;—then you are Christians indeed, and never till then. **CHRIST** will be the Saviour of none but of his servants; he is the author of eternal salvation to those that obey him: **CHRIST** will have no servants but by consent; his people are a willing people; and **CHRIST** will accept of no consent but *in full*, to all that he requires; He will be all in all, or he will be nothing.

V Confirm and complete all this by solemn Covenant. Give yourselves to the **LORD** as his servants, and bind yourselves to him as his covenant-servants. Upon your entering into covenant with **GOD**, the covenant of **GOD** stands firm to you. **GOD** gives you leave, every man, to put in his own name into the covenant-grant. If it be not found there at last, it will be your own fault: if it be not there, there will be nothing found in the whole covenant belonging unto you: if it be there, all is yours: if you have come into the bond of the covenant, you shall have your share in the blessings of the covenant. “Thou hast avouched the **LORD** this day to be thy **GOD**, to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, to hearken to his voice. And the **LORD** hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee.” (*Deut.* xxvi. 17, 18.) Observe: the same day that they avouched the **LORD** to

be their **GOD**, the same day the **LORD** avoucheth them to be his peculiar people: the same day that they engage to keep the commandments of **GOD**, the same day the **LORD** engageth to keep his promise with them.

There is a twofold covenanting with **GOD**; in *Profession*, and in *Reality*: an entering our names, or an engaging our hearts. The former is done in Baptism, by all that are baptized, who, by receiving that seal of the covenant, are visibly, or in profession, entered into it. The latter is also twofold.—1. *Virtual*. Which is done by all those who have sincerely made that closure with **GOD** in **CHRIST**, which has been described. Those who have chosen the **LORD**, embarked with **CHRIST**, resigned up, and given themselves to the **LORD**, are all engaged persons, and have virtually covenanted with him. 2. *Formal*. Which is our binding ourselves to the **LORD**, by solemn vow or promise, to stand to our choice. And this may be, either only *inward* in the soul; or *outward*, and *expressed* either by words, lifting up of the hand, subscribing the hand, or the like. And by how much the more express and solemn our covenanting with **GOD** is, by so much the more sensibly and strongly is it like to hold our hearts to him.

Now that which I would persuade you to, is this solemn and express covenanting with **GOD**. Divine Providence hath lately brought to my hand the advice of a dear friend and faithful labourer in the work of the **LORD*** about this matter, together with an excellent *Form of Words* composed for the help of weaker Christians, and aptly accommodated to all the substantials of our baptismal covenant; which having found great acceptance with many, I do with much zeal, for the establishing of souls in holiness and comfort, commend it to the use not only of young converts, but of the more grown Christians, that have not experimented this or the like course. And in order to the

* The **REV. JOSEPH ALLIN** is probably the person here meant. The same *Form of Covenant*, or one which exhibits no material difference, will be found in his "Alarm to Unconverted Sinners." See *Christian Library*, Vol. XIV. p. 141—144. (8vo. Edit. 1822.)

putting this matter into practice, I shall first give you these few directions.

1. Set apart some time, more than once, to be spent in secret before the **LORD**,

(1.) In seeking earnestly his special assistance and gracious acceptance of you.

(2.) In considering distinctly all the conditions of the Covenant, as they have been laid before you.

(3.) In searching your hearts, whether you either have already made, or can now freely make, such a closure with **GOD** in **CHRIST**, as you have been exhorted to. In special, consider what your sins are, and examine whether you can resolve to forego them all. Consider what the laws of **CHRIST** are, how holy, strict, and spiritual, and whether you can upon deliberation make choice of them all, (even those that most cross your interests and corrupt inclinations,) as the rule of your whole life. Be sure you be clear in these matters, see that you do not lie unto **GOD**.

2. Compose your spirits into the most serious frame possible, suitable to a transaction of so high importance.

3. Lay hold on the Covenant of **GOD**, and rely upon his promise of giving grace and strength, whereby you may be enabled to perform your promise. Trust not to your own strength, to the strength of your own resolutions, but take hold on his strength.

4. Resolve to be faithful. Having engaged your hearts, opened your mouths, and subscribed with your hands to the **LORD**, resolve in his strength never to go back.

Lastly, Being thus prepared, on some convenient time set apart for the purpose, set upon the work; and in the most solemn manner possible, as if the **LORD** were visibly present before your eyes, fall down on your knees; and, spreading forth your hands towards heaven, open your hearts to the **LORD** in these or the like words.

“O most dreadful **GOD**! for the passion of thy Son, I beseech thee, accept of thy poor prodigal, now prostrating himself at thy door. I have fallen from thee by mine

iniquity ; and am by nature a son of death, and a thousand-fold more the child of hell, by my wicked practice. But, of thine infinite grace, thou hast promised mercy to me in CHRIST, if I will but turn to thee with all my heart : therefore, upon the call of thy Gospel, I am now come in, and, throwing down my weapons, submit myself to thy mercy.

“ And because thou requirest, as the condition of my peace with thee, that I should put away mine idols, and be at defiance with all thine enemies, which I acknowledge I have wickedly sided with, against thee ; I here from the bottom of my heart renounce them all : firmly covenanting with thee, not to allow myself in any known sin, but conscientiously to use all the means which I know thou hast prescribed for the death and utter destruction of all my corruptions. And whereas I have, formerly, inordinately and idolatrously let out my affections upon the world, I do here resign my heart to thee that madest it ; humbly protesting before thy glorious Majesty, that it is the firm resolution of my heart,—and that I do unfeignedly desire grace from thee that, when thou shalt call me hereunto, I may practise this my resolution,—to forsake all that is dear unto me in this world, rather than to turn from thee to the ways of sin ; and that I will watch against all its temptations, whether of prosperity or adversity, lest they should withdraw my heart from thee ; beseeching thee also to help me against the temptations of SATAN, to whose wicked suggestions I resolve, by thy grace, never to yield. And because my own righteousness is but filthy rags, I renounce all confidence therein ; and acknowledge that I am, of myself, a hopeless, helpless, undone creature, without righteousness or strength.

“ And forasmuch as thou hast, of thy bottomless mercy, offered most graciously to me, wretched sinner, to be again my GOD, through CHRIST, if I would accept of thee ; I call heaven and earth to record this day, that I do here solemnly avouch thee for the LORD my GOD : and with all possible veneration bowing the neck of my soul under the feet of thy most sacred Majesty, I do here take Thee,

the **LORD JEHOVAH, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST**, for my portion ; and do give up myself, body and soul, for thy servant, promising and vowing to serve thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

“ And since thou hast appointed the **LORD JESUS CHRIST** to be the only means of coming unto thee, **I** do here, upon the bended knees of my soul, accept of Him, as the only new and living way, by which sinners may have access to thee ; and do here solemnly join myself in marriage-covenant to him.

“ O blessed **JESUS**, I come to thee hungry, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked ; a most loathsome, polluted wretch : a guilty, condemned malefactor ; unworthy to wash the feet of the servants of my **LORD**, and much more to be solemnly married to the King of Glory : but since such is thine unparalleled love, **I** do here with all my power accept thee, and take thee for my head and husband ; for better, for worse ; for richer, for poorer ; for all times and conditions ; to love, honour, and obey thee, before all others ; and this to the death. I embrace thee in all thine offices : I renounce mine own worthiness, and do here avow thee for the **LORD** my righteousness : I renounce mine own wisdom, and do here take thee for my only guide : I renounce mine own will, and take thy will for my law.

“ And since thou hast told me, that I must suffer if I will reign, **I** do here covenant with thee to take my lot, as it falls, with thee, and, by thy grace assisting, to run all hazards with thee : verily purposing that neither life nor death shall part between thee and me.

“ And because thou hast been pleased to give me thy holy laws as the rule of my life, and the way in which I should walk to thy kingdom, **I** do here willingly put my neck under thy yoke, and set my shoulder to thy burden ; and subscribing to all thy laws, as holy, just, and good, **I** solemnly take them as the rule of my words, thoughts, and actions ; promising that though my flesh contradict and rebel, I will endeavour to order and govern my whole

life according to thy direction, and will not allow myself in the neglect of any thing that I know to be my duty.

“Now, Almighty God, Searcher of Hearts, thou knowest that I make this Covenant with thee this day, without any known guile or reservation ; beseeching thee, that if thou espieest any flaw or falsehood therein, thou wouldest discover it to me, and help me to do it aright.

“And now, glory be to thee, O God the FATHER, whom I shall be bold, from this day forward, to look upon as my God and FATHER, that ever thou shouldest find out such a way for the recovery of undone sinners. Glory be to thee, O God the SON, who hast loved me and washed me from my sins in thine own blood, and art now become my Saviour and Redeemer. Glory be to thee, O God the HOLY GHOST, who, by the finger of thine almighty power, hast turned about my heart from sin to God.

“O dreadful JEHOVAH, the LORD GOD Omnipotent ! FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST ! Thou art now become my Covenant-Friend ; and I, through thine infinite grace, am become thy Covenant-Servant. Amen, So be it ! And the Covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven !”

This Covenant I advise that you should make, not only in heart, but in word ; not only in word, but in writing ; and that you should, with all possible reverence, spread the writing before the LORD, as if you would present it to him as your act and deed : and when you have done this, set your hand to it ; and keep it as a memorial of the solemn transactions that have passed between God and you, that you may have recourse to it in doubts and temptations.

Beloved, having showed you the way to the FATHER, give me leave to be instant with you, in pressing you to hearken to me herein, to come and join yourselves thus to the LORD. And if you will not be persuaded to this solemn and express way of covenanting with him, (which I believe you will find a great advantage,) yet take heed that you

refuse not to engage your hearts to the **LORD**; and make a full closure with **CHRIST**, upon all the terms which have been laid before you. Until that be done, I must be bold to tell you again, as I have told you already, that you are short of Christianity, “strangers from the covenant of promise, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.”

Brethren, as Abraham sent his servant, “to take a wife for his son,” (*Gen. xxiv.*) so the **LORD GOD** hath sent me amongst you to “espouse you to **CHRIST**.” I am not without fear, as that servant was not, that some of you will not follow me. But if the **LORD** see it good to send his angel before me, to make my way prosperous, if the **LORD** give me success in this great thing, that I may thus bring you into covenant with him, I shall therein have performed the main part of my ministerial work among you; I shall have espoused you to **CHRIST**, and married you to that one Husband; I shall have brought you within the strait gate, and set your foot into that narrow way which leads to life, and shall have laid the foundation of your following the **LORD** in holiness and comfort here, and of your living with him in blessedness for ever. For, when once you are in covenant, from thenceforth you have a **GOD** whom you may call your own, to whom you may have free access, and with whom you may be sure to find grace to help in all times of need. How blessed is his condition, who is able to say, “I have no friend in the world, but I have a **GOD** in heaven; I have many enemies, but I have a **GOD**; I have no house, nor money, nor lands, but I have a **GOD**; I have troubles, I have sins, but I have a **GOD**; a **GOD** to feed me, a **GOD** to succour me, a **GOD** to shelter me, a **GOD** to pardon me, a **GOD** to sanctify me, and a **GOD** to save me.”

You that are yet in your sins, in your old covenant with death, and agreement with hell; will you yet be persuaded, by what hath been said, to say to one another, “Come, let us break these bonds asunder, let us cast these cords from us? Come, let us go over to **CHRIST**, let us join ourselves

to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that never shall be forgotten?"

You that have sincerely come within the bonds of this covenant of the LORD, the LORD is henceforth become your GOD; CHRIST is henceforth become your SAVIOUR; you have shot the gulf; that good work is begun, which the LORD will perform to the day of CHRIST; you have gotten within the gate, you have entered into the path of life.

SECONDLY In the next place, therefore, I shall give some advice to those who are already in CHRIST, whom I shall direct, 1. To a right performance of holy duties, and of these four duties especially,—Prayer, Meditation, Self-examination, and Renewing their Covenant. 2. To a right improvement of holy duties. 3. To the carrying on a holy course. In all which, though I shall apply myself especially to those who are in CHRIST, yet I shall also give some farther helps to those who are yet out of CHRIST.

Before I enter upon the Directions for the right performance of holy Duties, it will not, I hope, be lost labour if I prefix a word of encouragement to duty, by laying before you the influences which holy duties will have upon a holy life, which I shall dispatch in these four particulars.

1. Duties are the exercise of grace. Idleness breeds ill humours and diseases in the body, and no less in the soul: stirring keeps us warm and healthful; now duties are the stirrings and exercises of the soul. Reading of the Word is not the exercise of the eye only, but of the understanding. Prayer is not an exercise of the tongue only, but of the heart; it sets all the faculties of the soul on work, it sets the several graces on work, it sets faith on work, it sets hope and holy desires on work; and grace, if kept in action, will be by so much the more active and powerful in the whole course.

2. In duties we have converse with GOD. Therefore they are sometimes called, our "drawing nigh to GOD."

When we come to duty as we ought, we put ourselves under God's eye; we set the LORD before our face: it is necessary to the right performance of duties, that we have right and clear apprehensions of God, and deep impressions upon our hearts of his majesty, omnipotence, omnipresence, holiness, goodness, and faithfulness. Now what an influence will this have upon the upholding and carrying on the life of God in us, to have daily such a sight of God before our eyes, and such a sense of God upon our hearts?

3. In duties we obtain new supplies, and fresh influences from God. The flourishing state of a Christian is set forth by "a well-watered garden;" (*Isa. lviii. 11.*) and in *Jer. xxxi. 12.* it is promised "They shall come and flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for corn, and for wine, and for oil; and their soul shall be as a well-watered garden." Where observe these three things:—

1. That the watering of the soul is from the goodness of the LORD; all the dews and showers of grace are from above; our springs do not rise in our own gardens; "All my springs are in thee."

2. All the influences of the grace and goodness of the LORD are gotten down by our applying ourselves to him in duty: this is the meaning of that expression, "They shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD; they shall assemble and come together to seek the LORD."

3. The people of God, in their addresses to him in duty, though it be but for a supply of things temporal, do get something for their souls: "They shall come for wheat, and for wine, and for oil; and their soul shall be as a well-watered garden." We never come to pray for any temporal mercy, and pray as we should, but our souls are gainers thereby. A Christian cannot come near the throne of grace for any thing, but his heart hath a share in the blessing. And there are three reasons for it. (1.) A Christian never prays for temporal mercies, but he hath some word or other to speak for his soul. (2.) Prayer, whatever it be for, is

the soul's drawing nigh to God, and exercising itself on God ; and the soul never goes to God, but it brings back something of God upon it, even then when it may be denied the temporal mercy it seeks : as when a saint is praying for a sinner, and God will not hear him for that sinner, yet he loses not that prayer, but hath it returned into his own bosom ; so when the soul is praying for the concern of the outward man, though it be denied in its particular request, yet its prayer shall not be lost to itself. (3.) Temporal mercies, obtained as a return of prayer, are blessings to the soul. But now when the matter of our request is particularly for our souls ; when grace is that for which we come ; when love, and life, and zeal, and spiritual strength, are the blessings for which we come ; when the watering of a dry and barren, and the refreshing of a weary heart, are the mercies which we seek ; shall our souls then be sent barren, and weary, and empty away ? Our hearts are as cisterns, which however sometimes they may be full of water, yet if there be not a supply from the well, the waters of the cistern will waste, and at length dry away. Duties are our labouring at the pump, which will keep the cisterns full. " Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." (*Isa. xii. 3.*)

Christian, thou complainest that thy heart is barren, and dead, and dry, and fit for nothing : why, is there not a well by thee, where there is water enough to refresh and fill thee ? Why dost thou no oftener let down thy pitcher ? Why art thou no oftener with thy God ? Thy heart wants watering ; get thee oftener to the well. More praying, more fasting, more conversing with CHRIST, more studying the Gospel, more searching the promises, would quickly get thee into a better plight. He that is much with God is rich in grace. Thou art not so much straitened, thou canst not be brought so poor and lean, but thou knowest where there is enough to fetch thee up again ; thou knowest where there is a well, that hath not only water enough, healing water, but wine, and milk, and honey : but thou must go oftener for it, if thou wilt have the benefit of it.

4. Duties are our conflicting with corruption, or striving against sin. Whenever we are striving with **GOD**, we are thereby striving against sin. Duty and sin contend for the victory : whilst duty holds up, sin goes down ; when duty flags, sin gets up. Holy prayer will make us weary of iniquity, or our iniquity will make such praying a weariness unto us. It is not for the interest of the flesh to suffer the heart to be much in prayer, or other duties ; and therefore we find, for the whole generation of carnal men, a little of it must serve their turn. There is no such way for Christians to be revenged on sin, as to bring it before the **LORD** ; they never fight against it with greater zeal, or with more success, than upon their knees. When the sinner kneels in earnest before his **GOD**, his lusts must quickly kneel to him. Our confession of sin, and laying it open before the **LORD**, our complaining to the **LORD** of it, our crying to the **LORD** against it, and pressing him upon his promise, upon his covenant, to help us against it ; these are the mightiest batteries our souls can make, to the beating down of its strong holds. When the **LORD** hears the groanings of his *Israel* under their oppressing *Egyptians*, he will arise and relieve them. Christians tell one another how sad it is with them, and what work they have with a proud, or covetous, or hard, or hypocritical heart ; and you may tell one another long enough, and find little help : go, tell thy **GOD** of thy sins ; carry them before the throne of grace ; make thy complaints against them there, and there thou wilt find compassion and deliverance.

Now gather up these four particulars together, consider them well, and then you will see, you that intend holiness in earnest, what great reason you have to apply closely to duties, and to accept of those Directions which shall now be tendered to you.

The First sort of Directions are such as concern the right performance of the duty of Prayer : the advice I shall give you touching this, take in these four particulars.

1. Bring yourselves, and hold yourselves, to a frequent and constant performance of this duty. There must be

performance, or there cannot be a right performance: those that pray not, or but seldom, give a shrewd sign that "the root of the matter is not in them;" they that can live without prayer are dead whilst they are alive. Prayer is the first-fruit of Christianity. The living child comes crying into the world; and as it is a token of life, so it is a means by which this new life is nourished. To him that can pray, God hath given a key to all his treasures. Prayer will not only unlock the clouds, as Elijah's prayer did, and bring down rain to refresh the dry and parched earth, but it will unlock heaven too: it will unlock the ark, and the mercy-seat, and bring down spiritual blessings on the soul. Praying is a Christian's knocking at the gate of heaven, that knocking to which the promise is made; "Knock, and it shall be opened." (*Mat.* vii. 7.) The word which the LORD speaks to us, is God's knocking at our doors; "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." (*Rev.* iii. 20.) And praying is our knocking at the LORD's door, at the gate of heaven, that this may be opened. By the way learn, that if you will not hear God's knock, it is just that he hear not yours: if God's voice may not be heard on earth, your voice will not be heard in heaven. Fear not, you shall be heard if you will hear: hear Him that speaks to you from heaven, and your cry shall enter into heaven. Our souls will never flourish, unless the showers of heavenly grace descend and fall upon them; and we cannot expect these showers should come down unless we look up.

Beloved, I have often pressed these duties on you; both *personal secret prayer*, that there be not one person found among you that prays not; and *family joint prayer*, that there be not one family found among you, among whom God is not thus worshipped: I have often pressed this upon you, and given you particular helps and directions about it, and have not been negligent to put you in remembrance of it; so that if there be prayerless persons or families found among you, the guilt of it must lie at your own doors.

But will you yet hearken to me in this thing? Will you

give yourselves to prayer? No word, that is spoken to you for the good of your souls, will ever prosper with you if this word prosper not: it is vain for me to persuade you to live a godly life, if you will not be persuaded to live a praying life. Would you ever come to any thing? See then that this exhortation do not come to nothing; be ye therefore serious; "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." (1 *Pet.* iv. 7) Be ye instant, be constant in prayer; set your resolutions, and set your time: set your times, and keep your times; do not put off this duty, by pretending that you pray always, every day, and every hour: as the pretence of an every-day Sabbath comes just to no Sabbath, so it is usually in the case of prayer. Some wretches' praying always, is not praying at all. "Get thee into thy closet," saith CHRIST; get thee a place, set thee a time, wherein thou mayest call on GOD, and make it thy business to seek the LORD.

Brethren, I say again, if you will not suffer me to prevail with you in this thing, I may even spare my labour of speaking any other things to you. Some among you, in some private conferences I have had with you, have given me some good hopes of the work of grace begun upon your hearts; but when, upon a farther inquiry, I have found that there hath been still a neglect of daily prayer, this hath struck such a damp upon my spirit, as hath brought down those hopes almost as low as nothing. And by experience I have found, that such persons as, upon advice and warning, would not afterwards be brought to the constant exercise of this duty, if they have retained any savour of religion at all, have yet from year to year been at a stand, and not the least sign of any improvement hath been to be seen. If ever therefore you will hearken to me in any thing that I tender for your soul's good, deny me not in this; set upon the daily exercise of secret prayer; and if you be resolved on the performance, I shall then be encouraged in the next place to help you on in the right performance. Therefore,

2. Come to pray with great expectation of obtaining help and grace from **GOD**. Do not barely impose this duty upon yourselves as your task, but encourage yourselves to it, by looking for a return ; think what it is that you would have, and look to receive it. The reason why we obtain no more in prayer, is, because we expect no more : **GOD** usually answers us according to our own hearts : narrow hearts, and low expectations, have usually as little as they look for. Large expectations are ordinarily answered with large returns : expectation will put life into action : you will then pray with most enlarged hearts, when you are most full of hopes. The reward that is looked for in the evening will much quicken the labour of the day. Fear not to expect too much from heaven : be not straitened in your own bowels, and you shall not be straitened in the **GOD** of bowels : open thy mouth wide, and he will fill it ; **GOD** will never upbraid his beggars for looking for too great an alms : he hath enough to supply them, and he hath a heart to bestow it. **GOD** will never say to you, You are too bold, you ask too much, too much grace, too much holiness. **GOD** hath given you commission to ask what you will, not to the half, but the whole of his kingdom ; and the kingdom you shall have, if no less will serve your turn.

Be thankful for every little you receive, but look for much : every little received from **GOD** is much ; a drop from the fountain is worth the world ; yet content not yourselves with some drops, when the fountain may be yours. The **King** of **Glory** loves to give like a **King**, and will never say, “ This is too much, either for a **King** to give, or a beggar to receive : ” since he hath given you leave, spare not to speak at large your desires. **GOD** hath promised you, and therefore you may promise yourselves, that whatever you ask (that is good for you) you shall not ask in vain. O, if we had so much in our eye when we come before the throne of grace, we should be oftener there, and yet still return with our load. Well, remember

this, whenever you come to beg, look to receive; come not to prayer as to a dry breast that is like to yield no milk, or to an empty cistern that will yield no water.

3. Learn the skill to plead with God in prayer. Though the breasts be full, yet they must be drawn hard ere the milk will come: though the LORD be willing to give those that ask, yet he will have them first to prove that they are in earnest. Many arguments he hath furnished to us, to press him with, but he will have us to use them: We must strive with God if we will prevail, and the best striving is with his own weapons. The counsel I give you in this is, plead hard with God, but plead with him upon his own arguments. There are among many others these four grounds on which to bottom your plea:— (1.) On God himself. (2.) On CHRIST. (3.) On the Promises. (4.) On Experiences.

(1.) On God himself. And there are two special things from which you may plead here.

The *first* is, His Gracious Nature. Fetch your arguments by which you plead with God for mercy thence, whence he originally fetched his arguments to persuade himself to show mercy; from his own bowels, from his natural goodness and gracious inclination to mercy: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son.”—“Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by JESUS CHRIST unto himself, (according to the good pleasure of his will,) to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.” Here we have heaped up in a few words the riches of mercy which God hath bestowed on his people;— CHRIST his beloved, redemption through CHRIST, the forgiveness of our sins, the adoption of children, acceptance in his sight, and the revelation of the mystery of his will, or

the discovering and making known of these glorious mercies to us. But whence is all this? Who was it, or what was it, that persuaded the LORD to this abundant kindness? Why, all this arose from himself: He purposed it in himself. He consulted no other argument but what he found in his own heart; it was from his love, "the good pleasure of his will," his grace, "the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded towards us." Love, and pity, and mercy, and goodness, are essential to GOD; He can as soon cease to be GOD as to be gracious; and this is the fountain of all our mercy; hence CHRIST sprung, hence the Gospel came, and all the unsearchable riches of mercy, prepared for poor lost and undone creatures. When you come to pray, fetch your arguments hence: plead with the LORD upon his own nature, his love, grace, and goodness. Thus we find the Apostle PETER praying for the Christians to whom he wrote; "The GOD of all grace make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1 *Pet.* v. 10.) Plead with the LORD in your prayers, as the Psalmist pleads with himself in his affliction; "Will the LORD cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath GOD forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Is his mercy clean gone? Hath GOD forgotten to be gracious?" (*Ps.* lxxvii. 7, &c.) "That men should be merciless, that men should forget themselves, and their friends, and their low estate, is no such wonder: but hath GOD, who is all grace, all mercy, all pity, hath GOD forgotten? Doth mercy cease to be merciful? Doth grace cease to be gracious? Do compassions cease to be pitiful? Hath GOD not only forgotten his servant, but forgotten himself? Remember thyself, LORD, thine own heart, thine own soul, and according to it, remember me."

The *second* plea, in reference to GOD, is His Glorious Name. The LORD's nature is to be gracious; and according to his nature, such is his name; "The LORD, the LORD GOD. merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and

abundant in goodness and truth." (*Exod.* xxxiv. 6.) This is an argument which the LORD puts into the mouths of his people, telling them, "I had pity for my holy name. I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake." (*Ezek.* xxxvi. 21, 22.) And upon this we find them frequently pleading with him; "For thy name's sake, lead me and guide me." (*Ps.* xxxi. 3.) "Do not abhor us for thy name's sake." (*Jer.* xiv. 21.)

(2.) On CHRIST. And there are four things from which you may plead with GOD upon this account. 1. The LORD's giving CHRIST to you as your Lord and your Saviour; upon which gift you may call him your own. 2. The purchase of CHRIST, who hath bought from the hands of the FATHER all that you stand in need of: he hath bought your lives: "ye are bought with a price:" and he hath bought you a livelihood, hath purchased an inheritance for you. 3. The interest that CHRIST hath in the FATHER, being the SON of GOD, the SON of his love, the servant of GOD, in whom his soul delights; whose name is so precious and powerful with the FATHER, that it will carry any suit, and obtain any request. 4. The interest that you have in CHRIST. As he is precious to his FATHER, so you are precious to him: as the FATHER can deny him nothing, so he can deny his people nothing; "Whatsoever you shall ask the FATHER in my name, he will do it." (*John* xi. 23.) He gives you commission to put his name upon all your requests; and whatsoever prayer comes up with this name upon it, he will procure it an answer.

Now, when you are praying for any mercy, make use of all these arguments: "LORD, hast thou given CHRIST unto me, and wilt thou not with Him give me all things of which I stand in need? Hast thou given me the fountain, and wilt thou deny me the stream? When I beg pardon of sin, when I beg power against sin, when I beg holiness, is not all this granted me in thy gift of CHRIST to me? Is CHRIST mine, and is not his blood mine, to procure my pardon, and his SPIRIT mine, to subdue mine iniquities? Are these mine, and wilt thou withhold them from me?

Look upon CHRIST, LORD : Thou hast said to me, ‘ Look unto JESUS,’—give thy servant leave to say the same to thee ; ‘ Look thou upon JESUS,’ and give out to me what thou hast given me, in giving him to me. Look upon the purchase of CHRIST: do I want or desire any thing but what my LORD hath bought and paid for ? Look upon the name of CHRIST, which thou mayest behold written upon every prayer that I make : Thou mayest say, ‘ For thy own sake thou shalt have nothing, not a drop, not a crumb ;’ yet wilt thou say, ‘ Nor for his name’s sake neither ?’ Is not that name still a mighty name, a precious name before the LORD ? ”

By these hints you may learn how to plead with GOD, from any other arguments drawn from his Promises or your Experiences.

QUESTION. These arguments *Believers* may use in prayer, but is there no plea for poor men to use, that are yet in their sins ? What may *they* say for themselves, when they come before the LORD ? Have you never a word to put in their mouths ? They have more need of arguments than any ; what shall they say ?

ANSWER. I shall premise, that it is the duty of mere natural men to pray : for, 1. Prayer is a part of GOD’s natural worship. If there were no positive law requiring it, yet the law of nature enjoins it, and no man is exempted from the obligation of the law of nature. 2. Otherwise it were none of their sin to neglect and restrain prayer ; for “ where no law is, there is no transgression.” Now we find in Scripture, that neglect of prayer is reckoned up amongst wicked men’s sins : “ They are altogether become filthy : they call not upon GOD.” (*Ps. xiv. 3, 4.*)

That which is usually objected against this is,—“ GOD heareth not sinners ; the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD.” Now, no man is bound to offer up to GOD an abominable thing ; better offer up nothing than an abomination.

In answer to this, consider, that there are two sorts of sinners, resolved sinners, and repenting sinners ; and accordingly there are two sorts of prayers made by sinners.

1. **Dissembling Prayers ;** mocking and lying prayers. Such prayers are made use of, either as a veil to cover their wickedness, and to make them appear to men to be righteous, or else as an engine or device, to quiet and pacify their consciences in a course of sin. They make confession of sin to serve instead of forsaking sin, and praying to serve instead of repenting ; their prayers help them to sin the more freely ; they think they may go on with any thing, if, when they have done iniquity, they do but pray for forgiveness. Such prayers are an abomination to God, and a desolation to sinners. “ Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination to me.” Sinners, not only your wickedness, but your very prayers will undo you. If you make them a shelter for sin, your very prayers will be turned into sin.

2. **Mourning Prayers.** When a sinner, being struck with a sense of his sin, of the necessity of changing his way, and of his utter inability to turn of himself, under the fears and troubles of his heart, goes to God, and cries out, “ LORD, What shall I do ? I see I am in an evil case ; my soul is running on in sin, and thy curse and wrath are upon me : LORD, save me ; LORD, help me ; LORD, pardon me ; LORD, convert me ; break me off from my sins, break me off from my sinful companions : I cannot get loose, my heart is too hard, my lusts are too strong, my temptations are too many for me to overcome of myself ; LORD, help me ; turn me, and I shall be turned ; pluck my foot out of the snare, that I be not utterly destroyed : forgive mine iniquity, make me a clean heart, make me thy child, make me thy servant, that I may never again yield up myself a servant to sin : ”—such a prayer as this, if it be in earnest, though it cannot properly be said, that the LORD doth accept it,* neither can any man say, that he will reject it as an abominable thing.

* That is,—Not in precisely the same sense in which he accepts the prayers of those whose persons he has previously accepted, and who are already justified by faith. EDITOR.

This being premised, I answer to the question, that sinners, if they have but a heart to it, have also a price in their hands. **GOD** hath put arguments into their mouths also, to plead with him for mercy : as,

(1.) The Grace of **GOD**, or his gracious nature, his readiness to show mercy. This even strangers may lay hold upon. **BENHADAD**'s encouragement to beg his life of the King of Israel, may be the sinner's plea in begging his : "We have heard that the Kings of Israel are merciful Kings." Go, sinner, to the **LORD**, and speak thus in his ears, "**LORD**, I have heard that the King of Glory is a merciful King ; thy name is the **LORD**, merciful and gracious ; and thy nature is according to thy name : it is thy nature to pity, and in thy heart there is plenteous compassion : I am a miserable creature, a poor, undone, helpless wretch ; do for me according to thy nature ; do for me according to thy name : will the **GOD** of mercy send away such a wretch that comes for mercy ? Will the **GOD** of grace send me away without grace ? The **GOD** of mercy hear me, the **GOD** of grace grant me to find grace in his eyes !"

(2.) **GOD**'s Call, or gracious invitation. "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." (*Isa.* lv. 1.) "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rise, sinner ; he calleth thee : go to the **LORD**, and when thou goest tell him, "**LORD**, thou hast bid me come, behold here I am ; I come, **LORD**, at thy word. I come for a little water ; I come for thy wine and thy milk ; I have brought no price in my hand, but thou hast bid me 'come and buy without money and without price.' Though I have no grace, yet behold at thy word I come for grace ; though I have no **CHRIST**, yet I come for **CHRIST** ; though I cannot call thee *Father*, yet being called, I come to thee as *fatherless* ; 'with thee the fatherless shall find mercy.' And is it only those that want the Fathers of their flesh ? Is it not

also those that want the Father of Spirits? Shall earthly orphans find pity, and only spiritual orphans be left orphans? If I am not thy child, may I not be made thy child? Hast thou not a child's blessing left yet to bestow upon me? Thou hast bid me come,—come for a blessing; bless me, even me also, O LORD. Wherefore hast thou sent for me?—Shall I be sent away as I came? I come at thy word; do not say again, Be gone, be gone out of my sight; LORD, I cannot go, I will not go; for 'whither shall I go from thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' Since thou wilt have me to speak, LORD, answer; though I dare not say, 'Be just to me a saint;' yet I do say, I will say, I must say, 'LORD, be merciful to me a sinner.'"

3. CHRIST. And there are two things in CHRIST, upon which sinners may plead with GOD :

(1.) His Sufficiency. There is enough in CHRIST, in his obedience and death, to save the worst of sinners, to save the whole world of sinners. There is a fulness in CHRIST; "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." (*Col. i. 19.*) There is a fulness of merit to obtain pardon, and to make reconciliation for whoever comes; a fulness of the SPIRIT to sanctify and cleanse them from their sins. "He is able to save unto the uttermost all those that come unto GOD by him."

From this sinners may reason thus with the LORD: "O LORD, I do not come to beg that of thee which cannot be had; thou hast enough by thee; look upon JESUS who sits at thy right hand; is there not righteousness enough in him to answer for all my unrighteousness? Are there not riches enough in him to supply my poverty? Shall I die for want of a pardon, when there is such blood continually before thee pleading for pardon? Shall I lie down in my own vomit, and wallow in the mire of my filthy lusts, when there is such a fountain by thee, still open for sin and for uncleanness? O sprinkle me with his blood; O wash me in this fountain! Hear, LORD; send me not away without an alms, when thou hast it by thee."

(2.) His Office: which is, to bring sinners to God, to make reconciliation for sinners, to make intercession for transgressors. He hath received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious also. What a strange and mighty plea is here for poor sinners! “It is true, LORD, I am a transgressor, and have been so from the womb; I have played the traitor, and been a rebel against thee all my days: but is there none in heaven that will intercede for a transgressor? Hath the LORD JESUS received no gift for this poor rebel who falls down before thee? Though I am a rebel, LORD, yet let me receive a rebel’s gift, not a rebel’s reward, (LORD, that would be dreadful!) but some of those gifts which CHRIST received for the rebellious.

(3.) Their own Necessity. Sinners are necessitous creatures; they have nothing of value left. As a sinner of a hundred years is but a child, so a sinner of thousands by the year is but a beggar; poor, miserable, blind, and naked: he can want nothing, and yet doth want every thing that is good: sin hath stripped him to the skin, and stabbed him to the heart; the iron hath entered into his soul; it hath left him nothing but “wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.” Is this thy case, sinner, and hast thou nothing to say? Spread thy wants and necessities before the LORD, and let these speak for thee: learn of beggars that come to thy door, who, if they have ever a sore or malady about them, will be sure to open it, to move pity, and to procure an alms. Their pinching hunger, their parching thirst, their naked backs, their cold lodging, thy door shall be sure to ring of: their necessity will both make them to speak, and help them to speed.

Sinner, spread thy necessities before the LORD; spread thy wants; open thy wounds and thy sores; tell him how desperately sad thy case is; tell him of the guilt that is upon thy head, the curse that is on thy back, the plague that is in thy heart: “God of bowels, look hither; behold what a poor, blind, dead, hardened, unclean, guilty creature; what a naked, empty, helpless creature I am: Look

upon my sin and my misery, and let thine eye affect thine heart. One deep calls to another ; a depth of misery cries out to a depth of mercy. My very sins, which cry so loud against me, speak also for me. My misery speaks my curses, the woe and the wrath that lie upon me ; my bones speak, my perishing soul speaks, and all cry in thine ears, Help, LORD ; GOD of pity, help ; help and heal me, help and save me : Come unto me, ‘ for I am a sinful man, O LORD :’ I dare not say, as once it was said, ‘ Depart from me, for I am a sinful man :’ Come, LORD, for I am a sinful man. Thou couldest never come where there is more need : Who have need of the physician but the sick ? Come, LORD ! I have too often said, ‘ Depart from me ;’ but if thou wilt not say, ‘ Depart,’ to me, I hope I shall never again say, ‘ Depart,’ to thee. My misery saith, Come ; my wants say, Come ; my guilt and my sins say, Come ; and my soul saith, Come ; come and pardon, come and convert, come and teach, come and sanctify, come and save me : even so, come LORD JESUS ! ”

Thus you have the sinner’s plea. Poor sinner, art thou willing to return from thy sins ? Fear not to go to GOD : take thee some such words as these, and go and tell the LORD, that one of his ambassadors told thee from him, that he expects thee before the throne of grace, and is ready, if it be not thine own fault, to grant thee mercy. Go, and the LORD help thee ; may he give thee thy heart’s desire, and fulfil all thy mind ; and for thy encouragement take along with thee this Scripture, “ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found ; call ye upon him while he is near : 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.” (*Isa.* lv. 6, 7.)

4. Pray in faith. “ But let him ask in faith.” (*James* i. 6.) You will here inquire, What faith is it that is necessary to our prevailing in prayer ? I answer, Not only that faith mentioned by the Apostle, “ He that cometh to GOD, must believe that GOD is :” (*Heb.* xi. 6 :) not only a persua-

sion that he is able to perform our petitions, or that he is ready to answer those that seek him : not only a persuasion concerning prayer, that this is **GOD**'s ordinance, appointed by him as a means whereby we may obtain mercy from him:—though all this be included in it, yet this is not all. The same faith is necessary to the acceptance of our prayers, which is required to the acceptance of our persons. That faith which gives a person interest in **CHRIST**, will best procure the acceptance of his prayers. Now this faith puts forth in prayer a threefold act.

(1.) It presents and offers up the prayer in the name of **CHRIST** ; “ By faith Abel offered his sacrifice.” (*Heb. xi. 4.*) Faith carries our prayers to our Mediator, for his hand to be put to them, without which they will not be regarded ; yea, it puts them into his hand, and says unto **CHRIST**, “ **LORD JESUS**, take thou this prayer ; what infirmities there are in it, do thou cover ; what sins thou findest in it, do thou hide ; mingle thy blood with my sacrifice, let thine incense ascend with my offering, and thus let it be carried before the throne of grace, where, that it may speak for me, let thy blood speak for it.”

(2.) It depends upon **GOD**, through **CHRIST**, for acceptance and performance. It eyes and leans upon the promise of **GOD**, which in **CHRIST** is Yea and Amen ; and setting to its seal, that **GOD** is true, upon this it stays itself.

(3.) It works the heart to a confident persuasion, that **GOD** for **CHRIST**'s sake will hear and answer : “ This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us.” (1 *John v. 14.*) But here consider, that this confident persuasion, that **GOD** doth hear and accept us, however it argues a higher degree of faith, and brings in much peace and comfort to the heart ; and if it be well grounded, is a good argument that the **LORD** intends to fulfil our desires ; yet it is not so necessary to the acceptance of our prayers, but that they may be heard where this is wanting. If the former acts have been put forth ; if there hath been a presenting them in the hands of our Mediator, staying our hearts upon the

promise; though there be a fear that **GOD** doth not regard them, yet for all this they may not be rejected.

Having thus in brief showed you what it is to pray in faith, what remains, but that you practise accordingly. Study the attributes of **GOD**, his power, goodness, mercy, and truth: study **CHRIST**, his office, interest, sufficiency, and faithfulness: study the promises: and let your faith set its seal to all this, that **GOD** is good, merciful, mighty, and true; that **CHRIST** will be faithful in his office; that his name is mighty with the **FATHER**; that the promises of **GOD** are in him Yea and Amen. Strengthen yourselves here, and so go before the **LORD**. Let **GOD** be in your heart, **CHRIST** in your hand, and the promise in your eye, whenever there is prayer in your mouth. Let your prayer be so presented, your dependance be so settled, and your confidence, as much as possible, be so raised, as you have been directed; or whether you can attain to this confidence or not, yet do not fail of such dependance; and then see, what a rich return your prayers will, sooner or later, bring down upon you.

The *Second* special Duty in which I shall direct you is holy Meditation. Touching the practice of this duty, take these two Directions:—

1. Every day, morning and evening, set apart some time for secret prayer; and when you go to pray, do not rush inconsiderately upon it, but first sit down, and meditate; and when you find your hearts affected and warmed by these meditations, then fall to prayer.

2. Let each morning's meditation be ordinarily matter for your thoughts to work on, and for discourse that day, unless Providence calls you to some other profitable subject. Thus continuing from day to day, from week to week, you will be both more thoroughly acquainted, and more deeply affected, with the things of **GOD**; and will find, through his blessing, more loveliness and enlargement in prayer, and more comfortable success. Only take heed of formality, of resting in the work done, of going on in a round of duty, without a due regard to the end of duty.

Let this be your aim in all, to get your hearts more fixed upon, and affected with, the things of the world to come, more enlarged and quickened, and more effectually carried on in that course of holy and heavenly walking, the end whereof is everlasting life.

The *Third* special Duty in which I shall direct you, is Self-examination. For it is of great use to the carrying us on in a holy course, to know our state.

1. By the knowledge of our state, we shall the better know our work; when we know what we are, we shall the better know what we have to do. If the question be, What must I do to be saved?—the answer of that will depend upon another question, How far am I come already? Am I converted, or unconverted; in a state of sin, or in a state of grace? Let that question be first answered, and the answer of the other will be easy.

2. By the knowledge of this, that we are in a good state, we shall have much encouragement to hasten on. Assurance will quicken and encourage us in the way of holiness. Those who affirm that the doctrine of assurance is a licentious doctrine, and serves for nothing but to maintain men in a loose, lazy, and idle life, understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. It is all one as if they affirmed, that the more assurance any person hath of the love of God, the less he will love God; or that the more he loves God, the less care he will take to serve or please him. Those that know no other motive to duty but fear, may preach such doctrine; but those that have found the quickening and constraining power of love, must lay down both their reason and sense too, before they can believe it.

The way to know ourselves is to examine ourselves. Now to help you in this duty of self-examination, I shall give you these two directions:—

1. When you set to examine yourselves by any marks or signs, in the first place, examine your marks that you would try yourselves by. If you would prove yourselves, whether you have true grace or no, by any mark, examine that mark by the Scriptures, whether it be a certain and infallible

sign of grace, so that you may be bold to conclude, that if you can find this mark in you, you are undoubtedly in the state of grace.

2. For the matter of your inquiry, let it be, First, whether you are in the way of life or not?—or, Whether you are translated out of a state of sin and death, into a state of grace and salvation? And if so, then, Secondly, Whether you be in a thriving or flourishing state, or in a languishing or decayed state?

To help you in the former trial, I need only send you back to those directions formerly given concerning your closure with CHRIST, whence it will not be difficult to gather certain marks to try yourselves by.

Secondly, whether you be in a thriving and flourishing estate or no? To help you in this, I shall only give you these two or three short directions:—

(1.) Compare yourselves with yourselves; your present state with your former state. Look, look, and consider what you were, or have been at any time since you first believed; and then see what ground you have gotten or lost.

(2.) Compare your state with the time which you have had, and with the means and opportunities, and several talents, which you have received. See if your stature in grace be answerable to your standing. If you are of seven, or ten, or twenty years' standing in the vineyard of the LORD, consider if you also be of so many years' growth. See if the reckonings which you have to bring in be answerable to your receipts. If you have been of long standing, and are but little of stature; if your knowledge be as little, your faith as weak, your love as cold, your peace and your comforts as uncertain, your corruptions as many and mighty, as they have been many years since; and much more if the waters of grace and peace run lower now than they did heretofore;—you may conclude yourselves to be but in a poor case.

(3.) Compare yourselves with the best of other Christians, to whom you have been equal in time, and other circum-

stances; and see if you have kept pace with the best of your time. If you see yourselves behind your company, and much more if you see divers, that have set out after you, to have out-run you, and gotten much before you; if you see Christians of less time, or less parts, that have had fewer helps, and greater hinderances, to have gotten the start of you; if those who have been but a few hours in the field are returning home laden with the sheaves which they have gotten, and you, that have been there all the day, have gotten only a few poor handfuls, you will have no reason to think it over well with you.

You whose case this is, are in a barren and unthriving case. O labour to see it, to lament it, and to acknowledge it;—"I confess it is even thus with me; I confess this is my case." If it be, bewail it; mourn over your neglects, and bemoan your poverty. If you had a great trade in the world, and a good stock, and good markets, and should trade and trade, from time to time, and never prosper, but be poor and low, when you see others of the same trade to flourish and grow rich, how near would it go to your hearts? Christianity is a good trade; grace is a good stock; the ordinances of God, under which you have lived, have been good markets; many that have set up long since you did, are grown rich, rich in grace, rich in comfort, rich in good fruits; and yet that you should still be so poor, and behind-hand, this is lamentable! O lament over it, and consider, that it is time for you now at length to look better to yourselves. That you may get into a better case, examine a little farther, what it is that hath kept you back: Some of the following hinderances have, it is very likely, kept you thus back. Either:

1. A slight performance of holy Duties. Duties have a great influence upon the state of our hearts and lives. Look what Christians are in their secret duties, you shall find them much after the same rate in their ordinary course. If you see a professor that is dead and barren, and careless in his life, follow him into his closet, and you will find him as slight, and dead, and heedless in his prayers; and those

who shift over their duties will but shuffle in their conversations. Try if this be not your case. Or,

2. Unprofitable converse with christian friends. The communion of saints should be improved to the edification of saints. Christians should find other matters to talk of, than of their corn and cattle, the weather or the news. What, have you not a **GOD**, not a **CHRIST**, nor a soul, of which to be reminding each other? Never a word of your country, whither you are travelling? We should come together to get light from each other's candle, to get warmth from each other's fire. If you squander away such opportunities, no wonder if you remain dark and cold. Examine if you be not faulty here. Or,

3. Unnecessary converse with carnal friends. Unsavoury company leaves a chill, and a damp, and a vanity upon our spirits. It is not for nothing that **CHRIST** requires his disciples to forsake all the world, father and mother, son and daughter, and much more such carnal friends as are at a great distance. If we cannot forget these, they will quickly help us to forget our **GOD**, and ourselves.

Yet religion doth not teach us to be unnatural or uncivil: it requires that we give to all their dues; friendship, to whom friendship; courtesy, to whom courtesy; and duty, to whom duty belongs: but this it teacheth, that we do not unnecessarily converse with those carnal persons whose society we may avoid, nor mix with those whom we may not avoid. With whomsoever your dwelling be, let your delight be in the saints. If **GOD** cast you among others, let them be your fear, rather than your familiar friends; and keep such at a due distance, as that they may neither hinder you in your duties to them, nor prejudice you in your duty to **GOD**. Examine how it hath been with you upon this account. Or,

4. Overbusyng yourselves about the affairs of this life. It may be, you find so much work to do abroad, that you let all lie at random within. It may be, the reason why your heart is so cold, is, because you have so many irons

in the fire : you have so many fields to look to, that your garden is all over-run with weeds : Or,

5. The remaining guilt of some unrepented sin. Israel cannot prosper, while there is an accursed thing in the camp.

6. Some unmortified lust, under the power of which you live, and of which, perhaps, you take no notice. You have, it may be, a proud heart, or an angry, fretful heart, or an envious, revengeful heart ; and this may cause you to pine away. An unmortified lust in the heart is like a moth in the garment, which eats out its strength, and mars its beauty. Pride in the heart is as proud flesh in a wound ; whatever medicines be used, the wound remains uncured till the proud flesh be taken off. An angry, fretful heart, is like a wolf in the breast ; whatever be applied, it will prey upon and devour it, and the body will pine away, till the fretting humour be cured. And so any other prevailing lust will have the same effect ; as a man in a consumption, who is wasted to skin and bone, whatever cordials or restoratives he takes, his flesh will never be gotten up, his strength will never return, till the corroding rheum be stayed. If there be any prevailing lust in thy soul, especially if thou indulgest it, in vain shalt thou use many medicines ; for thou shalt not be cured, till that lust be subdued. Thou mayest pray, and fast, and complain all thy life long of thy deadness, and barrenness, and languishing state, and yet still be pining away, whilst there is any iniquity to which thy heart gives indulgence. Search diligently, and see if this be not thy case.

7. Slothfulness. The field of the sluggard is a barren field. He that will not plough, nor sow, nor weed, nor watch, nor work in his field, is likely to have but a poor crop.

8. Contentedness with thy poor, and low, and barren state. Some who are born poor, live poor all their days, and take up with their state, and never look after riches. For ought thou knowest, thy heart might have been in much better case, if thou hadst intended riches : it is the

covetous Christian, who is the rich Christian. Thus it is with worldly men, the covetous of the earth ; these are the rich men of the earth ; these are the monied men, the landed men, that have laid house to house, and field to field : and it may be, if thou hadst been spiritually covetous, thou mightest have laid grace to grace, comfort to comfort, and have been a man of great possessions before this day ; but thou hast been a narrow-hearted, poor-spirited creature, that never hadst any ambition, nor any design to grow great and rich towards God ; and hereupon it is that thou art as thou art.—Christian, though there be none of the former causes, that may have a hand in bringing poverty upon thee, or holding thee under it ; yet it may be that this last, a contentedness with little grace, is that to which thou owest most of thy pining disease. This is too common a case. We have not large hearts towards God ; we are not covetous after holiness ; we are too well contented to be babes in CHRIST, to be children in the grace and knowledge of God. Where shall we find a Christian who is resolved to be rich, to seek great things for himself,—the great things of eternity, I mean,—and to bring forth much fruit ? It is no wonder that there are so many barren fig-trees in CHRIST's vineyard, so many starveling souls among the professors of religion, when there are so few who seriously design fruitfulness. We might have gotten double to what we have done, if we had had a mind in earnest to it.

Brethren, consider how it is with you ; and if you find this to be your case, that your souls are in an unthriving state, search narrowly if some of the fore-mentioned particulars be not those that have kept you back ; and when you have found out the cause of your disease, rest not till it be removed ; for be ye well assured, that that which hath hindered will hinder, till it be taken out of the way.

The *Fourth* and last special Duty in which I shall direct you is, the Renewing of your Covenant : wherein, before I give you the directions, I shall premise.

1. That every sincere Christian has (as hath been before showed) entered into covenant with **GOD** :

2. That Christians are guilty of much treachery and false dealing with **GOD**. The **LORD** may take up that complaint against many of us, which he took up against Israel: "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues: for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant. (*Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37.*)

There is a double falsehood in the covenant, of which we may be guilty :

(1.) There is a falsehood in our entering into covenant, when we do it not heartily; when our promises to **GOD** are nothing but words; when we mean not, nor intend any such things as our mouth speaks; this is lying unto **GOD**. Oh, how many such liars are there to be found amongst those who are called Christians! We have all covenanted to renounce the flesh and the lusts of it, the Devil and his works: we have all covenanted to take the **LORD** to be our **GOD**, to cleave to him, and obey and serve him only, all our days. All this we have done in our baptism, and in our profession, which we have since made, to stand to our baptismal covenant. But have we not, many of us, lied unto the **LORD**? Hath there ever been any such thing in our hearts? Those who are false in this foundation of their Christianity are but false Christians; those who have lied unto **GOD** in their covenants are but lying converts.

(2.) There is a falsehood in our keeping covenant; when whatever reality there hath been in our intention, yet we fail in execution; when we do not stand to our word, nor are steadfast in our covenant, and every part thereof. And thus every Christian is more or less guilty. Every sin we commit is, in a degree, a breaking of our covenant, a departing and going back from the **LORD**, and a dealing treacherously with the **Most High**. Oh, how much falsehood of this kind is there to be found in every one of us!

When some of our hearts are so set upon the world, and take so much liberty in pursuing, and so much pleasure in enjoying, these earthly things, that the LORD is less regarded and looked after, is this according to our covenant? When there is such sensuality to be found amongst others; when we live such idle, easy, careless, lives; when our appetites, our passions, our tongues, are left so much at their liberty; when there is so much provision made for the flesh, and so little for the soul; is this according to our covenant? Is this all we meant, in promising to be Christians? Is this our living to GOD, our living to CHRIST? Oh, what falsehood have we been guilty of!

3. That all our breaches of covenant do exceedingly weaken the bond and obligation of the covenant. The obligation of the covenant may be said to be weakened in a double sense. First, *Really*, when the tie of it is relaxed and loosened, and we cease to be so strongly bound as before; and thus no sin can weaken our covenant-obligation: it doth not become ever the less our duty to cleave unto GOD, because we have so often departed from him; or ever the less our sin to follow the world, because we have followed it so long. Secondly, *Sensibly*, when the bond of the covenant having been so often broken, is not now accounted so solemn or so sacred as before; by how much the more it hath been broken, by so much the less sensible hold hath it upon us. It seemeth but a very light thing to persons who have so often broken their faith with GOD, to break it over and over again; it doth not much affect or trouble such hearts, which have been accustomed to transgress, to revolt more and more.

4. The renewing of our covenant will revive the obligation of it. Though there be not a stricter, yet there is another tie; there is a new link added to the old cord. Men are more afraid and ashamed to break their word as soon as it is gone forth out of their mouths. The seriousness wherewith such a sacred duty should be performed, will leave some impressions upon the heart. The very

consideration of our past breaches of the covenant, which is necessary to our renewing of it, will awaken our hearts to more care and watchfulness.

These things being premised, I shall give you this double Direction for the performance of this duty : First, For the time when : Secondly, For the manner how.

Touching the former, there are some special times when this duty is especially seasonable : as,

(1.) Upon your falls into greater sin. Great sins make great breaches, and it is not safe to let them lie unmade up. Breaking of covenant makes a breach upon conscience ; and this will prove as the breaking down the banks of the sea ;—if they be not presently made up, there may be no stopping them.

(2.) In great straits and afflictions. We have then our hearts at the advantage, to bring them back, or to bind them the faster to the LORD, when we stand in any special need of comfort or help from GOD. Times of straits and difficulties are a special season for this duty ; though it is too common, that those vows which we make in the days of our distress, are forgotten in the days of our prosperity.

(3.) In case of any declinings to a careless, remiss, and senseless frame of heart or life.

(4.) At our approaches to the table of the LORD. These are some of the special times for the performance of this duty.

Secondly, For the manner how.

(1.) Remember your covenant. Read over and consider distinctly the terms of it, and weigh diligently the strictness and great solemnity of your engagement to GOD therein, that your hearts may be the more deeply affected herewith.

(2.) Remember your faults. Read over and consider distinctly the sins into which you have fallen since your engaging yourself to the LORD, together with the several aggravations of them ; and repent and be humbled under them.

(3.) Resolve upon more care, watchfulness, and faithfulness for the future. Verbal promises, though there appear

some affection at the time, if they be not joined with a resolution to take more care, are like to come to nothing.

(4.) Have a special eye, in your engagement with the **LORD**, to your special sins, failings, and neglects, to which you have found yourselves most inclined, and by which you have been more ordinarily overtaken. Say, "I will, through the help of **GOD**, watch against every sin, but especially against passion, &c. This is my sin, herein I am apt to be faulty, here my hardest work lies. I will watch to every duty, but especially to temperance, or patience, or self-denial; herein I have been most wanting."

(5.) Lay hold on the promise of **GOD**, for the renewing of his grace towards you, and for the renewing of your strength, whereby you may be enabled to perform your promises, and pay your vows. It may be that your former experiences of your unfaithful hearts have quite discouraged you. You say, "I have found this heart so fickle, and so false, and so feeble, that I dare not trust it, so as to engage any farther for it. I have found my work so hard, my temptations so many, my strength so small, my attempts to follow **GOD** so successless, that I am afraid I shall never come to any thing. I doubt I shall but mock **GOD**, and bring more guilt upon myself, by adventuring to promise any thing farther for this sinful and unfaithful heart." Why, though thou darest not trust thy heart, yet trust thy **GOD**, who hath said, that he will renew thy strength, and that his grace is sufficient for thee. Depend on **GOD** for the renewing of thy strength, and then fear not to renew thy vows.

(6.) In this strength of the **LORD** go into his presence; and with sorrow in thy heart, and shame in thy face, falling down before him, humbly confess thy faults and failings; and then, in the like solemn manner, as thou hast been before directed, engage thyself again to the **LORD** in the same covenant.

Secondly, I shall now direct you to make a right Improvement of Duties.

Godliness doth not stand barely in praying, meditating, or examining: there is something farther to which those

duties have a respect, and to which they must be made useful : it is a holy life, that is the end to which our holy duties are to help us on. That they may do so, take these two following directions:—1. Whenever you set upon duties, resolve to put hard for it, to enjoy such sensible communion with **GOD** in them, that you may come off in a more spiritual frame of heart, than you came on. 2. Having gotten your hearts to any better frame in duty, be careful to keep it up after duty.

1. Whenever you set upon duties, resolve to put hard for it, to enjoy such sensible communion with **GOD**, that you may return from them with some advantage upon your spirits. Resolve, “ Whenever I come before the **LORD**, I will never go away without him.” The reason why we thrive no more by duties, is because we do not meet our **GOD** in them : **GOD** never meets with his saints, but he sends them away with some marks of his goodness upon them. The reason why we so seldom meet with **GOD** in our duties is, because we do not so wishfully look for his appearance. **GOD** waits for thy coming ; and if it be not thy fault, thou mayest see his face before thou departest ; and if thou see **GOD** in a duty, thou wilt not then return without some impressions of **GOD** upon thy heart.

When **MOSES** came down from the Mount, where he had seen the **LORD**, “ his face did shine ;” there was something of the glory of **GOD** upon his countenance : Israel might plainly see that **MOSES** had met with **GOD** ; they might see the beams of divine glory in his face. Oh, how sad is it, that Christians should return from duty with no more of **GOD** in their faces, or upon their spirits, than for the most part they do. We come many times with no other spirit from our Bibles, or our closets, than we come out of our shops, or out of our barns ; there is so little savour of **GOD** upon our hearts, that nobody would ever think that we had been praying to, or conversing with **GOD**. Brethren, whenever you let down your pitchers into the wells of salvation, be not content to bring them up empty ; be so conversant with **GOD** in your duties, that you may

come off laden, as the bee from the flower, with the honey and sweetness of your duties.

And this I advise you to endeavour after, not only in your solemn public duties, on Sabbaths, Humiliation-days, or Thanksgivings; but in your daily family-duties, your reading, singing, praying, yea, even in those shorter prayers and praises which you use before and after meals. Whenever you draw nigh to God, look to see God, to taste of God, and to get down something of God upon your hearts. And then,

2. Whatever you have gotten from God in duty, what life, what warmth, what refreshing, what enlargement of heart, be careful to maintain and keep it alive afterwards. See that your spirits do not presently sink and cool again, after they have been thus raised and warmed. Do not satisfy yourselves with this, that you have some comfortable entertainment with God, and feel some warm and lively workings of your heart towards him, and some refreshings from him in duty; but look to it, that you keep that holy fire, which is there kindled, from being presently quenched again. You do not eat and drink, that you may have the comfort of your food only while your meal lasts, but that the spirits and the strength which you get by one meal may hold you out to the next. Duties are the set meals of the soul, wherein it so feeds upon God, that, in the strength of what it receives, it may afterwards walk with God more comfortably and cheerfully.

The Lord promises to his people, "The threshing shall reach to the vintage, and the vintage to the seed-time:" (*Lev. xxvi. 5:*) And, "The ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed." (*Amos ix. 13.*) The meaning is, your old store shall last till new come again: you shall not only reap enough for the time of harvest; you shall not only gather enough to serve you during the time of the vintage; but your corn shall last from harvest to harvest, your wine shall serve you from vintage to vintage, your old store shall not be spent till new come to supply you. Duties are the harvests

and vintages of our souls. O what blessed lives should we live, did we so husband what we get in one duty, that it might last us to another; that the vintage might reach to the vintage, the harvest to the harvest; that the life and warmth, and refreshing, which we get in one duty, might hold till the next; and that so we might be carried on in a holy, lively, heavenly frame, from duty to duty, as Israel walked on from strength to strength, till they came and appeared before God in Sion.

That which holds us so low and barren in religion is, that whatever we have obtained from the LORD in duties and ordinances, we presently lose it. When we have been weeping sometimes before the LORD, and wrestling with him, and pleading hard for some quickenings or comforting influences of his SPIRIT upon our hearts, and the LORD hath heard us, and given us our desires; yet as soon as duty is over, we go away, and bury all that we have obtained, in a confused heap of worldly thoughts and businesses; we unbend, and let down our spirits, till we come to duty again; we content ourselves to live in such an estrangement from God all the rest of our time, that sin and the world have a whole day's time to pull down what an hour's duty hath been building, a whole week's time to destroy and steal away what a Sabbath hath gotten in; and so at the returns of duty, we find our hearts at the same loss, in the same deadness and hardness, that they were before. In the Old Testament, though the sacrifices were offered but morning and evening, yet the fire that kindled them was not to go out night nor day: there must be fire kept alive from the morning-sacrifice, to kindle the evening-sacrifice; and fire left from the evening, to kindle the morning sacrifice. O Beloved, how often is it, that though at our morning-sacrifice a fire is kindled, yet we take so little care to keep blowing it, that it goes quite out before the evening; and when we come to offer our evening-sacrifice, we have no fire to kindle it?

Brethren, hath the LORD visited you, and quickened, and comforted you in duty? O think with yourselves,—“What

a sweet life should I live, might it be thus with me always ! How much to be lamented is it, that such light should ever go out, that such grace should be short-lived ! Why if I do not look to myself better, this sun-shine will last but a little while ; and how will the LORD take it, if I suffer the sparks which he hath kindled, so soon to be quenched ? How is my soul ever like to prosper, if such precious food pass away from it as soon as it is received ?"—“ Is this a fast that I have chosen, for a man to afflict his soul for a day ? ” Is this a prayer which God regards, for a man to affect his heart for an hour ; to be in the mount with God, and raised up to heaven for the time, and within a few minutes after to be sunk into the dirt of the earth ? How can you bear such a loss as this ? When will your souls come to any thing, if you have only some few such lucid intervals, and all the rest of your time is covered with clouds and darkness ?

But how may we do to keep this holy and lively frame ?

(1.) Be watchful : “ Nevertheless we prayed, and set a watch against them night and day.” (*Nch.* iv. 9.) Beloved, it is with you, as it was with those Jews : whatever you have gained, you have adversaries lying in wait to steal it away ; whatever you have built, you have adversaries lying in wait to pull it down again. I have heard of some enchanted places, where what men built in the day, the Devil pulled down at night ; and this danger you are continually in ; what is built at one prayer, the Devil labours to pull down before the next. Let your eye be much upon your hearts ; observe diligently, how they hold up, or sink, that if there be the least damp, or decay, growing upon you, you may espy it before it be gone too far. It is no wonder we lose all, when, ordinarily, as soon as ever our duties are gone, away we go, and think no more what we have been about ; as if we were well content to take our leave of our duties and our God together. When you depart out of your closets, leave your hearts behind you. Worldlings seldom bring their hearts thither ; when they come to pray, they leave their hearts behind them : let Christians never carry

them thence. When you have done praying, and must go abroad to your earthly affairs, let your hearts stay behind with your God : let your thoughts be much upon the entertainment which you have had ; and see to it, that the temptations which you meet with do not so easily divert you from what you have been begging or wrestling for.

(2.) Make present use of what you have obtained. God gives grace, and strength, and life, for use ; and use will preserve them. Hath the Lord warmed thy heart ? Go warm thy brother's heart, and that will keep thine from cooling. Hath God spoken comfortably to thy soul ? Go and speak of what he hath done for thee to others. Hath God inclined, and thereby fitted thee for action ? Take the season ; thou mayest do more for God, and for thy soul, in such an hour, than in many days beside ; be doing with what thou hast received, and thou needest not fear losing it. When we are idle, then we fall asleep, and grow cold ; instruments do not rust whilst they are in use. We never more spend our strength, than when we spare our labour.

(3.) Lift up your hearts to the Lord often, every hour, in some short ejaculations. No business, no company, can hinder this duty ; and this will be of special advantage to you ; therefore neglect it not : every sigh, or breathing of your souls heaven-wards, will fetch down fresh influences from heaven upon you.

(4.) Charge this whole course upon yourselves every morning ; and examine every evening how you have kept to it.

Being thus entered upon, and prepared for a godly life, I shall give you some directions,

THIRDLY, How to carry it on ; and for your help herein, take these following counsels.

I. In your whole course pursue, and, as much as possible, eye your end,—God, and your own salvation. Consider often wherefore you live ; and if it be that God may be honoured, and your souls saved, let this be pursued in all the parts of your life. Do no action, which hath not some tendency that way ; and that which hath a tendency, let it be directed to that glorious end. Let every

arrow be levelled at your mark. The reason why the end is no more attained is, because it is no more intended ; it is no wonder we shoot short, or beside our mark, when our eye is not upon it. The eyeing our end, will both direct our course, and quicken and encourage us in it. Set the **LORD** much before your eyes ; dwell upon the contemplation of his glorious excellencies ; and consider how worthy the **LORD** is to be exalted,—what an honour it is to poor creatures to be any way serviceable to his honour,—and how much to be lamented it is, that any of your time, or any of your strength, should be spent upon vanity, which might be improved to so worthy and high an end. Grudge every minute of your time, that is not bestowed on **GOD**.

Consider the blessedness of living for ever in the presence and enjoyment of **GOD**. Look towards the holy city ; enter by faith into the **Holy of Holies** ; set yourselves before the throne of **GOD** ; view that everlasting life, those glorious joys, those rivers of pleasure, that exceeding eternal weight of glory, which are there possessed by the saints ; and then say to your hearts, “ Come on, soul, come on ; here is that for which thou art praying ; here is that for which thou art labouring ; here are the country, the kingdom, the crown, for which thou art fighting, and wrestling, and running, and suffering.” The setting this glory before your eyes, will both quicken and sweeten your holy course, and take off your hearts from any other courses. The end puts a beauty upon the means, and a blackness upon all the hinderances of its attainment. A sight of heaven will make a holy life a beautiful life.

There are two things which make a holy life beautiful : 1. That it is the image of a heavenly life : 2. That it is the way to it. All the labours, difficulties, and sufferings of a godly life, are therefore pleasant and beautiful, because they are the way of the kingdom. And, on the other side, a sight of heaven will make the ways of sin to be unpleasant, to be dark and black ways.

There are two grounds upon which sin is odious to true believers. 1. Its opposition and unlikeness to **GOD**. It

bears the image of hell upon it, not of heaven. 2. Its interposition betwixt them and their end. Nothing else can ever keep them from God; there is no danger of their falling short of everlasting blessedness but by sin. This is the only gulf that is fixed between them and glory. And hence it is that the way of sin, with all its pleasures, is to the saints a dark and dismal way. The pleasures of sin are black pleasures; the gains of sin are black gains; the jollity, and liberty, and prosperities of sin are all dark and black in their eye. These clouds, whatever brightness there seems on them, keep the sun from shining on them.

O what progress might you make in the way of life, were holiness with all its difficulties become beautiful, and sin with all its delights become odious! What would there then be wanting that might encourage you? What would there be left to hinder you? Why, let God and glory be more in your eye, and then sin will be more odious, and holiness more precious; you will then never want encouragements to lead you on, nor be incumbered with such temptations as now keep you back.

Brethren, look on the things not seen, and take from them both direction in your way, and encouragement to go on in it.

1. Take direction from Heaven. When you are travelling, and see the place before you whither you are going, your eye will tell you your way. When you are entering upon any course, look up and consider, Is this my way to God? When you are eagerly pursuing the world, ask your hearts, "Is this my way to heaven? Am I now working out my salvation?" When you are walking in the way of pleasure or liberty, then look up to the Lord, and look in upon your heart, and say if you can: "Now, Lord, I am hastening to thee; now soul, I am taking care for thee; my sports and my pleasures are the way to make God sure, and heaven sure to me:" Can you say so? Will not your own heart tell you, "This is not the way? If heaven be what I intend, if salvation be what I mind, surely then I am out of my way."

2. Look heaven-ward, and take encouragement thence to go on. View the glory that is above, and consider how happy you would be if you were once safely there ; and let such thoughts press you to hasten on, and encourage you against all labours and difficulties. Think with yourselves, when you are setting upon any duty, "If I go well through this, I shall be one step nearer heaven." When you come to the beginning of every day, think with yourselves, "If I spend this day well, I shall this evening be gotten one day's journey nearer home." When you are falling into any trouble, think thus, "If I cut my way well through this wave, I shall be so much nearer my harbour."

Every new degree added to your grace is another stone laid upon the building of glory. At the end of every holy duty which you have rightly performed, you have gotten one round higher on JACOB'S ladder. Look how many days you have walked with GOD ; so many days' journey you are nearer your rest : look how many troubles and temptations you have gone through ; so many gulfs you have shot, so many rocks have you passed by, towards your harbour.

If such thoughts were continually upon your hearts, and before your eyes, how strangely would they quicken you in your way. Take courage ; after a few days more, a few duties more, a few waves more, you will be safely landed in your country. Lift up your eyes and see, lift up your heads and rejoice to see, how, by every duty and difficulty, your redemption draweth nigh. If a traveller, who is almost spent and tired, once comes within sight of home, this adds new strength and life, and on he goes again amain. Let your eyes be more on your home, and there will be less loitering or weariness in your way.

II. Walk on your way in the name of CHRIST : live by faith in the SON of GOD. The strength of a Christian is his faith ; the strength of faith is CHRIST ; the strength of CHRIST is put into the promises. If you would live to GOD, live by faith ; if you would live by faith, go often to the promises.

1. Study the promises. Study the freeness of them ; there is grace in the promise : study the fulness of them ; there is **CHRIST** in the promise, and with him all things ; there is wisdom, righteousness, strength ; there is bread, and clothes, and lands, and friends, and safety : study the sureness of the promises ; there is a **Yea** and **Amen** set to them ; “ All the promises of **GOD** are **Yea** and **Amen**.” 2. Set thy seal to them. Believe that **GOD** is true. 3. Clear up thine interest in them. Make it out that they are sure to thee. 4. Treasure up in thy memory a store of particular promises, which may answer every case of thy life. And then, 5. Upon the credit of that word, venture on, after thy **LORD**, in any duty, through any sufferings : whatsoever difficulty thou seest in thy work, whatsoever danger thou seest in thy way, whatsoever want or weakness is upon thee, go on, resting upon **CHRIST** for success in thy duties, and support under thy trouble, and supply of thy wants.

It may be when thou lookest upon a holy life, thou wilt say, “ This is indeed a blessed life, if I could attain it : But O, I see there is so much to be done, and to be borne, that I doubt how I shall be able to go through it. The **LORD** requires me, if I will come after him, to deny myself ; this first step puts me to a stand ; I doubt I shall stumble and fall at the very threshold of Christianity. Deny myself ! Alas, I cannot deny my friend, or companion ; I cannot deny mine enemy that entices me to sin. If **SATAN** do but speak a word to me, to draw me aside, he prevails ; and must I yet deny myself, when I see how unable I am to deny mine enemies ? I cannot do it. Why, here thy faith, if thou wilt consult with it, will furnish thee with encouragement. Though thou art able to do nothing of thyself, yet thou mayest be able to “ do all things, through **CHRIST** which strengtheneth ” thee.

Again, thou sayest, “ The **LORD** requires me to make a clean heart, to purge my conscience, to crucify my lust. But who am I, that ever I should think of doing such great works ? I could as easily make a new world, as a new heart ; I can as well stop the sun in its course, as stop my

lusts in theirs ; I can as easily dry up the fountains of the great deep, as cleanse the fountain of my corrupt heart." Aye, but thy faith will tell thee, that He who bids thee cleanse thy heart, hath said to thee, that He " will sprinkle clean water upon thee, and thou shalt be clean." Thy faith will carry thy fountain of sin to that fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness. Thy faith will tell thee, that the body of sin hath received its death-wound, that thou mayest not serve sin ; and that the same mouth which commands thee, " Let not sin reign in thy mortal body," hath promised thee, " Sin shall not have dominion over thee."

But yet, thou addest, " The LORD commands me to keep my heart, to keep my tongue and mine eyes, to make straight steps to my feet, and to turn aside to no iniquity, to turn aside from all temptations to sin, to abstain from all appearance of evil ; and many more the like words hath he given me in charge, requiring me to walk in all his commandments, and to keep all his statutes and judgments to do them : these are hard sayings, who can bear them ? " Aye, but he that said this (saith faith) said one word more, that will make all this easy, " I will put my SPIRIT within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes ; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (*Ezek. xxxvi. 37.*)

Once more thou repliest, " But CHRIST commands me to take up my cross, to suffer with him, to part with all I have, and to lay down my life for his name. Can I do so little for his name, and am I ever likely to be able to suffer for him ? Am I put so hard to it in every light affliction, and is it possible that I should resist unto blood ? The LORD pardon me, I have found that a little shame or reproach is more than I can well bear : a scoff or a scorn for CHRIST, to what impatience hath it often put me ? Have I ' run with the footmen,' and have these ' wearied ' me ; how shall I ' contend with horses ' ? "—" But GOD is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able." The LORD will lay on thee (saith faith) no more than thy load ; either he will increase thy strength, or not increase thy burthens. He who hath given thee a little

strength to go through small trials, will, if he lay more load on thee, give thee more strength to bear it. The **LORD** will either enable thee to die for his name, or he will not call thee to it.

Believe **GOD**! "To him that believeth all things are possible;" if you believe, they shall be so to you. He hath said, he *will be*, and therefore you may boldly say, "The **LORD** is my helper." "Trust in the **LORD**, and keep his way; be doing good, and verily you shall be fed." Verily you shall be assisted; verily you shall be supported. Commit your way to him, and, whatever difficulty there be in your work, he shall bring it to pass. Commit the keeping of yourselves to him, and you shall be "kept by his power through faith unto salvation." "Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it:" distrust yourselves as much as you will, but distrust not your Rock: you are weak creatures, but you have a strong **GOD**; you have empty hearts, but a full **SAVIOUR**; you have but a poor stock in yourselves, but a rich stock in the Promise, whence you shall have a continual supply, so that your barrel of meal shall not waste, nor your cruse of oil spend, till you have finished your course. Hang on your crucified **LORD**; take hold on his covenant; take hold on his strength. Go forth in his strength and name, and then fear not. Your difficulties shall vanish, your way shall prosper, your souls shall flourish; you shall have your fruit unto holiness, and your end everlasting life.

III. Deny yourselves. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." (*Matt. xvi. 24.*) Remember your covenant; you have given yourselves to the **LORD**, and are now no longer your own. You are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh; you have already paid it more than its due. Let him that liveth live to the **LORD**; let them for whom **CHRIST** died, live no longer to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.

CHRIST and self are contrary; you cannot serve these two masters: if you will not deny yourselves, you deny your **LORD**; and if you can deny yourselves in any thing,

you will deny **CHRIST** in nothing. If you can heartily say, "Not my will," you will easily add, "But thine be done."

But what is this Self which we must deny? I answer, as **CHRIST** said to the woman of Samaria, "He whom thou hast for thy husband is not thy husband:" That which thou holdest for thyself is not thyself. Thou callest it, and countest it thyself, and lovest and cherishest it as thyself; but it is not thyself. That which is here called thyself is in Scripture called thy flesh, thy corrupt or carnal part; that corruption which is gotten into thy understanding, and sits there, giving thee evil counsel; that corruption which is gotten into thy will, and sits there, swaying thee to choose thy hurt; which is gotten into thy appetite, and makes thee lust after all things that are pernicious to thee, and resist all that would do thee good. This is the self to be denied, —the corruption of thy nature, which hath insinuated itself into all thy parts and powers, and governs thee in all thy actions. This it is which carries thee from God, keeps thee from **CHRIST**, resists the Word of Life, leads thee out of the way of life, leads thee about after thy pleasures, and sports, and companions, holds thee down to this earth, and is dragging thee to hell.

This is it which makes men say, "The word that is spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not do, but will do whatsoever proceeds out of our own mouths;" which makes them say concerning **CHRIST**, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" let the world reign; let the Devil reign; let pride, and envy, and malice, reign; but whosoever reigns, this man shall not reign over us. It is this which lays so many blocks, and creates so many difficulties, in the way of holiness; which makes this way seem too strait, the duties of it impossible, and the troubles of it intolerable. Were it not for this, the way of **CHRIST** would be easy, and his burden light. This is that Self which must be denied, if you would follow **CHRIST**.

Do you ask, What it is to deny this *yourself*? It is to shake off its government, to resist its reasonings, to disobey

its commands, not to follow its inclinations, or satisfy its desires. Whatever CHRIST commands, this Self will be reasoning against it, and countermanding it. When CHRIST says, "Be humble, be watchful, be circumspect, be perfect, labour, run, strive, suffer;—your flesh will contradict: "this is a hard master; these are hard sayings: this is both needless and intolerable: shake off the heavy yoke, pity thyself, spare thyself, and put not thyself to such hard service: at least thou mayest abate something of this strictness: if thou wilt be holy, what need of so much care and labour about it? allow thyself some liberty, some ease, some pleasure." And if you yield a little, it will counsel you a little more, and a little more; and never give over till it hath reasoned you out of all Christianity, into very brutes or devils.

But how shall we deal with this Self, when it thus sets upon us? Why, return the same answer as CHRIST did to PETER, when he gave him the like counsel: "Get thee behind me, SATAN:" "hold thy peace, Devil; speak no more thus to me." Say to the flesh, as the men of Sodom said to LOT, "Stand back: this fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge," or a ruler. (*Gen. xix. 9.*) "Thou art stolen in, I know not how; stolen into my head, stolen into my heart; and now thou thinkest to be a counsellor, to be a ruler. Stand back, flesh; hold thy peace, for I will not hearken to thee." Say to it as the King of Israel said concerning the Prophet, "I hate him, for he never speaks good to me, but evil." Say to this wicked flesh, as those wicked ones said against the LORD, "The word which thou hast spoken to me, I will not do: the liberty thou demandest thou shalt not have: the pleasure and the ease which thou cravest I will not allow thee. My LORD whom thou counsellest me against, shall be my LORD; him will I love, him will I obey, him will I follow in all that he shall say to me: I will not pamper this flesh, but pinch it more: I will not humour this fleshly mind, but cross it more: I will not feed this fleshly appetite, but hold it the shorter: I will not pray the less, or fast the

less, or hear the less, because this flesh is against it; but will pray the more, and fast the more, and beat down this body, and bring it into subjection with the more care and diligence: I will starve this proud beggar, and weary it out of its imperious demands; it shall get nothing by this ado which it makes, but rather shall be held the shorter. I will the rather deny myself what I might allow, because I will not feed or foster such an enemy."

O Christians! What an exact life might we live, and with what ease might we go on in our holy course, if this were done? What an uncontrouled dominion might our LORD have over us, if this Self were pulled down from sitting with him in the throne? And how much might be done to the destroying of it by our constantly denying it? Keep the flesh low, and by degrees you kill it. But, woe to us, what friends are we of this enemy; how gently do we deal with this old man; what provision do we make for this flesh! What we have a mind to, we must have; what we have a mind to, we will do; whither we have a mind to go, we will go; and seldom give our reasons or our consciences liberty to say, "What doest thou?" We are like fond parents, if their child cry, though it be but for a knife, or a handful of dirt, it must have it to quiet it. A wise parent will rather give his child a rod than that which will hurt it; and knows that this will be hurt enough, that a child should always have its will. O check and whip the brat, and let not thy soul spare for its crying. Better the child cry than the parent; better the flesh cry than the conscience.

But O, what a liberty have many, who seem to be Christians, often taken in the days of their prosperity;—living in pleasure, as if they hoped to charm their flesh out of its enmity, or to kill it by kindness; as if this were the enemy, which, when it hungers, they must feed, when it thirsts, they must give it drink! O what liberty have we seen taken by many such, for feasting, costly attire, idle fashions, light and carnal merriment; yea, and condemning the stricter and more self-denying way of severe and

mortified Christians, as if this proceeded from an affectation of a voluntary humility, or from an ignorance of their christian liberty.

But is this indeed the way to crucify the flesh ? Or have you gotten it so much under command already, that now you can securely trust it with any thing which it would have, without fear of its making war again against CHRIST, or your souls ?

Look to yourselves : look back, and consider, whether your souls have not suffered, whilst your flesh hath been thus surfeited ; whether there have not been some abatements made from CHRIST, for every such allowance granted to the flesh ; and whether GOD hath not been provoked, whilst self hath been thus pleased. Think seriously, whether this abuse of our liberty be not something about which the LORD is now pleading with us, and for which he is now scourging us. We have compelled the LORD to cast us into the house of mourning, thereby to repair the breaches that have been made upon our souls in our houses of feasting : and our LORD puts us the harder to our second lesson, "Take up your cross," because we have not better learned our first, "Deny yourselves."

IV. Order yourselves aright. Beloved, if you observe the former rules well, all that remains will be the more easy. Order yourselves aright, in those things, I mean, which especially concern your own persons ; keep your own hearts with all diligence ; look well to your own ways : "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another." (*Gal. vi. 4.*) Keep a severe eye upon yourselves ; hold a strict hand upon yourselves ; be more severe towards yourselves, than towards all the world. It is an ill sign, to see professors of religion severe in observing and censuring others, and remiss towards themselves. Be candid and charitable towards others, but exercise severity at home.

In the right ordering of yourselves, take great care that you,—1. Allow not yourselves in the least known sin. 2. Live not in the neglect of any known duty. 3. Take

heed of the world. 4. Be humble : 5. Be temperate : 6. Be moderate.

1. That you allow not yourselves in the practice of the least known sin. Do not look on this as any apology for sin, "that it is but a little one." There is no sin that can properly be termed little. The least iniquity will cost either the blood of **CHRIST**, or the blood of your own souls. Little sins are spreading sins ; a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump : **ELIJAH**'s cloud, out of the bigness of a man's hand, in a few hours clothed the whole heaven in black. Little sins are leading sins : the child conveyed in at the window, will open the door to let all the great thieves in. When **GAD** came into the world, his mother said, "Behold a troop cometh." When the messenger of the King of Israel came to the Prophet, he said, "Shut the door, and hold him fast at the door : is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" (2 *Kings* vi. 32.) Shut the door against every sin, for whose messenger is it? Look behind, and see who comes after it : is not the voice of his master's feet behind him? The Devil is not far off, whenever sin knocks for admission ; and the door being opened to the messenger, it is likely to stand open for the master. Take heed, Brethren, that you do not give a toleration to any sin ; little sins allowed become great sins. The allowance of sin is that which makes the great waste upon conscience, and the great spoil upon our peace. There is but little tenderness in the conscience, that doth not bid defiance to the least sin.

Beloved, if sin get the possession at any time of your hearts, let it be rather upon surprise than surrender ; if possible, [and "all things are possible to him that believeth," and "abides in **CHRIST**,"] be not surprised by sin ; but whatever you do, see that you do not surrender to it. Be jealous that sin steal not upon you in disguise, but when you see what it is, beware of it as of the Devil : will you let a known enemy lodge within you? Brethren, do not shut your eyes against sin, nor open your doors to it. Shut not your eyes against it ; be willing to know it ; do not go about to persuade yourselves concerning any thing to which you have a

mind, that it is not sinful, or that it may be lawful enough, for ought you know ; but look through it impartially, and if you find it to be sin, receive it not in. I cannot well say, whether of the two be in the worse case, those that are not willing to know what they do, or those that do what they know to be evil. But this I can say, that neither the one nor the other are likely to know whether there be sin or no ; such winkings will blind their eyes, and such walkings will blot their evidences, and hinder their progress in holiness. If you would be sure that the LORD is yours, keep close to him ; if you would keep close by GOD, keep clear of sin ; and if you would keep clear of sin, keep your windows open, but your doors shut ; see who it is that knocks, before you let him in. An open eye, and a tender conscience, will be the best security to both your grace and peace.

2. Live not in the neglect of any known duty. The Devil may be served not only by your doing evil, but by your doing nothing. We obey the will of the flesh, when we neglect to obey the will of GOD : as our commissions stab, so our omissions starve our souls. GOD will not, and our souls cannot, want a duty. Our lameness in the practice of duty will quickly appear in the leanness of our souls. Omissions will be reckoned at our judgment, and therefore must be reckoned and repented of now. Do not content yourselves with a negative holiness, that you do no harm ; do not think it enough to be able to say, "I know nothing by myself, no hurt that I have done : " suppose you do not, yet thereby are you not justified. GOD will judge you, and may condemn you, for what you have *not* done. If you had nothing to answer for but your neglects, the neglects of one day, or of one hour, [if unpardoned,] will undo you for ever. To be holy, hath more in it than to be harmless. There must be doing your duty, as well as departing from iniquity. Nor is it a little now and then that will serve ; there must be continuance in well-doing, a readiness to every good work, a fruitfulness in good works, a faithfulness in good works. " Well done, good and faithful servant." He is a faithful servant who hath done his best, and who hath

not voluntarily neglected any thing of his master's work, nor wasted any of his master's talents ; who is able to say, " Though I have not done what I ought, yet I have endeavoured to do what I can." Every neglect is a degree of unfaithfulness. If ye will be the servants of CHRIST, be faithful servants ; and that you may be so,

First, neglect not any kind of duty. One thing lacking may be the loss of all. You can hear, it may be, but you cannot pray ; you can pray in secret, but you cannot pray in your families ; you can instruct your families, but you cannot govern them ; you can love the saints, you say, but you neglect the communion of saints ; you can be just in your dealings, but you cannot be charitable ; you can give an alms to a hungry body, but you cannot give counsel to a sinful soul ; you can give counsel, but you cannot give a reproof ; this or that you cannot bring your heart to. But take heed ; though you cannot bring your heart to it, yet neglect not to be working your heart to it ; to be persuading, and reasoning, and praying your heart to it. Take heed there be not an act of indulgence passed for this neglect : take heed you do not say, " The LORD pardon me in this thing," and so give over, and let it alone.

Secondly, Neglect not any opportunity of duty. Whenever the LORD calls to duty, let your heart answer ; whenever the LORD opens a door for any service, take the season.

(1.) Be watchful, and observe every opportunity. Sometimes the LORD puts " thine enemy into thine hand," and gives thee some special advantage against such a corruption : sometimes the LORD puts " a price into thy hand," an opportunity of getting in, or laying up for thy soul ; an opportunity for laying out for God or thy soul : observe diligently all such seasons. Thou mayest do more, or get more, in such an hour, than in many days after.

(2.) Keep thy heart in a disposedness and constant readiness to duty. Be always prepared to every good work : see that however sometimes thou mayest want power to perform, yet to will may be always present. When a price is put

into thy hand, see thou want not a heart to it ; when thine enemy is in thine hand, let not thy heart spare it ; let not thine heart be out of the way, whenever the season serves ; let not thy heart suggest to thee afterward, “ Oh, what a day have I lost ! How much seed might I have sown this day for eternity ! What a treasure might I have laid up for everlasting ! ”

(3.) Above all, take heed that you live not under a neglect of duty. The most diligent and vigilant Christians have too many neglects ; but see that you are not guilty of any neglect in ordinary ; that there be not any thing that you know to be your duty, which you commonly and of course pass over ; so that this day is even as yesterday, and to-morrow, and next day, and next week, and so on, are likely to be as this day. Whatever it be that you perform, such a neglect as this will unavoidably hinder the thriving of your souls. For, 1. The guilt of such a neglect will mar the beauty of what is done ; and the LORD will have such a standing controversy with you for what is not done, that he will not accept or prosper what is done. 2. There will be the want of the influence of those duties which are neglected. We cannot want a duty, but we may afterwards find the want of it in the state of our souls. Grace out of exercise grows into decay ; and if one of thy spiritual members suffer or waste, the whole body suffers with it. 3. The Devil will fill up the vacuities of our lives. There is not a void plat in thy garden, but the Devil will be sowing his seed. If you do, the Devil will not leave an empty day, nor an empty hour of your lives. If grace do not fill up each day with the duties of it, he will fill it up with sin. It is a hundred to one, but a weed grows up in the room where a flower is wanting.

Brethren, if you would be thriving Christians, be universal Christians, for any work your master hath to do ; be honest Christians, willing to know your whole duty ; be watchful Christians, that you may know your seasons, and then be faithful ; allow not yourselves in, be not patient with yourselves under, any neglect.

3. **Take heed of the world.** If you be Christians, **CHRIST** hath gotten the better of the world, hath gotten the pre-eminence, and brought the world under. If it be so, take heed it get not head again : and that you may be both secured from the snares of the world, and make your best advantage of it, take the following directions.

(1.) Never make any exchange of **CHRIST**, or any thing of **CHRIST**, for the world, or any thing that is of the world. Never purchase any thing of the world at so dear a rate, as the loss of any thing of **CHRIST**. Lose not any degree of grace, for the gaining of this world's goods ; lose not a spiritual duty, for the attending on a worldly business. Enrich not your bodies upon the impoverishment of your souls. What possession or use of this world you may have without any prejudice to your soul, enjoy it, and be thankful. But beware you do not so take up with the businesses, and take in the advantages of this earth, that your souls suffer loss ; or that you should ever have occasion to say of any thing you have done or gotten, " This is the price of my peace ; this is the price of my comfort ; this is the price of a Sabbath, or a Sacrament, or a prayer ; I have lost a Sabbath ; I have lost my communion with God in prayer ; I have abated the life, and the vigour, and the exercise of my grace : And this is all I have for it,—some addition to my outward state : I have more of earth, but less of heaven ; more gold, but less grace ; more of this mammon, but so much the less manna ; more of the cistern, but less of the fountain." Beloved, it was never the intent of the Gospel to strip you of this world's good, but to secure you from the mischief of it : be but so watchful, and so fearful, and so wise and wary in improving your worldly estates, that you be not hereby losers upon a spiritual account, that you may have what you have as an addition, but not in commutation for **CHRIST**, and he will never blame you for it.

(2.) Let not **CHRIST** or the world again change places, or interests. If **CHRIST** hath your hearts, let him not again be thrown under your feet : if the world be gotten under

foot, let it not again get into the throne; let it be your servant, but let it never be again your god. Let **CHRIST** be the chief, let him have the highest esteem, the dearest, the strength of your affections. Let the word of **CHRIST** be of more power with you, and carry you farther, than all the gains and glory of the world. Let not this be your rule, "To follow **CHRIST** and holiness, so far as you may without any prejudice to your worldly interests;" but let this be it, "Follow the world so far only, as you may without being false or unfaithful to **CHRIST**." Venture on in holiness to the great hazard of your estate; but venture not after that with the least hazard of your religion. Resolve to be Christians, whether you be rich or poor; but endeavour not to be rich, but upon such terms that you may be not the less Christians. Especially take heed that the prosperity of the world steal not away your hearts; "If riches increase, set not your hearts upon them." (*Ps.* lxii. 10.) It is hard to prosper in the world, and not to prostitute our hearts to it. Temptations of prosperity are the world's courting, and complimenting, and wooing of our love: if ever a suitor be likely to prevail, it is when he puts on his best array. Prosperity is the world in its glory; whenever it presents itself thus to you, then take heed lest you forget **GOD**, and prove adulterers and adulteresses from **CHRIST**.

(3.) Let not the **LORD** want any thing you have. There is nothing that you have, but it may at one time or other be said to you, "The **LORD** hath need of it;" and if he hath, let it go: if the **LORD** say, "I have need of it," do not you say, "I cannot spare it:" desire to have only for use; and what you have, be willing to use it, and use it well. Nothing is well used but what is used for **GOD**; that which is bestowed on yourselves, or your children, is misused, if it be not bestowed there for the **LORD**: entitle **GOD** to all you have; write his name upon it, and mark it for him,—“This is his wool, his corn, his silver, his gold;” and use it for him.—If your pride, or your gluttony, or your

envy, if your sports, or your pleasures, or your companions, demand any thing to be spent on them, let your answer be, "It is not mine to give;" or what NABAL's was to DAVID, when he sent to him for provision for himself and his followers, "What is DAVID? Or who is the son of JESSE? Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men whom I know not whence they be?" (1 Sam. xxv. 10.) What are these lusts? What is this pride? What are these pleasures? Shall I take these good things which the LORD hath given me, and bestow them upon such vile things as these? Were these things given me to feed mine enemies, and the enemies of GOD; to feed snakes and adders, vipers and scorpions? Was this the end why GOD hath made me greater than others, that I might be more wicked than others? Hath GOD made me rich, that I might be a drunkard, or a glutton, that I might maintain my pride, and my pomp, and my brutish pleasures? Hath GOD made me a rich man, that I might make myself a beast?—Beloved, the LORD hath rather lent you, than given you, what you have. You are but stewards of his manifold gifts put into your hands: you must give an account to GOD for all your receipts and disbursements; and your account will be but a lame account, if you bring in any thing laid out, that is not laid out for GOD. Let not the cause of GOD, or religion, want any thing you have: let not any of the poor afflicted ones of the LORD go without their parts. He who hath gotten such power over all he hath of this world, that he can freely dispose of it to its proper use, may be numbered amongst those that have overcome the world, and so is in the less danger of finding it a temptation and a snare to him.

(4.) Be able to want what you have not. To be able to want the world, is a greater honour and comfort than to possess and enjoy it. I know not which is more difficult, to be able to use it well, or to be able to want it; but ordinarily he that can do one can do both: he that can

carry himself as a Christian in his plenty, will be able also to carry himself so in his penury. The Apostle tells us, that he had learned how to do both; "I know how to be abased, and how to abound: in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." (*Phil.* iv. 12.) Worldly men can do neither, they know not how to be rich, nor how to be poor; how to be in credit, nor how to be in disgrace; they can neither bear wealth, nor want; that is, they know not how to be as they should be in either state. If they are rich, and in credit, then they are proud and riotous, and luxurious; if they are poor and in disgrace, then they murmur, then they are impatient, and discontented, and envious at those whose ways do prosper: if they are full, they forget God; if they are empty, they fret against the LORD. To be able to want, and to abound, is the same as to be able to behave like a Christian in both estates; to be able to hold on in a christian course, without being hindered or turned aside by the one or the other; to be able to be holy with the world or without it; on the one side, to be able to be high, and yet humble, honourable, and yet honest, rich in this world's goods, and yet rich in good works, to bear his burthen of thick clay without ever sinking one's spirit, or slackening one's pace heavenwards; and on the other side, to be able to be poor and patient, afflicted and cheerful, comfortable, contented, and as constantly serving the LORD in the want of all things, as others do in the fulness of all things; to be able to live by faith, though one hath never so much else to live upon, and to be able to live by faith when one hath nothing else.—Christians, if you can want, you shall never want. He hath enough, that is able to spare that which he hath not. If you can want the world, the Devil will then want a temptation, either to entice you from, or discourage you in, your holy course; you may then be Christians in spite of all the world.

(5.) Above all, take heed to get clear of the world, and from under its dominion. Men may go far in religion, and

yet perish by the world at last : it is dreadful to consider, how many sad instances there are to be found, who seem to have much love to CHRIST, whose hearts are yet secretly chained to the world. There is many a professor, that hath made a fair show, and is persuaded in his conscience that he is upright with God, and yet his heart doth secretly cleave more strongly to the world than to CHRIST. As there may be secret pride, of which men may be guilty and not know it, so there is a secret reigning covetousness, in which men may live, and die, and be damned, when they never suspected it ; and this I fear is a more common case than is supposed. When we see men owning the Gospel, setting up the exercises of religion in their families and closets, praying like saints, speaking like angels, melted into tears, raised in joys, separated from the world, holding communion, and in many things holding pace, with the best of men ; when we see such persons (and are there not such to be seen ?) so industriously driving on after the world, so constantly busy in laying house to house, and field to field, so possessed with worldly cares, so hard-hearted, and strait-handed towards those that are in need, hiding themselves many times from their own flesh ; who can say to duty, Stand aside ; to prayer, Stand aside ; to hearing or meditation, Give place, whenever they have a worldly business before them ; but seldom or never can say, Stand aside world, stand aside oxen, and sheep, and trades, and livings, I have a God and a soul to look after ; but can content themselves, for that, with those few leisure times they have, wherein they have nothing else to do ; and yet notwithstanding they comfort their hearts, and conclude all is well ; nay, let them be never so plainly dealt with, and warned to beware lest they be found lovers of this world, and strangers from CHRIST, yet they cannot see, they cannot be persuaded, but their hearts are sincere ;—what can be thought of such persons, but that they are likely to die for ever, by their secret adultery against God. Look to it, that this be not your case ; be sure you be gotten

clear of the world. The Devil will allow you to have some respect for CHRIST, and some affection to religion; will allow you duties; will let you pray, and let you hear; so long as the world governs your hearts. Some indeed he holds close prisoners, that wholly mind earthly things: and he could wish his captives were all in such a case, without the least sense or show of religion; yet those he cannot keep under so great a restraint, he is content to hold as prisoners at large: any liberty to pray, to hear, &c., they may take, and yet be prisoners: the Devil does suffer you now and then to walk abroad, and exercise yourselves in the duties, and feed yourselves with the hopes of religion; but if you be not close prisoners, yet are you not prisoners still? O let it not content you that you are prisoners at large: O let nothing content you but your enlargement out of prison, so that you are no longer prisoners to the world, but CHRIST's free men.

4. Be humble. Keep your hearts low; be low in your own eyes; think not of yourselves above what is meet: and be content to be low in the eyes of others; that is the harder lesson of the two; there is many a person that is so conscious of his own poverty and worthlessness, that he cannot have high thoughts of himself, but yet he would, as SAUL, be honoured before the people. Take heed of this: let who will affect to be reckoned among the world's great ones, let it be enough for you to be accounted among God's little ones. If the LORD hath lifted you up, take heed of lifting up yourselves: your work is to abase yourselves, and then let God exalt you. Pride is one of the last enemies, and longest-lived, that a Christian hath to deal with. It will rise up out of the ashes of other lusts: men are proud that they are not covetous, or prodigal, or intemperate. Nay, it sometimes rises up out of its own ashes: men may be proud of their humility, proud that they are not so proud as they have been: and can you be too watchful against such an enemy? —Christian, labour to know thyself more thoroughly; and

amongst all the lusts of thy heart, which might, if understood, bring thee low, take particular notice of this thy self-exalting spirit ; and if this do not abase thee, and shame thee, and lay thy honour in the dust, thou art proud indeed !

5. Be temperate. In the use of creatures, I mean, beware of excess ; eat and drink for service, not for pleasure. Let not your LORD be a loser by his bounty to you ; lose not a duty in a dinner ; a full meal makes many a drowsy duty. Take heed, give not to your appetite all it craves ; let not appetite, but conscience, be your measure. Eat not your souls into leanness ; let not your table become your snare, and that which is given you for your health become your disease. When you are at your meat, remember your work, and let that limit you ; be only so free in your food, as may make you more fit for service. He that hath such a race to run, such a warfare before him, must be temperate in all things, or he may lose the goal and the battle. Not only drunkards and gluttons, but even men that are accounted sober, are more peccant this way, than they are ordinarily sensible of. Their spirits would be more free, their services would be more lively, their work would be more easy, and their way more pleasant, if they were more temperate. Let this Scripture meet you at your tables, as well as elsewhere, “ Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

6. Be moderate. “ Let your moderation be known unto all men : the LORD is at hand.” (*Phil.* iv. 5.) Maintain such a tranquillity and serenity of mind, let all be in such a due and equal composure within you, that it may appear in your carriage without. Let there be no noise, nor tumults ; but, as much as possible, let there be a constant silence and calm upon your spirits. Moderate your cares, moderate your fears, moderate your passions ; say to your spirits when they begin to swell, as CHRIST to the wind and waters, “ Peace, be still.” Get the command of all within you, and keep them under constant discipline : be

careful for nothing, fear nothing, be impatient at nothing; that whatsoever happens to you without, you may be able to say with the Apostle, "None of these things move me." Be not like those weakly bodies, whose temper changes with the weather. Be able to bear whatever changes happen from abroad, without any perplexing commotions at home. "In your patience possess ye your souls." If you can but keep your temper, whatever happens, you may keep your way, and hold on your course: but a heart out of quiet will put your whole man out of course. If you can but be quiet and patient, you may be any thing, you may do any thing, that GOD will have you be or do: but let your fears, and your passions, and your impatiences loose, and whither will they carry you? When you should be denying yourselves, you will then be shifting for yourselves; when you should be following CHRIST, you will be running from CHRIST; when you should be working out your salvation, all your care will be taken up how to save yourselves in a whole skin: whereas, let those be well laid, and you will have nothing to do, but to follow your work, and to run your race which GOD hath set before you.

V. Carry yourselves well towards others. A Christian's work doth not lie all about himself: though your own souls be concerned in all you have to do, yet your care must not be confined to yourselves, you must have a due respect, and a due carriage, towards others also.

Carry yourselves well towards all men. Let your conversation be, as in all things, so towards all men, as becometh the Gospel. I can here give you only some short hints. 1. Be true. 2. Be just. 3. Be merciful. 4. Be peaceable. 5. Be courteous.

1. Be true. Take heed of the way of lying; let sinners know that a lie is of their father, and not of yours. Let the word of a Christian be sacred. Make sinners say of you the same which GOD says, "They are children which will not lie. Temptations to lying are many, and men are

especially tempted to it in these two cases. First, In case of any faults committed. What cannot be excused, must be concealed ; and, for want of a better covering, they must hide it under a lie. Secondly, In their dealings in the world ; in their buying, and selling, and trading. The trade of lying gets into every trade, as if there were no living but by lying. The seller must have his lies : there must be a lie to set off the wares ; “ It is special good, the best of its kind,” when perhaps it is stark naught ; a lie to set up the price ; “ It stood me in so much, I cannot abate ;” or a lie to bring on the buyer, “ I will not abate ;” when it may be the next word is a lower price. The buyer must have his lies : a lie to bring down the price, “ It is naught, it is naught,” saith the buyer ; a lie to bring down the seller, “ I will not give your price,” and yet he gives it. Oh, how common an evil is this, and how little considered ! How few are there that have great dealings in the world, that can altogether acquit themselves of it ! How many are there that live upon lies, that feed themselves with lies, that clothe themselves with lies,—the unlawful gains that their trade of lying hath brought them in !—Resolve to be true ; be true though it be to your loss, be losers rather than liars. Sell not conscience with your commodities, for a penny or two-pence profit extraordinary. And be watchful. Consider what you say before you speak, that you be guilty of falsehood neither purposely, nor unwarily.

2. Be just. Observe that rule of righteousness, “ Do to others, as you would they should do to you.” And let this rule be observed in all your words, yea, and your thoughts also, as well as actions : if you would not be wronged, do not wrong ; if you would not be oppressed, do not oppress ; if you would not be defrauded, do not defraud ; and so, if you would not be defamed, or reviled, do not defame or revile ; if you would not upon every report or groundless surmise, be evil thought of, do not think evil of others. Are you faultless upon this account ?

Would you that all that should come upon you, which by you hath fallen upon others? Would you that all the world should be to you, what you have been to any in the world? If you have not been knowingly unjust in your dealings, yet have you neither been injurious in your words? Would you that your faults and infirmities should be the ordinary discourse of others? And have not yet others' infirmities or faults been the subject of yours? Would you not be suspected, or despised in the thoughts of others? And have you never dealt thus by others?

3. Be merciful. "Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful." (*Luke* vi. 36.) You have a merciful Father; you have a merciful High Priest: be ye also merciful: as you have received mercy, as you look for mercy, be careful to show mercy. Give to him that asketh; lend to him that would borrow; visit, relieve, refresh the bowels of him that is in misery. He that is merciless to the bodies of men, is therein cruel to their souls. Niggardliness, in professors of religion, will disgrace their profession, and harden the hearts of sinners from entertaining the Gospel. "Can you persuade me," they will say, "that this is the way of God, that this is true religion? What, a merciless religion? God keep me from such a religion!" Your feeding of hungry bellies, your clothing of naked backs, may be a means to save many a soul from death.

4. Be peaceable. "Have peace one with another." (*Mark* iv. 50.) "Follow peace with all men." (*Heb.* xii. 14.) The Lord is a God of peace; Christians are sons of peace. "The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated." Peaceableness consists, (1.) In an unwillingness to provoke or offend: a peaceable man will not break the peace, is not quarrelsome or contentious, will not stir up strife, forbears all provoking carriage, and hath no provoking tongue; he hath peace in his heart, and that brings forth peaceable language and carriage. (2.) In an unaptness to be provoked. A peaceable spirit is a patient spirit. (3.) In a readiness

to be reconciled: "Easy to be entreated:" (*James* iii. 17.) A peaceable spirit is hardly provoked, easily pacified. (4.) In a forwardness to reconcile those that are at variance: a peaceable spirit is a peace-making spirit; such a one is both a blessed man, "Blessed are the peace-makers," (*Mat.* v.,) and a blessing to those he lives among. One angry, quarrelsome spirit may be a plague, and one peaceable and healing spirit a blessing, to a whole society.

5. Be courteous, sweet, and affable in your carriage towards all. This will much win upon the hearts of those you converse with, and beget their good-liking of whatever good they behold in you; this will both mollify their spirits towards you, and make them more willing to hearken. Morosity and sourness will fright them out of your company, and harden them against your counsel. Your candour will help to convey down any admonition or reproof you give them, which otherwise their stomachs would rise against, and spit out in your faces. Carry yourselves so to all, that you may convince them you are their friends, the friends of their souls, whilst you appear the enemies of their sins; that your counsels are the counsels of a friend; and that your reproofs are the wounds of a friend, which are better than the kisses of an enemy.

But still take heed, that your courtesy to sinners do not lead you into a compliance with them in their sins; that what you intend as a net to take their souls, become not a trap to take yours: whilst you are a friend to their persons, beware you be not drawn aside to have fellowship with them in their wickedness. It is better to be uncivil than ungodly. Be as courteous as possible, yet so far only that your courtesy be neither a snare to you, nor an encouragement to them in their sins. Be wise as well as kind.

Do not pass over these second-table duties, as the lower things of religion, which a little praying or confessing will make up. Truth and temperance, justice and mercy, are among the weightier matters of the law: there is so much religion in them, that there can be no religion without

them : though there may be morality where there is no true religion, yet there can be no religion where there is not morality. " Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and bag of deceitful weights ? " (*Micah* vi. 11, 12.) Are these my people ? What, holy and not honest ? Religious and not righteous ? A single heart, with a double tongue ? What, grace where is no peace, nor mercy, nor temperance ? What, railers, and quarrellers, and yet religious ? " If any man seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain." (*James* i. 26.) A dreadful word ! There are many seeming Christians, in whom an unbridled tongue is found. How many light and vain words, how many false and deceitful words, how many bitter and angry words, do we hear out of their mouths ! What biting and devouring, what cutting, provoking, reproachful, and reviling language doth often break forth at the same mouths, whence at other times we hear praying and blessing ! But can such consider, without a trembling heart, " This man's religion is vain ? " "*Vain*" notes two things : 1. Empty : Whatever religion such men seem to have, there is nothing in it. 2. Ineffectual : that is vain that falls short of, and doth not reach its end. The end of our religion is salvation. Whatever religion such men have, it will never save their souls ; they may lie in hell for ever, notwithstanding all the religion they have. All the conclusions that men make from such religion, that they are in a state of salvation, are false and deceitful : that faith which cannot drive the Devil out of the tongue, will never prove CHRIST to be in the heart : that religion which will not tame the tongue, will never save the soul.

I insist the more on this, because however injustice, unmercifulness, and intemperance, may possibly be as common, and some of them as pernicious ; yet these evils of the tongue are more apt to be passed lightly over, and, notwithstanding all the mischievous consequences of them, to be less regarded.

But can you make a light matter of that which proves

you damnable hypocrites? By this biting and devouring tongue, you do not only consume one another, but you consume every man himself, your own peace, religion, and salvation. You see, by experience, how it devours all the exercises of religion. What duties are we fit for, whilst our tongues are on fire? Prayer must be laid aside: reading, or conference, about GOD, or about our souls, are turned out of doors: GOD himself cannot be heard, conscience cannot be heard, while those noises and tumults last.

You that have been sick of this disease of an evil mouth, bless the LORD if the cure be begun; but rest not until it be perfected. It will still defile, where it doth not destroy. It will still defile your consciences: your hearts never send forth an evil breath, but there is something of it sticks behind. It will defile your duties: there will be a tincture on your prayers of that foulness which your evil words have left behind them. It will disturb, where it doth not devour: it will disturb you in your holy course, if it doth not quite divert you from it. Never look to prosper in holiness, or to be fruitful in good works, whilst you break forth into evil words: these lean kine and thin ears of envy and contention will eat up all your good fruit.

O brethren, let us no longer excuse, but judge ourselves for this: let our bitterness become bitter to us; let us weep over it, let us watch against it, let us quench those fires within, that there be no more such flames and smoke without.

We lay the blame of all upon temptations and provocations; but our lusts are in the fault, which war in our members. Let us be more sensible of these; let us be humbled, let us be ashamed, that we that profess ourselves sons of peace, should harbour such sons of contention in our hearts. Let the experience we have had of the loss we have sustained, the guilt we have contracted, the wounds we have given to our brethren, to our own souls, and to the Gospel of our LORD, set us to the purging out of this sour leaven. Let salt be cast into the fountain, that the streams may become sweeter; and when the fountain is healed,

then let us sweep the channel: let there neither be war any longer in our hearts, nor a sword in our mouths. Let us "beat our swords into plough-shares, and our spears into pruning-hooks." Let our words plough up the hearts, and not break the heads; let them reprove the sins, and not reproach the faces of our brethren. Let us counsel, and admonish, and comfort one another, and "provoke to love and good works:" but let there be no more bitterness, or strife, or envying, or quarrellings found among us; let us leave these evil fruits to grow only on evil trees, where we can expect nothing else. Let the saints still be found what they were of old, "doves," "lambs," "lilies among thorns:" let there be "nothing that hurts or offends in all the mountain of the LORD."

And whilst we take this care about our words, let us take as great care about our works. Let there be no virulence in our tongues, nor violence in our hands: let there be no deceit in our lips, nor falsehood in our dealings: let us speak the words of truth and soberness, and let us keep the way of righteousness and peace: let us walk humbly with GOD; and let us do justly, and love mercy, and live peaceably with men: let good words and good works meet together, religion and righteousness kiss each other; let peace spring up out of the earth, as grace looked down from heaven. Let us now "add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity." "Finally, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise; think on these things." Brethren, so speak ye, and so walk; these things do: live in peace and love, and the GOD of peace shall be with you.

In special: *Carry yourselves well in, and towards, your Families.* You that are governors of families, have more souls than your own to look to. You have the charge of

souls lying upon you. You are not only to look to your families in matters civil, but in matters of religion. Under the Law, the master of the family was to circumcise all the males in his house: in the Fourth Commandment, the master of the family is charged not only to keep the Sabbath himself, but to see that his whole family keep it. Parents are required “to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the LORD;” to nurse them up for GOD; to nourish them up in the words of faith and good doctrine; to feed their souls with the milk of the word, as well as their bodies with the milk of the breasts. Now, where there is a charge of souls, there must be an account given of souls. When there is a child brought forth, or a servant brought into thy family, GOD says to thee, as the man in the Prophet’s parable, “Keep this man, look to this man; if he be lost, thy life shall go for his life.” (1 *Kings* xx. 39.) If any in the house perish through thy neglect, thy life shall go for his life, thy soul for his soul. This is thy charge, and if thou be not faithful, so shall thy judgment be.

But what must we do for the right ordering of our families?

1. Instruct your families, teach them the way of the LORD, dwell in your houses as men of knowledge, and make GOD known to all yours, by reading and acquainting them with the Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation. 2. Endeavour their conversion to GOD, by speaking often to them of the sinfulness and misery of their natural state, and of the nature and necessity of conversion, and by inquiring often into the state of their souls. 3. When they are grown up, and well instructed in the principles of Christianity, endeavour to bring them to an express dedicating and engaging of themselves to the LORD. 4. Teach them to pray; and call upon them often, and see to it that they neglect it not. 5. Pray for them, and with them. 6. Dispense your favours and frowns, your corrections and encouragements, not only as they are more or less towardly to you-ward, but as they are more or

less tractable and careful in the matters of God. 7. In your disposal of them, either to callings, or in marriage, have a special regard to the advantage of their souls. I can now but name these particulars, which I have formerly more largely insisted on. 8. Be examples of holiness to them; walk in the midst of your house with a perfect heart; do not *unteach* them by your practice, what they have learned from your instructions; do not teach them to slight your words, by the unsuitableness of your ways to them.

For a Conclusion of the whole, observe farther these four general Directions:—1. Be sincere. 2. Be steady. 3. Be fruitful. 4. Be steadfast.

1. In your whole course, and all the particular actions of it, be sincere. Sincerity is not a distinct grace, but notes the truth of every grace, and gracious action.

There is a sincerity of our state, and of our actions. (1.) There is a sincerity of our state. That notes the uprightness of our hearts in the main, and hath been already described. (2.) There is a sincerity of our actions; this is two-fold, either such as respects particular actions, or the series of our actions, or our whole course; “This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.” (2 Cor. i. 12.)

There is also a natural sincerity, and a godly sincerity. (1.) Natural sincerity imports no more than simplicity or plain-heartedness; when there is no guile or deceit in any action, no purpose to deceive, no pretence of what is not intended. (2.) Godly sincerity supposes the sincerity of our state. He cannot have his conversation in godly sincerity that is not first a godly man. It includes in it not only truth, but faith and love; and not only a good meaning, but a good will to the work, and to the Lord, for whose sake we do it.

Brethren, be upright in your way; be true to the Lord, not putting him off with eye-service, but serving him in

singleness of heart; be ingenuous towards **GOD**, with good-will doing service : whatever good words you speak, whatever good duties you perform, whatever good fruits you bring forth, let good-will be at the bottom. Let not fleshly wisdom have any thing to do in the managing and ordering of your spiritual ways. You must be fools, if you will be honest. “ He that will be wise,” saith the apostle, “ let him be a fool.” So he that will be upright, let him lay down his fleshly wisdom. Let him not consult with flesh and blood, nor study to cast himself into such a mode, or limit himself to such a measure of godliness, as will best secure and advance his earthly concerns; but laying aside such considerations, let him follow the **LORD** in all things.

Beware of hypocrisy and dissimulation : be not mockers of **GOD**. To refresh the needy with good words only, “ Be filled, be warmed,” this is but mock charity ; and to worship **GOD** with tongue-worship, this is but mock religion.

Oh, how much such mocking of **GOD** are many guilty of? There is nothing but words in their prayers, nothing but words in their confessions. Their faith is a mock faith, their repentance is a mock repentance, their humility is mock humility ; nay, their very alms, wherewith those that received them are refreshed and relieved, are in respect to **GOD** a mock-charity, mock-alms. Whatever is done, there is nothing of the heart in it ; and where that is wanting, the **LORD** looks on all as nothing.

O remember and bewail all your hypocrisies and dissimulations ! You are apt to think, when you have been praying, or fasting, or keeping **Sabbaths**, or visiting the sick, or relieving the oppressed, that you have been doing some great services ; when yet, it may be, you have been dissembling with the **LORD** in all, and had need to pray again, not only, “ **LORD**, forgive us our pride, or covetousness,” but, “ **LORD**, forgive us our prayers.” Consider, my Brethren, what a high provocation this is : it is no small sin to be mockers of men ; but will a man mock **GOD** ? “ Seemeth it to you a small thing that you weary men, that

you will weary my GOD also?" Seemeth it a small thing to you to deal falsely with men, but will you deal falsely with GOD also.

Brethren, in all your ways observe the rule, "Do as you would be done by." If you would not that the LORD should mock you, be you no longer mockers of GOD. Do not put off the LORD with mock-duties, unless you will be content to be put off with mock-mercies, with a mock-pardon, and a mock-salvation.

Blessed be GOD for any sincerity that he hath seen in us: but woe to us that there hath been so much hypocrisy mingled with it! O, let us fear an hypocritical heart: O, let us watch against an hypocritical heart: let us purge out all the remainders of the Pharisaical leaven. Let there be truth in all we do, and, as much as in us lies, nothing but truth. Let us draw nigh to GOD with a true heart. Let us be undefiled or upright in the way of the LORD. Let us love in truth; let us speak the truth in love; let all our paths be mercy and truth; let our hearts be in every word, in every step of our lives; let the heart do all; let faith pray, and obedience hear, and repentance celebrate our fasts; let wisdom guide, let truth speak, let mercy give, let love forgive, let patience bear, and long-suffering forbear: let temperance feed us, humility clothe us, and integrity preserve us; let grace do all, and let GOD have all; let pride have nothing, and covetousness nothing, and envy nothing; let lust neither bear a part in our doings, nor eat any of the fruit of our doings. Let there be written on all we have, or do, "Holiness to the LORD."

Brethren, sincerity will give us boldness before the LORD: we shall be able to lift up our faces in his presence, and look in his face in peace; and he that can be bold with GOD, may be bold with all the world: he that can look GOD in the face, may look his accusers, his despisers, and his persecutors in the face: he that can freely appeal to GOD, can boldly appear before men. "The sinners in Sion are afraid, fearfulness surpriseth hypocrites:" the sense of their guilt and guile sides with every danger

that they are in, strengthens every fear that comes upon them, makes their own hearts fall upon themselves, and puts a sting into every cross. It is innocency that hath boldness ; dare to be upright, and fear nothing. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God accepteth thy works."

2. Be steady and even in all your ways. Be not off and on, in and out : "be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long ;" alone, in company, at home, abroad, in thy duties, in thy business, all the day, and every day : let to-morrow be as this day, and the next day as to-morrow. In this evenness and quality of our lives stands the beauty and comeliness of them, when all the several parts of them bear their due proportion each to other.

Be like unto God, and then be ever like yourselves ; be unchangeable. We appear almost so many men as we live days, or come into companies : we have more of the moon than of the sun,—little light, but many changes and spots. Let not your conversation be so checkered ; let not Christians be speckled birds, sometimes something of God, sometimes as much of the flesh. What a deformity is it to a new garment, to have here and there a company of old rotten patches ; now a little of God, and then as much of the Devil ; now in the spirit, and then in the flesh ; now a little of godliness, and then a patch of sensuality. Be Christians, and be ever yourselves : do not change your hearts with your companies. Let all your goings be established ; be ever in the fear of the Lord.

3. Be fruitful. That ground is counted fruitful which bringeth forth good fruit, and which bringeth forth much fruit. I have already directed you how to bring forth good fruit ; now let me press you to see to it, that your fruits abound ; "always abounding in the work of the Lord." "The wisdom which is from above is pure and peaceable," &c., and "full of good fruits." "Herein is my FATHER glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit." As you have "yielded your members servants to uncleanness, adding iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members

servants to righteousness and holiness." You have been the servants of sin, be ye now the servants of righteousness; and be ye as free, and as forward, and as fruitful in the service of righteousness, as ever you have been in the service of sin. You have added sin to sin, unrighteousness to uncleanness, iniquity to iniquity: as sin hath abounded and multiplied its fruits, so let grace also abound, and bring forth its fruits abundantly.

Bring forth good fruits, and of all sorts: As it is said of the tree of life, that stands in the city of God above, (*Rev.* xxii. 2,) so let it be said of every living tree that stands in the vineyard of God here below: They bring forth "twelve manner," that is, all manner "of fruits." Be fruitful in every good work, and bring forth fruit for every season. There are summer-fruits, and there are winter-fruits, that God expects from you. By summer-fruits, I mean those that are most proper for the days of your prosperity; as thankfulness, watchfulness, fear, humility, self-denial, mercy, and compassion. Your winter-fruits are such as God looks for in the days of our afflictions; fasting, repentance, mortification, humiliation, submission, and patience. Brethren, be not only good summer-servants, but winter-servants also: and whenever it is winter with you, fall close to your winter-work; be much in the exercise of repentance, godly sorrow, and patience. Let the persecuting world see, that godliness will not only live, but flourish too, in the hardest winter. The truth is, there is no such flourishing time for the saints, as the time of trouble. God's trees do usually bear best in winter. The winter-frosts ordinarily bring forth and ripen their fruit better than the summer's warmth: at least the hard winter prepares for a fruitful summer.

Beloved, is it winter with any of you? Lose not this season; to your work, to your work! Let your work serve you instead of fire to keep you warm. Let not the cold winds and storms chill and freeze your spirits, and so kill your fruits; let a fire be kindled and kept alive within you, the fire of love and holy zeal. Let not those winds blow

out, but blow up these fires : let them blow out the fire of lust, of passion and contention, but let them blow up the fire of love and zeal ; and let your inward warmth supply the want of outward comforts and encouragements, for the cherishing and ripening of your fruit. Be either bringing forth fruit, or preparing fruit ; let not the plough stand still, let the clods be broken, let the seed be cast in : if it be the day of your tears, sow in tears ; it is good sowing in such a rainy day, and such a seed-time will bring forth a comfortable harvest.

4. Be steadfast and immoveable. Be not moved, either from the hope of the Gospel, or from the obedience of the Gospel. Be not apostates from CHRIST : let not the fear of the cross make you weary of the yoke of CHRIST : turn not back from the holy commandments for any tribulation that may come upon you. Suffer not yourselves to be persecuted out of your religion or conscience.

Tribulations are temptations, and will try what there is of God in you ; what reality there is lying under all your professions ; whether the word of CHRIST hath taken any root in you : and those troubles will make the greatest trial of you, which fall upon you for righteousness' sake.

There are some troubles that fall promiscuously on all, good and bad, and put no difference betwixt the one and the other, but as an overflowing flood, bear down all before them : as in general famines, pestilences, and wars, in which it happens alike to the just and unjust, to him that serveth God, and to him that serveth him not. There are other troubles that fall only on the heritage of the Lord, on the best among a people ;—when the vile of the earth prosper and flourish, and those only in whom some good thing is found, are the suffering people ;—when the sun shines on the barren mountains and miry marshes, and the storms, the thunder, and the hail, fall only on the fruitful field ;—when the corn is smitten, and only the thorns and briars escape. Such troubles as fall on the righteous of the earth, and for their righteousness' sake ; when the bread and water of affliction are given to disciples, and in the name of dis-

ciples, these are the most trying troubles. Such troubles as leave men to their choice, either to sin or suffer; when godliness becomes the road to tribulation, and ungodliness is the only door that is left open by which we may escape;—such afflictions as these will make the most narrow search and thorough trial whether we are godly indeed or not.

Brethren, see that your hearts be so established with grace, that you stand your ground, and keep your way in such days of temptation. And that you may hold out, and hold on, and abide in the day of trial, take this course:

First, Try yourselves thoroughly aforehand. If we could judge ourselves we should not be judged. Though I cannot say, if we would try ourselves we should not be tried; yet this I can say, if we would try ourselves, we should be the more likely to abide the trial of the LORD. Try yourselves aforehand: and that,

(1.) What you are in the state of your souls, according to the instructions I have already given.

(2.) What you are in your duties, in your active obedience. He that is not faithful in doing the will of GOD, is not like to be faithful in suffering the will of GOD. He that carries himself like a Christian in his present state, need not fear how he shall stand in any future state he may be brought into. The trial that trouble will make upon us is, whether we will be faithful in doing the will of GOD when we must suffer for it: now he that neglects his duty, and cannot hold his heart to a holy course when his religion is like to cost him nothing, what is like to become of this man's godliness when it may cost him the loss of all? Dost thou talk of suffering for CHRIST, and suffering for righteousness, and hope thou shalt never forsake him whatever may come upon thee, when thy heart tells thee, how much thou hast slighted CHRIST, neglected thy duty to CHRIST, and contented thyself with a cold, heartless, lukewarm profession, without the power of Christianity; and that, when thou hadst no pretence of damage or danger that was hereby like to come upon thee? Thou sayest, it

may be, with PETER, "Though I die with Him, I will not deny Him:" Aye, but dost thou deny thyself for him now; deny thy pleasures, and thy ease, and thy companions now? Hast thou not many a time denied him a prayer, or an alms, when he hath called for it? Canst thou watch with CHRIST? Dost thou walk with CHRIST? Dost thou live to CHRIST? Art thou faithful in bringing forth fruit unto CHRIST, the fruits of holiness? If not, how dost thou think to be able to suffer for him? If the way of CHRIST be too strait for thee, thou wilt find his burden to be too heavy; if thou canst not bear his yoke, thou wilt be less able to bear his cross. Consider what your ways and your doings are at present; and if you find the LORD helping you to walk in all good conscience now, you need not doubt being able to witness for a good conscience when called to it. If you keep the word, and do the work of the LORD, you may expect his help for bearing his burden. If you be faithful in your lives, you are the more like to be faithful to the death; "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee in the hour of temptation." (*Rev.* iii. 10.)

(3.) What you are in the ordinary and smaller crosses, that come daily upon you. Though many of our crosses are but light, and below the spirit of a Christian to take notice of, yet may we observe at what a loss we often are under them. Every little wind raiseth a storm: every little cross puts us out of course. What breaches are often made upon our consciences! What interruptions of duties! To what distance are we put from CHRIST, and our holy communion with him! And all merely for a thing of nought! We cannot bear unkindness from a friend, nor an injury from an enemy, the provocation of an evil tongue, a scoff, or a slander, but presently our spirits are in an uproar, and there are such tumults raised up within us, that for the time we forget we are Christians: duty and comforts, CHRIST and conscience, souls and the matters of eternity, are laid aside, and turned out of doors; and all this sometimes for such trivial things, that

when we come to ourselves we are quite ashamed. Now if every small party which the adversary sends out against us puts us to the rout, how shall we stand when he comes upon us with his full body? If we are overcome of the footmen, how shall we contend with the horsemen? If we cannot bear an unkindness, or a scoff, or a slander, what would become of us, should we be brought to resist unto blood?—Beloved, it is of greater import to Christians than they are aware of, both to observe themselves daily, and their carriages in these lower things, and to inure themselves to patience and meekness under them. Though it be no great virtue to be patient, where there is no great provocation, yet there may be great benefit by it. If we could shame ourselves out of this folly and childishness of spirit, whereby we are so apt to be moved with every toy; if we could reason and pray ourselves into such a fixed calm and quietness of spirit, that we could keep our way with the neglect of such disturbances, our lives would be both more comfortable at present, and we should be in the better preparation for any harder things that might come upon us. If we know how to be Christians among briars and thorns, we shall be the better able to continue such among spears and arrows.

(4.) Examine what you are under the temptation of prosperity. The world is a Christian's enemy; it expresseth its enmity in its temptations; and the end of all its temptations is to draw us off from God. Its temptations are of two sorts, either of prosperity or affliction, and both drive at the same end, though in a different way. The more dangerous of these two sorts of temptations are held to be temptations of prosperity; the world flatters more from CHRIST than ever it can fright from him. Now, Beloved, if you have stood your ground against the storms of these first mentioned temptations, you may with more confidence encounter the latter: he that hath been holy in prosperity, will be holy in afflictions; he that knoweth how to abound, will the better know how to want; he that hath kept close to God, and kept on his way, against all the flatteries of the

world, is not likely to be sunk under its frowns and threatenings: the God that hath preserved you from being lulled asleep by the warm sun, will also preserve you from being withered by the scorching sun.

Secondly, Mortify the flesh with the lusts of it. It is corruption that makes affliction tedious and dangerous. Unmortified lusts will both make affliction to be sharper, and also to be the greater temptation.

(1.) They will make afflictions to be the sharper and more painful. What makes contempt and disgrace so tedious? Why, it is the pride of our hearts. What makes poverty and want so grievous? The covetousness and greediness of our hearts. The appetite will be quarrelling that it wants its dainties; carnal fears, and worldly desires, come in with their vexations. Kill these lusts, and you give present ease to your hearts; it is sin that makes sufferings smart.

(2.) They make afflictions to be greater temptations. The more affliction pains us, the more strongly do they persuade us to take heed of that which brings them on us, and comply with any thing that will give us ease or relief. Every pang that comes upon us for godliness' sake, they will be crying out, "Away with it, away with it: this praying, and precise walking, hath undone me: this conscience hath lost me my estate, my liberty, my friends; bereft me of all my comforts, my credit, my quiet; and created all these fears, and sorrows, and vexations: will remitting my zeal make me whole, and save me all this harm and loss? why then shall I thus torment myself, when I have a way open to escape all?"—Brethren, would you be secure from such temptations, get your lusts slain, which put an edge upon them: cut off all provision from the flesh; allow not yourselves liberty to live a sensual life, while you have opportunity; bring yourselves under a voluntary restraint; deny yourselves before God comes to deny you; put the bridle upon your appetites before God comes and puts bonds upon them and you; starve

your lusts to death, that the LORD come not and storm them ; let tribulations find their hard work done to their hand, and they will lie more easy. Get your hearts so low, that the contempt of men cannot bring you lower. Give all you have to GOD, your ease, and your pleasures, and your liberty, and your estates ; give away all you have from lust to GOD, and then you will not be disquieted at whatsoever messengers he sends to fetch it away. When this is done, what hurt can tribulation do you ? You will then dare to follow the LORD against all the world. You will not fear loss ; you have nothing to lose, all is given away already : you will not fear a prison ; your hearts have carried you thither already : you will not fear disgrace or contempt ; your hearts have brought you so low, that the pride of them cannot lay you lower.

Thirdly, Be circumspect. See that you do not unnecessarily pull sufferings on yourselves ; and especially look to it, that you suffer not as evil doers. If your sin lead you into sufferings, GOD may leave you in them ; and then what is like to become of you ? There is a suffering for our faults ; and there is a suffering for our righteousness without our fault ; and there is a suffering for our righteousness through our fault. We sometimes run ourselves upon trouble when we need not ; as when by our imprudent ordering of ourselves in some duties, we lay ourselves open to those sufferings which a little prudence might have prevented. We must be wise as well as innocent. Christians should never ordinarily expose themselves to suffering, till GOD hath so hedged up all lawful ways of escape, that they must suffer or sin. Be so wary in your course, that you may not faultily suffer for the good that is in you ; but especially see to it, that you suffer not as evil doers, and for the evil that is found in you. To this end be careful,

(1.) That you speak not, nor do, any thing in the matters of religion rashly. Christians should be considerate and well advised in what they speak or do, and should mark

and weigh their words and actions themselves, which they know will be so narrowly observed and weighed by others.

(2.) That you speak not, nor do, nor refuse to do, any thing obstinately, or out of animosity. Let your ways be guided, not by passion, or a spirit of contradiction, but by conscience and meekness of spirit : be not self-willed : let nothing be done through strife. Be steadfast, but not stubborn ; be faithful, but not wilful ; be zealous, but not contentious.

(3.) That you neither do nor suffer any thing out of pride or vain glory : as we are to do nothing, so we should suffer nothing, out of strife or vain glory. Take heed that an affection of applause be not that which leads you on. Your pride may cost you much, but will never bear your charge : may bring you into trouble, but will never bear you out.

(4.) That you do nothing ignorantly. Be clear, especially, in those things which may be costly. Study your duty thoroughly : labour to see your way plain ; to see the pillar of fire and of the cloud going before you : give heed to the word of the Scriptures, which is a “ light to our feet, and a lantern to our steps.” Where you are clear, you will be bold ; but take heed of suffering upon a mistake. Your troubles will be likely to open your eyes, and thereby destroy your supports and comforts.

(5.) Do not suffer unpeaceably. Suffer not for unpeaceableness, and suffer not unpeaceably : be patient, and you will be peaceable.

Thus, Brethren, see that you be well advised, meek, humble, peaceable, and clear in the grounds of your sufferings : And then,

Fourthly, Be resolute. Be sure you stand on good ground, and then resolve to stand your ground against all the world. Follow God, and fear not men. Art thou godly ? Repent not, whatsoever thy religion cost thee. Let sinners repent, but let not saints repent : let

saints repent of their faults, but not of their faith ; of their iniquities, but not of their righteousness.

Look to yourselves you that stand, and take heed lest you fall : You that stand in integrity, take heed lest you fall away by your repentance.

Repent not of your righteousness, lest you afterwards repent of your repentance. Repent not of your righteousness, no, nor of your zeal, or your forwardness, or activity, in the holy ways of the LORD. Your zeal, it may be, hath put you in the front of the battle, where you receive the first and hottest charge of your enemies, when others have kept them more close, and been more remiss, or hid in the crowd : yet wish not yourselves a step farther back, or a cubit lower in your stature in the grace of GOD : wish not any thing undone, concerning which GOD will say, “ Well done.”

Repent not, and remit not of your zeal ; think not of a retreat. Do not, as the King of Israel, hide yourselves under a disguise. Feign not yourselves to be worse, in hope to escape the better : the arrow may find you, though you be hid from the eye. Let not any of you that have been confessors of CHRIST, return to be only his midnight disciples.

Forsake not the LORD till you can find a better captain ; that is, till GOD cease to be GOD, till the LORD say, Shift for thyself, “ there is no help for thee in thy GOD.” Retreat not from holiness, till you are sure you can retreat without loss. Be not false to religion, till you find it false to you. If ever religion cost you more than it is worth, throw it off as you will.

Christians, know when you are well, and hold your own : be not betrayed out of your refuge. If you must suffer, suffer for that which will pay you your charges ; suffer not for your sins, but for your religion ; suffer not for the shadow or name, but for the substance of religion. If any thing in the world will save you harmless in your sufferings, and quit the cost of all your expenses, it is substantial

goodness. If there be any shame that hath glory in it, it is the reproach of **CHRIST**, and the shame which you suffer for his name. If there be any cross that is a crown, it is the cross of **CHRIST**: if there be any cross that can be undoubtedly called the cross of **CHRIST**, it is the holy cross, or sufferings for holiness. Those martyrs that suffered the Popish tyranny, for witnessing against the abomination of the mass, with the rest of their idolatries and superstitions, had not a more clear and glorious cause and crown than thou hast, who sufferest for the power of holiness.

If there be any thing in the world which **GOD** owns, and wherein his honour is nearly concerned, it is holiness. If ever the Devil showed himself a Devil, it is in his opposing holiness: if ever he showed himself a Devil in print, it is in those books of reproaches and scoffs that are written against purity: if ever he showed himself a Devil in grain, it is when his hands have been dyed with the blood of saints.

Brethren, if you will resist the Devil, if you will be on the **LORD**'s side, be on the side of holiness. If you will stand to any thing, if you will not be shaken reeds, tossed up and down with every wind, if you will fix any where, —fix here, upon substantial godliness.

This is the great controversy betwixt heaven and hell, betwixt the Seed of the Woman and the Serpent, about the substance and power of godliness. Some quarrels and contests there are about the shadows and appendants of religion, matters merely circumstantial: but whatever noise there be made about such things as these, the bottom of the controversy lies deeper: it is about the body of religion, and not the skirts of its garment: it is he that will live godly in **CHRIST JESUS**, that doth and must suffer persecution.

Art thou godly? Fix here, and let this be thy resolution:—I live in a world of quarrels and contentions, contentions about shadows and circumstances; but for such things as these, though I will not defile myself by comply-

ing in my practice with what conscience complies not, yet I list not to be contentious, nor to perplex myself or others about them. But by the grace of God, whilst God is a God of holiness,—whilst holiness is the image of God,—whilst these words of the Lord, “Be ye holy,” “Follow holiness,” “Live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world,”—whilst these, and the like words of the Lord stand unrepealed, by the grace of God I will be a friend, an advocate, a practitioner of holiness, to the end of my days. This is my resolution, and in this resolution I commit myself to God, and so come on me what will.

A

REBUKE TO BACKSLIDERS,

AND A

SPUR FOR LOITERERS :

BY

THE REV. RICHARD ALLEIN.

VOL. XVIII.

Q

REBUKE TO BACKSLIDERS,

&c.

 ISAIAH lxiv. 6, 7

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.

IN the former of these verses, we find the Church making a double complaint,—of their sin, and of their affliction.

1. Of their sin. There all misery begins, and there all our complaints should begin. We are all, not an unclean thing, but as an unclean thing, as the worst of things, as any thing that is most filthy and unclean. There is the uncleanness of a toad, a venomous deadly uncleanness: our uncleanness is as bad as that; our hearts are, as it is said the evil tongue is, full of deadly poison. There is the uncleanness of a leper, a contagious uncleanness: such is ours; we have infected one another; we are all infected. There is the uncleanness of a serpent, a stinging uncleanness: such is ours; our sin hath bitten us, and stung us to the heart. There is the uncleanness of a dunghill, a stinking uncleanness: such is our uncleanness; our iniquities have made us to stink before the LORD. Find out any thing that is worse, or more unclean than all these; whatever it be, our sin hath made us as bad as the worst; nothing can be said too bad of sin, and none speak worse of it than

the people of God. Those that are all sin, carry it as if there were no hurt in it : we cannot make sinners sensible • what evil there is in sin ; but saints feel it.

2. Of their afflictions : “ We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have driven us away ; ” driven us into banishment, driven us into captivity, carried us away from our country, and from the city of our God, yea, and from the favour and presence of our God, into a strange land, into our enemy’s hands. We all do fade and wither like a leaf ; our sin hath brought us down into a decaying, withering state ; and our iniquities, like the wind, have driven us away. Withered, faded leaves, you see how they are blown down and carried away with every wind, when those that are green and flourishing keep their stand against wind and weather.

In verse 7, we have an additional complaint : yet “ there is none that calleth upon thy name.” Our punishment found us in a polluted and wasted state, and behold we grow worse and worse ; we wither daily. Prayer fails ; than which, there is not a more deadly symptom of a decayed soul. Prayer is the very breath of a Christian : when men’s breath fails, they die and turn to their earth.

“ There is none that calleth upon thy name.” Calling upon the name of God, is sometimes taken for prayer : “ Call upon me in the day of trouble ; ” (*Ps. l.*) that is, pray unto God. Sometimes calling upon the name of God is put, as prayer is, for all religion. (*Gen. iv. 26.*) In the text, you may take the words as comprehending both senses, prayer in special, and all religion in general ; and indeed, that is no praying that leads not on to all religion.

As these words, “ There is none that calleth upon thy name,” note the neglect of prayer, in that sense I have spoken of them elsewhere. My present purpose is to speak of them in the latter sense, as the neglect of calling upon the name of God denotes the neglect of all religion.

I observe here, that consumption upon professors is the highway to confusion and destruction. If we wither and

fade as a leaf, our iniquities as the wind will scatter and drive us away. If grey hairs be upon us, death and destruction are near.

Beloved, you can hardly be ignorant what complaints there are, even from all quarters of our land; what a decay there is every where upon professors of religion: and whether this consuming disease hath not seized upon many of us here, I leave it to your own consciences to judge. The consideration hereof hath engaged me to enlarge on this subject, beyond what I at first intended; and I beseech you every one, to set your hearts upon the words I shall speak, so as both to make a narrow inquiry each one into himself, whether you be grown into such a decay, and to endeavour a speedy recovery. I remember how it hath been with this congregation. What a glorious and hopeful morning appeared! What a spring-tide there was of converts flowing in to the LORD, and what a day of warm and holy affections among us! Whether our day hath continued its brightness, according to the spring of our morning, let us sadly consider before the LORD.

I shall first open this disease to you, and then show you, that where it proves general, there this consumption is a forerunner of confusion and destruction.

I. For the first, know, there is a two-fold decay or consumption in religion:—1. Partial. 2. Total.

1. Partial or gradual; a declining or consuming in some degree; a growing into a worse case than sometimes we were; a growing weak, and cold, and remiss in our religion; an abating or losing of our former care, strength, life, affection, and vigour of soul: and this may be incident to real Christians, who are subject to decay, (1.) Inwardly, (2.) Outwardly.

(1.) Inwardly, in the state of their souls: they may be backsliders in heart. (*Prov.* xiv. 14.) Particularly, First, there may be a shaking of their faith: the foundations may be shaken; there may be a failing of the firmness of their belief of the truth of the Gospel, and some declinings towards infidelity. Secondly, There may be a wearing out

of their sense of the importance of those truths which they do believe. Though the Gospel may still be received as unquestionable truth, though the evidence of its truth may be so clear as that they cannot question it, yet the weight of it may not be so much felt upon their hearts; the truths believed may not be so much minded, nor so thoroughly considered, as to leave any powerful impressions of them upon their hearts. Those great things, the worth and value of a soul, the dreadfulfulness of losing it, the excellency and necessity of CHRIST, the eternal weight of glory, the everlasting vengeance of GOD against the unrighteousness of men, though believed, yet may not be so duly minded: they may be so much out of their eye, and out of their thoughts, that the sense of them may seem to be lost. Friends, it is not the being of these great things, no, nor the bare believing that they are, but the having that height and depth, that life and death in our eye, that will work upon the heart. Thirdly, there may be a decay, as of faith so of all other inward graces. Hence it is that the Apostle prays so earnestly for them, "The GOD of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory, by JESUS CHRIST, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1 *Pet.* v. 10.) We are every one of us weak souls, and shall certainly fall, and come to nothing, if the GOD of grace do not strengthen and settle us. And therefore we have need to pray, and that earnestly, every one of us, "The GOD of all grace strengthen me; the GOD of all grace stablish and settle this my weak and unstable soul." Hence also Christians are exhorted, "Hold fast what thou hast;" (*Rev.* iii. 11;) keep that good thing which is committed unto thee. And so we had need every one of us to call upon ourselves; O my soul, hold fast CHRIST, hold fast holiness: Hast thou gotten any sound religion in thine heart? Hold it fast that thou lose it not." The rust will eat out our gold, the moth will fret out our garments, the thief will steal away our treasure, if it be not watchfully maintained.

(2.) There may be outward decays, decays in point of practice. There may be a neglect of the duties of prayer,

hearing, meditation, and examination. "Thou hast not called upon me, O JACOB ! thou hast been weary of me, O Israel !" (*Isa.* xliii. 22.) I can seldom hear of thee ; thou hast been a praying people, a sacrificing people ; but thou art grown weary of my worship. How seldom art thou found in thy closet, or in the congregation ? Thou art become a stranger to those duties which once were thy delight : or if duties be performed, yet the heart and the life of them is lost ; dead praying, cold praying must suffice them. O how do our spirits often freeze in those devotions which should kindle a fire in us ! Some men's duties serve for nothing, but to keep them asleep, and to keep conscience quiet, which, if there should be a total neglect, would fly in their faces and awaken them. There may be a decay in their conversations ; they may decline from a spiritual to a carnal, from a heavenly to an earthly life. Those that had once escaped the pollutions of the world, may be again entangled. (*2 Pet.* ii. 20.) There may be a declining from a savoury and useful, to an unsavoury and unprofitable life ; the salt of the earth may have lost its savour ; those very tongues, whose speech was used to be with grace, seasoned with salt, ministering grace to the hearers, are either dumb and speak nothing, or else employed to speak vanity. How long may we be in some professors' company ere we hear a savoury word from their lips ; or if any good does come, how heartless and lifeless is it ! In what they do, they move like puppets ; in what they speak, they speak, like parrots, that which they have learned by rote, but without any true sense of what themselves do speak.

Such declining souls are a miserable spectacle, the reproach of the Gospel, and the disgrace of religion. They are more like carcases or ghosts, than living souls ; idol Christians, that have eyes, and see not ; ears, and hear not ; tongues, and speak not ; feet, and walk not : if they have any thing of religion in them, nobody in the world is like to have the benefit of it, nor themselves the comfort of it. They may be stark dead, and dried up at the

roots, they may be mere chaff and stubble, for ought any body else, or themselves either, can say to the contrary. These dry trees, however they stand in the vineyard, may stand there for fuel for the fire, and not for fruit. Such miserable spectacles are withering professors; and yet what multitudes of them are there to be seen!

Friends, let us consider ourselves. If we have not denied the faith, if we believe God and the Gospel, and the great and wonderful things of the world to come; yet are there not many of us that have lost the sense of the weight and importance of those great things? Have not the lean and ill-favoured kine eaten up the fat ones? Have not the thin and the blighted ears smitten and destroyed the full ones? Hath not this earth, and the businesses thereof, choked up some of our hearts, and left little sense of God or immortality upon us? Particularly consider,

1. Do we live as people that verily believe we must shortly be in another world, where we must eternally reap the fruit of our doings here? Do we live as men that have that eternity in our eye, and the lively sense upon our hearts of that death and judgment, that glorious reward and eternal punishment, which are before us? Surely we do not! O how few of us thus live! Do we pray and hear, and buy, and sell, and converse in the world, as men that look for so great a change? Was there never a time when we felt more of eternal things upon our hearts than now? Was there never a time when we were more serious, and in earnest, in our religion? When we were more deeply engaged in laying up treasure in heaven, and making an escape from the wrath to come? Was there never a time, when such serious questions as these,—“What must I do to be saved? What if I should be damned, shut out of the everlasting kingdom, and shut up in everlasting darkness? What may I do to please God, and to walk worthy of his holy calling, and to make sure of a part in CHRIST?”—was there never a time when such questions were more ordinarily put than now, and when we were more solicitous about having them answered?

2. How is it with our particular graces, and inward vital operations? Do we retain our first faith? Do we hold out in our first love? Where are those warm and lively affections that discovered themselves? Time was, when some of us were all in a flame of love, and life, and zeal for **GOD**; when we had melting affections, mourning and tender hearts; when our spirits were hotly working within us about **GOD**, and the things of **GOD**; when we could not live nor be at ease, but under the influences of heaven, and the illapses of the Divine Love; when communion with **GOD**, and intercourses with heaven, were sweeter to us than our appointed food. Was there never such a time with some of you? And is it so now? Or are not these matters sadly changed, with you, from what they once were? May you not say with the Psalmist, "I remember the days of old, and am troubled?" (*Ps.* lxxvii. 3, 5.) I remember my pleasant things, my pleasant hours, the sweet and delightful intercourses I had with the **LORD**; I remember these things, and am troubled to see what a fall there is from what I once enjoyed?

3. And how is it in your duties and in your lives? Is the old spirit of prayer with you? Hath the **LORD** such constant, such affectionate visits from you as he was wont to have? Are your sighs, are your tears, are your souls poured out in praying, and in striving and wrestling with the **LORD**, as formerly they have been? And is there such a vein of serious religion running through your whole lives? Do you eat and drink, work together, and converse together, in the spirituality and singleness of heart, which sometimes some of you did? Is it your care to exhort and quicken, and build up, and provoke one another to love and to good works? Is there that watchfulness over your goings, that diligence in instructing and governing your families, and in educating them in the fear, and knowledge, and worship of **GOD**, as hath been? Or must you not take up a lamentation over yourselves, and fall to judging and condemning yourselves, some of you at least, upon most of these accounts, and cry out, O my soul, how art thou fallen?

Friends, let not these words pass as words of course : let them enter into your hearts, and stick in your sides, and be a wound in your very souls.

Let me put the question yet again to you all : How is it with you ? How is it with your souls ? Do ye hold your own, or do ye lose ? Prospering or perishing ? Flourishing or withering ? Upon the wing, mounting upwards as the eagles, or in the dust with the worms ? Pray consider, who among you can say,—I thank the LORD, my soul is upon the increasing hand : Through the grace of God, my soul is maintained in life, and I am reaching forward, and getting a little ground heavenward daily : Through rich mercy, the grace that hath been bestowed on me, hath not been bestowed in vain : I cannot deny the goodness of God to me : I have good hopes that it is better with me than it has been :—Some of you, I hope, can speak thus, to the praise of the glory of the grace of God in you : but I fear too many of you must give a sadder answer :—How is it with my soul ? The LORD be merciful to me, it is but in a poor case : LORD, I pine ; LORD, I am fallen, I am fallen ! With my outward man it is well enough : but, oh, mine inner man withers, my religion vanisheth, my poor soul languisheth, my grace perisheth ; much of it is lost, and that which remains is dying daily : I took it all along to be well enough ; but now I observe, Oh, it is a miserable decay that is grown upon me.

Beloved, I have told you already what complaints there are of decays from other places ; and now consider, is not the moth come into this congregation ? Is not the worm eating at our root also ? Compare the present spirit with what was in our first meetings : surely there appeared another manner of warm, lively, serious, affectionate spirit than is to be found in us at this day. What, have so many years' preaching and praying, and sacraments, had no better success than this ? Have you been hearing all this while to your loss, and praying to your loss, and had sacraments to your loss ? O that every one of you now would lay his hand on his own heart, and faithfully inquire, LORD,

is it I? LORD, am not I one of them? Do not think now to excuse the matter; do not tell me,—We hope it is not so bad; your fear of us is more than you have ground for. O that I were mistaken in you, and that it were better with you than according to my jealousies! But I must tell you, if you have not the same fears, some of you, concerning yourselves, I doubt it is because you have no more observed yourselves, nor so thoroughly considered yourselves how it is with you.

Well, let these hints humble us, and lay us low before the LORD. Let these words startle us, and awaken us, and prepare us towards our recovery. Thus much touching the partial decay.

2. There is a total decay, or apostasy from the faith. But of this I shall not enlarge here.

II. Consumption in religion, where it proves epidemical, is the forerunner of destruction. Whatever influence the profane may have upon the removal of the Gospel, that which most certainly provokes the LORD to cast off, is the decay and apostasy of professors. “Remember whence thou art fallen, and do thy first works, or I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place.” (*Rev. ii. 5.*)

To set home what hath been spoken:—You backsliders, consider this one word:—This consumption, if it be not speedily recovered, is likely to be mortal. You that are sick of the withering disease, look to it in time, lest your sickness be unto death, even death eternal. You that are backsliders, think not that your souls are safe, by what you have already attained; but know, that your drawing back may be unto perdition. You that have begun to fall, tremble to think where this fall may end. You may sink and sink, and fall lower and lower, and never stop till you come to the bottom of hell!

Now I come to the chief doctrines intended:—*It is the duty of the people of God, to stir up themselves in the matters of religion. And Stirring religion will take hold*

of God. I shall handle them both together, and show,—
I. What it is to stir up ourselves in the matters of religion.
II. What need we have to stir up ourselves. **III.** What it
 is to take hold of **GOD**. **IV.** That stirring religion will take
 hold of **GOD**. **V.** How we should stir up ourselves.

I. What it is to stir up ourselves in the matters of religion. There is, 1. A stirring up ourselves to religion, or to get religion where there is none: 2. A stirring up ourselves in religion, where there is something of it already.

1. There is a stirring up ourselves to religion. There are some that are utter strangers to religion, that have nothing of **GOD** or religion in them. "Some men have not the knowledge of **GOD**: I speak this to your shame." (1 *Cor.* xv. 34.) It is a shameful thing that there should be any in the churches of **CHRIST**, without the knowledge of **GOD**: ignorant persons are the shame of congregations: we may be all ashamed that there are so many among us that have no knowledge. Thou that art an ignorant man, the people of **GOD** may be all ashamed of thee. It is a shame to our congregation that there is such a blind soul amongst us.

Some that have a little knowledge of **GOD**, have yet no sense of **GOD** or religion upon them; "men of a reprobate mind," (*Rom.* i. 28,) sottish senseless souls, void of judgment, and void of sense. Nothing of **GOD** will affect them, or work upon them: instruct them while we will, preach to them while we will, nothing will move them at all; we cannot beat any sense of **GOD**, of their souls, or of religion, into them.

Others, if they have some knowledge and some little sense of **GOD** and religion, yet have no true religion in them. They know something of **GOD**, something of religion, yet still are without **CHRIST**, and without **GOD** in the world. They have something of it in their head, but nothing of it in their hearts, or their lives. Or if there be some little touches of it upon them, yet there is no sound or saving work upon them: they think themselves to be

something, think themselves to be Christians, but deceive their own selves. Some have no religion, and care not whether they have or no ; do not at all concern themselves about it ; it does not enter into their thoughts to mind any such thing ; they are well content to continue as they are.

How is it with you, Sinners, that are here before the LORD ? Some of you have not the knowledge of GOD, are without CHRIST, are yet in your sins ; and, oh, how little sense have you of your need of CHRIST ! How little desire have you to be changed ! Do not you feel that your hearts are at rest ? Are there any hearty wishes,—O that the LORD would change my heart ! O that I might be brought to fear GOD in truth ! No, you mind not, nor take any care about any such thing ; as little of GOD or religion as you have, you care not whether ever you have more.

Now such as these, that have no religion in them, their work is, to stir up themselves to religion, and this stands in these things : (1.) In thinking how it is with them, and what they have to do : (2.) In crying out for help : (3.) In taking the alarm from the watchmen : (4.) In forcing themselves back from their sins, and onwards to CHRIST.

(1.) In thinking how it is with them. This is the first step they are to make towards religion, to bethink themselves how it is with them. “ If they shall bethink themselves ; ” (1 *Kings* viii. 47 ;) that is the first work, and then, (ver. 48,) “ If they shall return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul.” Sinners must think, 1. What they are at present. 2. What they are to do for the future.—1. Sinners must think what they are, and what a state they are in:—What have I of the fear or knowledge of GOD in me ? Am I a Christian ? Have I any thing of saving religion in me ? Am not I a blind, senseless, careless soul, that have not so much as made any profession of religion ? I live without prayer, never pray in secret, have no prayer in my family, nor any such thing as minding GOD or my soul. I eat and drink, I lie down and rise up, I work,

and trade, and follow my business for this world : but as for the other world, I confess I take little care about it ; or if I have minded it more than some others, and have made a little profession of Christianity, yet am I not still without CHRIST ? Short of saving religion ? What can I think of myself and my present condition ? Surely, as little as I have been troubled at it, it is a woeful case I am in. What, yet in my sins, and under the power of the Devil, and in a state of damnation ? I had need look about me, before I be past remedy !—2. They must think what they mean to do:—What, shall I continue in this case till I die ? Or shall I try to escape ?—Sinners, it is a fearful state you are in : you are miserable souls if you have no religion in you. But pray think what do you mean to do for the future ? Will you go on as you are ? Will you take no more care of your souls than you have done ? Nor look after any more religion than you have ? Put your hearts to it, and think what you mean to do. What, will you not be persuaded to thus much ? Will you not so much as think with yourselves,—What shall I henceforth do ? Shall I venture it as I am, or shall I try to escape out of this fearful condition ?—If you were come to this, to bethink yourselves what a wretched case your souls are in, and how you may escape ; you had then got the first step in this work of stirring up yourselves to religion.

(2.) In crying out for help. When the soul once begins to cry for help and recovery, then it begins to stir to some purpose. And this kind of stirring stands, First, In crying out upon themselves to seek out for help. The sinner, being brought to a sense of his misery and danger, cries out to himself, as those lepers one to another, “ Why sit we here till we die ? ” (2 *Kings* vii. 3 ;) or as the mariners to JONAH, “ Arise, sleeper, call upon thy God, carest thou not that thou perish ? ” (*Jonah* i. 6.) Thou art ready to perish, O my soul ; if I continue as I am, I die ; if I can get no more of God, or of religion and Christianity, than I have hitherto, I must burn for ever and ever. Awake,

my sleepy heart; to thy knees, to thy prayers, call upon thy God, that thou perish not! Secondly, In crying out to the LORD, to give help in this time of need. Crying out to the LORD for help is an argument that conscience is stirring, and it is the stirring of the heart. There may be a cold saying, God help me, when the heart is still asleep; but when it cries out, then it is a sign that it is awakened. When the Psalmist had a sight what a wicked world this world was become, and was affected with the sight, then he cried out, "Help, LORD, for the godly man ceaseth;" (*Ps.* xii.) the wicked walk on every side, and the vilest men are exalted. And as the sight of such a wicked world was to him, so should the sight of a wicked heart be to a sinner. He should exclaim, "O my wicked heart, what a world of wickedness is it! How full of deadly poison! Grace is not in it; the good that was in it is ceased and perished, and every vile thing is to be found in it. Envy, and malice, and lust, and falsehood, and folly, and enmity against God; what a fountain of wickedness is within me! O what a heart have I! Help, LORD, save me from this wicked heart; save me, or I perish."

Sinners, how is it that you yet stir not? Open your eyes, and look a little inward; is there not sin within you, with all its curses and plagues? Is not that heart of thine a very den of dragons and serpents? Every lust of thine heart is a serpent, a dragon, and an adder, which, as tame as they lie, so that thou feelest them not, are devouring thy soul. Every sinner among you has such a heart; a heart full of serpents, a heart full of dragons. O how is it that there is not a cry among you, "LORD, help; save, LORD, save me from this miserable heart!"

(3.) In taking the alarm from the watchmen. God hath sent forth his Ministers to alarm this sinful world. "Blow ye the trumpet in Sion, sound an alarm in my holy mountain." (*Joel* ii. 1.) "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet; tell my people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins." (*Isa.* lviii. 1.) What is the use of an alarm? Why, to awaken, and to declare to people that there is an enemy near, and that they are in

danger of perishing, if they suddenly look not to themselves. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire;" (*Matt.* iii. 10;)—that was JOHN the Baptist's alarm. "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now He commandeth all men every where to repent; for he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness; (*Acts* xvii. 30, 31;)—that was PAUL's alarm. The like alarms are the Ministers of CHRIST sounding in sinners' ears every day: "Repent, or ye shall perish:" "believe, or ye shall be damned:" "be converted, or ye shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven." The majority of sinners, for all this, stir not, but sleep on. Hath not the alarm been sounded amongst you? And yet how few of you are there, whose souls are not fast asleep to this day? We have cried unto you, as DELILAH to SAMSON, "Arise SAMSON, the Philistines are upon thee,"—arise, sinner, the Devil is upon thee, sin lies at the door, the Judge stands at the door, death is ready to strike thee through, hell opens her mouth for thee," and behold nothing will do to awaken you. We give the alarm, but you will not take it.—This is the stirring of the soul, of which I am preaching, when sinners are alarmed, and take the alarm; when the word preached sets conscience a preaching and thundering upon sinners; when conscience calls to them, "Turn to the LORD; break off thy sins by repentance; thou art a dead man if thou go on; there is but a step betwixt thee and everlasting death; thou wilt be in, thou wilt be swallowed up of the eternal furnace, if thou suddenly repent not." When men's hearts thus take the alarm, and, their consciences being startled, fall to work with them, and provoke them to look after God and his grace; this is another thing wherein this stirring stands.

(4.) In forcing themselves back from their sins, and onwards towards CHRIST. Though, in a proper sense, there can be no co-action of the will, yet such violence may be used towards ourselves, as in our common speech we call forcing ourselves. So SAUL said, "I forced myself, and offered a burnt-offering." (1 *Sam.* xiii. 12.)

Sinners should lay violent hands as it were upon their hearts, pulling them back from sin, and putting them on towards CHRIST. Sinners must do by their hearts, as the Angels did by LOT. (*Gen. xix. 16.*) When they were hastening him out of Sodom, they laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife and children, as they lingered, and even pulled them out from that burning. Do your hearts hang back from CHRIST; do they still hang after your sinful ways? Lay hold on them, and pull them along. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." (*Matt. xi. 12.*) This speaks of a kind of violence to be used with GOD; but the first violence men are to use, is upon themselves: they must first lay violent hands on their own hearts, to bring them towards GOD; and this must be done by pressing the things which they hear upon their hearts. Fear will be to sinners, as the avenger of blood to the man-slayer; it will hunt them on their way, and hasten them to CHRIST. They will say, "O my soul, art thou not afraid to continue as thou art, to continue a drunkard, to continue a worldling, or a liar, or a sleeper in thy course of sin? Art thou not afraid of the Devil, art thou not afraid of death, doth not hell make thee tremble? Art thou afraid what may come upon thee, and yet wilt thou not stir?" If goodness, and kindness, and mercy, will not allure you, let your misery, and the danger you are in, scare you: *dwell* on the consideration of that wrath and fiery indignation which you are falling into: a sudden, transient thought, will do little; you must think, and think again, and again, "What if these dreadful things should come upon me? What if I should fall into that fire? O how should I endure? How should I do to dwell in everlasting burnings?" Think over such thoughts, sinners, and give not over till you feel these very thoughts begin to scald and scorch you; and then force and fright yourselves. Are turning from sin, and the pains of seeking after CHRIST, more painful than everlasting death? What, wilt thou do nothing to save thy life? Suppose thy house were on fire, how busy wouldst thou be to quench it! How passion-

ately wouldst thou cry out, Fire, Fire! How wouldst thou run, and call, and send for all the help thou couldst get! And is not thy soul more to thee than thy house? Will not the wrath of God burn more fiercely than the fire of thine house? Nay further, suppose thine house were on fire, and thou wert locked in, and couldst not get out, but wert like to burn with thy goods; O how wouldst thou cry out to thy friends without, "O pity, pity me! help me out, pull down the windows, break open the door, and help me out! I burn! I burn, break open the door, that I may get out!"

2. There is a stirring up ourselves in religion, or to the vigorous exercise of it. Some have much religion in them; they abound in the grace of God, and in the work of grace. Others have something, but it is but little of religion that they have; they are but of "little faith," (*Matt. vi. 30*), and have but little strength. Some good thing is found in them towards the God of Israel, but yet it is only "a day of small things." We read of "babes in CHRIST:" (*1 Pet. ii. 2*:) and of these, some are but new-born babes, beginners in religion; others, who though for their time they might have been grown up to be men, to be strong in the Lord, yet after a long profession of Christianity, they have not had one cubit added to their stature; though they have been Christians of long standing, yet their souls are as ZACCHEUS's body, of little stature. Of those that have but little grace, some never had more; it hath been ever low with them from the beginning: others once had more grace, but they are fallen; like NAOMI, time was when they went out full, but they are returned empty. They have wasted their talents, and are consumed in their strength; their light burns dim; their flaming lamp is become but like smoking flax; they have little more than the snuff of religion left.

Now there is need of stirring up themselves in religion in all these. Those that have the most of grace, had need bestir themselves to get more: those that live most in the diligent exercise of grace, that live most spiritually, and most circumspectly, had need be giving more diligence daily: you

that are highest, you are not yet come to your full growth; there is still more to be got, and more to be done for God and your souls.

But this duty of stirring up ourselves in religion most especially concerns those that have but little religion; both such as never had but little, and such as once had more, and now are fallen to decay.

To show you what this stirring up ourselves means, understand, (1.) By what acts you must stir up yourselves. (2.) To what pitch of religion you should strive to attain.

(1.) The acts by which you must stir up yourselves are the following:—

First, “Consider your ways.” Set your heart upon your ways; see how it is with you; take diligent notice how it goes with your souls. Friends, it may be there is the same reason for you, upon a spiritual account, as there was for the Jews, upon an outward account, to consider. Why should they consider their ways? Why, “Because ye have sown much, and reap but little; ye eat, but have not enough; ye drink, but are not filled; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; ye earn wages to put into a bag with holes.” (*Haggai* i. 6.) Upon a spiritual account much the same may be said concerning you. God hath been sowing much, but hath reaped but little; he hath been feeding and clothing you, but you are empty and naked still; all that you have received from God, doth not keep you warm; whatever treasures have been poured out upon you, your hearts have been as bags with holes; the treasure of the LORD runs out as fast as it is poured in. O how have the instructions of God, his counsels, and his comforts, slid away! How quickly are they let slip! What becomes of all your sermons, and sabbaths, and sacraments? We have brought you many a rich treasure; we have been pouring into those hearts of yours such living food, such rich wine and oil, as might have made you fat and flourishing; but it still finds a hole in your hearts, at which it runs out as fast as it is poured in.

Are your souls built up in faith and holiness? GOD hath been building among you, but how doth the building go up? In some of you, hath it not ever been at a stand? If the foundation hath been laid, yet scarcely a stone has been laid upon it; and as to others, in whom the building seemed to be raised to some considerable height, is it not broken down? Deal plainly in this matter: do your souls prosper, or hath it not been some time better with you than it is now?

If you have had a long time to increase, since you first believed; and more than that, if heretofore it hath been better with you than it is now; then bethink yourselves,—is not this an evil case you are in? Is this a case to be rested in? If you had a child that should be no more able to speak, or go, or feed itself, and had no more understanding at ten or twenty years old, than when it was but an infant, would not such a child be a cross to you, and an affliction? O how is it that you are not an affliction to yourselves, that, after so long a time as you have had for growing, you should yet in matters spiritual not be past babes or children? • It was an affliction to the Apostle, that he must still speak to the Corinthians as to babes; “I could not speak unto you as to spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in CHRIST.” (1 Cor. iii. 1.) Is it not an affliction to you to continue thus carnal?—But what do *you* think of your state, who have grown up, from being carnal, to be spiritual, and are fallen from spiritual to carnal again? Have you once had the day-light shining in your hearts, and are you now returned to the twilight again? Did you once live a life of faith, and a life of love; and had you your conversation in heaven? Were you once of a tender heart, of a circumspect and savoury life? Did you live in the SPIRIT, and walk in the SPIRIT; and are you now fallen back to a more eager minding of earthly things, having lost that sense, that lively sense, you had of things spiritual and eternal? Then acknowledge, “My soul is in an evil case; it is time for me to bestir myself.”

Secondly, Cry out upon yourselves to reach forward to

what you have not attained, and to recover what you have lost. As the Psalmist said, "Awake up my glory;" (*Ps.* lvii. 8;) so say you,—Awake up my grace, awake up my love, awake up my fear, awake up my conscience: What, shall I always loiter, as I have done hitherto? Shall I never be more busy for God and my soul? O it is more than enough, it is too long that I have lived under the profession of Christianity, and yet my soul is brought to no better pass: Much I have lost already; and shall I go on losing and losing, till I have lost all?—Friends, remember whence you have fallen, and repent; recover your first love, and do your first works: and when you will take the cry from our mouths, and cry thus upon yourselves, then there is hope ye will recover.

Thirdly, Cry unto the Lord for his help. If Ministers cannot stir you, if conscience cannot stir you, if ye cannot awaken yourselves, nor recover yourselves, yet the Lord God can do it; the Helper of Israel can help you. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." Before you be too far gone, before your case grow desperate, whilst the Lord is at hand, calling upon you, now seek to him. Go to the Physician of souls, he can cure every disease, and thy disease, the consumption of the heart. This no other Physician can cure, but the Physician of souls: whatever other Physician thou goest to, with the neglect of him, thou wilt find them all Physicians of no value: whatever other course thou takest, with the neglect of seeking God, he will say to thee, as in *Jcr.* xlv. 11, "In vain shalt thou use many medicines, for thou shalt not be cured." Go to God for thy languishing soul; cry unto him; lift up thine heart with thy might; pour forth thy very soul in prayers;—"Lord, I am fallen; Lord, I pine; my soul languisheth, my faith faileth, my beauty is withered, my spirit is wasted, my flesh and my heart faileth; but thou art the strength of mine heart, and my hope is in thee; help, Lord, or I die, I die for ever."

Fourthly, Put a force upon yourselves to do your duty.

It is not lying down in the ditch, and crying, "God, help me;" you must do your best to help yourselves, or God will not help you. All the means under heaven will never do, unless you set your hearts on work for yourselves. You that are not for pains-taking, there you must lie, and pine, and perish; there is no help for you. "Why liest thou thus upon thy face? Get thee up," says God to JOSHUA. (*Josh. vii. 10.*) Why stand you bewailing and bemoaning yourselves? Up, and be doing! Thou hast sinned thyself into this case, thou hast idled thyself into this loss, and nothing will help thee out without thine own diligence and labour. Fall to thy duty, and follow it closely, or thou wilt die the death. In this manner force yourselves on; and let not your hearts be quiet within you, till you have engaged in a more active and laborious life.—Thus I have showed you by what acts you are to stir up yourselves. But,

(2.) To what pitch in religion should we stir up ourselves?

To this I shall answer,

First, In general. It is not enough to amend a little, or to get into a something better case than you are in; but you must come on fully after the LORD. Some of you may think, if this word should have some effect upon you, and make you a little better, it has done its work upon you. No, no! You are far short of what you should be; and think not that this word hath done its work, though it should make you a little better than you are, unless it also bring you effectually to what you should be. There is no mark short of Perfection, that should terminate your aims: but I shall give you three marks on this side the goal, the better to direct your eye towards it.

1. You should come to such a pitch as is proportionable to your time. You are some of you of long standing, and yet are come to little. O labour that your growth may be according to the time you have!

2. Those that are fallen should strive to get up to that pitch, to which once they had attained. This is the first

thing we should have in our eye, to recover our first love, and to do our first works. That which hath been attained, may be attained ; and you must strive after it. You that are fallen, remember how it hath been with you in your best time ; remember the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals, when your hearts were tender, when your love was keen, when your affections were quick and lively, when the word and ordinances of God were sweet and powerful, when you came from far, and would go through thick and thin to hear the word of the Lord, and when your meditations, and communications by the way, as you went and returned, were so pleasant to you : such a time there has been with you ; are you fallen from this ? O let it be with you as in the days of old !

3. Every one should strive to get up to the highest pitch of religion that is attainable. You should level at Perfection of Holiness, and no mark short of perfection should bound your aims. “ Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor. vii. 1.) Because we cannot obtain all that is desirable, but there will be still, while we live, something that is before, of which we are yet short ; therefore our motion must be constantly progressive. We must still be going forward, and reaching out to that which is before, that our works may be more, and our hearts may be better at last than at first ; “ The path of the just ” must “ shine more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov. iv. 18.) Grace must be growing up, till it be swallowed up of glory.

Secondly, I shall answer the question *Particularly*.

1. Stir up yourselves to a hunger and thirst after more religion.—Hunger and thirst are eager appetites, that put us to pain, and are impatient till satisfied. Covet earnestly the best gifts. The covetous are greedy souls ; but there are degrees of greediness : the hearts of some covetous ones are more sharp set upon the world, than others that are greedy enough. Covet earnestly ; let your hearts be as

hungry and thirsty after grace; as the most greedy men on earth after the world.—Hunger and thirst are imperious appetites, that will command men upon any thing, any labour, any difficulties, in order to obtain satisfaction: hunger will break through stone walls: a thirsty man will not sit still, and only say, I thirst, give me to drink; but will arise and go about, to seek where he may be satisfied; he will go out to the springs and the brooks, and the wells of salvation, where he may draw and drink of the water of life; he will refuse no pains, no hazard, in order to satisfy his desire. Then you are hungry after religion, then your souls are athirst for God, when you are so sharp set, that you must have it, and will stick at no labour for the obtaining of what you want.

It is one misery of decayed souls, that they have lost their appetites: some consumptive bodies will be hungry, and eat till they die; but consumptive souls neither hunger nor thirst. It is an ill sign that thou art dangerously gone in a consumption, who hast lost thine appetite after God. It is one of the death-tokens mentioned by SOLOMON, that “desire shall fail.” (*Eccl. xii. 5.*) The life of grace is fallen much to decay in thee; but doth thy desire after grace fail too? Hast thou lost thine hunger and thirst after righteousness? Doth thy soul cease to pant after the water-brooks? Canst thou not say, “I am athirst for God, even for the living God?” Then, that soul of thine is nigh unto death. O friends, how many such dying souls are there among us! Grace hath failed, and desire hath failed in too many. Do not deceive yourselves with saying, I desire to be a more holy and heavenly Christian; do not say nor think that you desire what you do not. If you truly desire grace, and an improvement herein, then this is the one thing that you desire; grace, and nothing but grace, holiness, and nothing but holiness, will satisfy. And if you can say, This one thing I desire; then you will also say, This one thing I seek. It is not a dull, and idle, and ineffectual wish, that can be

accounted a sincere desire ; but such a keen and eager appetite after **GOD**, as will not suffer you to rest. Those that are heartily hungry cannot sleep for hunger ; their hunger will keep them waking. What, are you such drowsy, sleepy souls ? Can you take any rest in that poor and empty state in which you are ? Surely, whatever you think, you have little thirst for **GOD** ; it would keep you waking, if you had ; your souls would have no ease ; you could not be in quiet till you obtained.

Do not some of you find a great indifferency in this matter ? Are you not but little concerned about the reviving of your souls ? If you have any good desires at all, are they not weak, dull, and cold, such as do not at all stir or disquiet your spirits, but that you can go on well enough, for all this, in your worldly designs and ways ? When do ye think to recover into a better case ? Are ye ever likely to come to any thing in religion ? May you not fear that you are soon likely to come to just nothing, if ye hold on a while longer at this pass ? If I could but preach you into hungry ones, and thirsty ones ; if I might send you away with an appetite ; then there would be hope that the **LORD** would fill you with his good things.

This is the first thing to which I would persuade you, to stir up your appetites : get a hunger and thirst after the **LORD**, and the power of religion : let your loss make you hungry after a recovery ; let your want make you hungry after a supply ; let the worth and excellency of religion, and the power of holiness, make you to hunger after it, as sometimes the very sight of meat does in bodily cases. If we could but kindle in you affectionate desires, ardent, impatient, painful, working desires, this would be a good step towards that pitch of religion which I am proposing to you. Let your souls thus cry out after the living **GOD**, “ **LORD**, help me, help me up to thee, help me on after thee, revive thy work in me ! I have gone astray like a lost sheep ; seek the soul of thy servant, that I may never again forget thy commandments.”

2. Stir up yourselves to a savour and relish of religion. Some are so sick and weak that they cannot eat nor drink what is good for them ; others can eat and drink, but cannot relish what they take ; they have lost their taste. When both their appetite and their taste are restored, when they can eat that which is good, and can relish what they eat, that is a farther token of recovery. It may be your necessities put you upon something of religion, and hold you to praying and to hearing : but yet, whatever you receive, whatever you do, you can find no savour in it ; you have no taste of the sweetness of religion ; it hath no relish in it. You can pray, but you have no lively affections in prayer ; you can hear, and yet find no sweetness in what you hear ; you can speak about the things of God, but are not at all affected with what you speak ; it comes coldly and dryly out, and hath no gratefulness in it, neither to yourselves nor to those that hear you : surely this is a sign that you have but little religion in you, if any at all. When what we receive of religion, goes deep ; when that which we bring forth of religion, comes deep, comes from the heart ; it will be more affectionate : and the affection which we express will be an evidence that we taste the good things we speak of. When you experimentally taste the sweetness of religion, and are thereby deeply affected with it, then you are likely to hold to it, and prosper in it. This taste of religion is not to be got, but by inward and experimental acquaintance with it : whilst it dwells but in the head, and upon the tongue, it will be but a dry and insipid thing. You must go deeper in religion, if ever you will taste the sweetness of it. Get your hearts so leavened and seasoned with it, and so drink in the spirit of religion, that you may be changed into its own image and nature ; and then you will find how pleasant it will be to you.

3. Stir up yourselves to solidity in religion. Particularly, (1.) To solid, substantial religion. (2.) To be more solid in religion.

(1.) Get up to solid and substantial religion. What the substance of religion is, I shall shortly hint to you from two Scriptures: "We are the circumcision, which worship GOD in the SPIRIT, and rejoice in CHRIST JESUS, and have no confidence in the flesh:" (*Phil.* iii. 3:) "Teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." (*Tit.* ii. 12.) Out of these two Scriptures you may learn wherein the substance of religion lies, *viz.*

[1.] In worshipping GOD in the spirit; or in spirit and in truth. This notes, 1. The inward worshipping of GOD; our loving, fearing, praising the LORD: 2. Our being real and spiritual in the outward worship of GOD; our hearing with the understanding; our praying with our spirits; our taking heed to it, that our acts of worship be not barely bodily exercise, but the work of our souls,—not shadows and images of worship, but the very thing they pretend to be.

[2.] In rejoicing in CHRIST JESUS: That is, as our Mediator, by whom, as we exhibit all our worship, so we expect its acceptance, and all the comforts and fruits of it.

[3.] In shunning iniquity; denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts. This notes, 1. The abstaining from the practice of sin; that we do no iniquity: 2. The mortification of the desires of sin, the killing of sin within, the crucifying of the flesh, with the affections and desires.

[4.] In the practice of holiness and righteousness; our living soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world.

These are the substance of religion; he that worships GOD in spirit and in truth, that thus rejoices in CHRIST JESUS, that denies ungodliness and worldly lusts, and lives soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, he is a substantial Christian.

Friends, look to this; what you want of the delights of religion, let it be made up in diligence. If you feel not so

much of the warm workings of love to CHRIST, yet keep close to CHRIST, and the obedience of his will. If whilst you are less lively, you be yet more tender, and heedful, and watchful in your goings; if whilst you cannot so passionately mourn for sin, yet you carefully shun and beware of sin; if though you be not raised to such raptures of joy, as some others, yet you are more mortified to sin and the world; if you be dead with CHRIST, dead to the fashions, and desires, and pleasures, and riches of this world;—you have got the substance of Christianity in you. In these, and such like instances, stands the solidity of Christianity; wherein he that groweth most is the best Christian. It is true, where we are both substantial Christians, and also warm and lively Christians, that is incomparably best. Follow after both; but especially take heed that whatever be wanting in affection, be made up in solidity. Get to be more understanding and experienced Christians; get to be more conscientious, tender, strict, and close followers of CHRIST, in all the known and weighty matters of the law. Be mortified to sin, be crucified to the world, be bent upon doing all the good you can in your generations;—this is what I mean by solid religion. Be as affectionate as you can, be as zealous and lively as possible; but be sure that there be substance under all your shows. Be diligent Christians, be doing Christians, be mortified Christians: it is this which will hold out; and therefore let this be what you are reaching unto, to keep yourselves from iniquity, to keep yourselves close to duty, and hence to be built up through faith unto salvation.

(2.) Get to be more solid in religion; to be more deeply rooted in the faith, and more firmly resolved for the obedience of the Gospel. In this establishment, or rootedness, (besides a firm belief of the Gospel,) these four things are included. [1.] A firm resolution for CHRIST. [2.] A firm trust in CHRIST. [3.] A firm adherence to CHRIST. [4.] A confirmed habit of holiness.

[1.] A firm resolution for CHRIST, and the obedience of the Gospel. Firmness may be taken in opposition to

Fickleness. Some are light and unstable souls; they are off and on; sometimes resolved, and then unresolved: sometimes their faces, and sometimes their backs, are upon CHRIST. Firmness is also opposed to Feebleness, or weakness of resolution. Some Christians are more strongly resolved; others not so strongly. Though they do not go back, yet are they under doubts and fears that they shall; and, it may be, sometimes (in the day of temptation) they put it to the question, Shall I go on, or shall I desist? Now this firm resolution, to which I would press you, is opposed to feebleness and weakness.

[2.] A settled trust in CHRIST. Now because this will both prove us to be established Christians, and also mightily conduce to our farther establishment, I shall here a little enlarge, by showing, What this trust is; and That it both proves us established Christians, and makes for our further improvement.

This trust in CHRIST is expressed in Scripture by committing ourselves to him. "I know whom I have believed, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him," (2 Tim. i. 12,) or trusted him with.—This Committing ourselves to CHRIST, notes, *first*, our laying up ourselves, and all our hopes and concerns, with him, so as to venture ourselves in his custody; to venture ourselves upon his faithfulness; to cast all our burdens upon him; to "cast all our care upon him;" to leave it upon CHRIST to take care of us; to put it into his hands, to look to it that nothing be lost, and to help us on through our whole course to the end. Only here, lest we be damnably mistaken, know, that it must be only for his own part that CHRIST must be trusted,—for that which he hath undertaken to do for us, and to keep for us. It must likewise be only in his own way; in a way of obedience to CHRIST, in a way of well doing: as in respect to GOD, so in respect to CHRIST also, we must "commit the keeping of ourselves to him in well-doing." There are some things that we are to do, which CHRIST never undertook to do for us; we are to believe, we are

to repent; this we must do ourselves: CHRIST hath never undertaken to believe or repent for us; we must believe ourselves, and repent ourselves. There are some things that CHRIST never undertook alone to keep for us; we must keep faith and a good conscience ourselves. CHRIST hath undertaken to help us to repent, to help us to keep a good conscience; but never undertook to save us the labour of repenting, or that of keeping faith and a good conscience ourselves. And as to that which CHRIST hath undertaken to keep for us,—to keep our souls, to keep us unto salvation, to preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom,—he will do it only in his own way: whilst we are walking in CHRIST's way, in the way of faith and obedience to his will, in the way of holiness and righteousness, we may boldly venture ourselves in his keeping.—Drunkards, how dare you go on in your drunkenness? Ye vain, and carnal, and careless ones, how dare you go on in this carnal life? “How can ye escape the damnation of hell?” “O, I trust in CHRIST for salvation.” And what follows? Why, thereupon, how boldly thou ventur^{est} on in rebellion against him! Thou wouldst not dare to be such a drunken beast, thou wouldst not dare to go on in thy lying, or covetousness, but for thy trust in CHRIST to save thee at last. But, man, wilt thou trust CHRIST for that which he never undertook? Wilt thou trust CHRIST for that which he never promised? Did CHRIST ever promise to save thy soul, whether thou wert a believer or no believer; whether thou comest in and be converted, or standest out and runnest on in thy wicked ways? Turn, sinners, turn to CHRIST; repent, and be converted from your sins; or never comfort yourselves in your trust in CHRIST.—But Committing to CHRIST notes, *secondly*, our leaning upon CHRIST, and dependance on him, in a quiet and confident expectation of his helping us, and holding us on our way, according to his promise. Christians lean on CHRIST; and this gives them courage for their work, and ease and rest in their spirits: their trust in CHRIST notes such a repose of their souls,

such a dependance on his sufficiency, and on his fidelity, as quiets, and sustains, and stays their hearts in hope, and peace, and comfort ; and so it is expressed in *Isa.* l. 10 : “ Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay himself upon his GOD.”

Thus I have showed you the second particular, wherein solidity in religion stands, *viz.* a firm trust in CHRIST. It implies,

[3.] Adherence to CHRIST, or cleaving to the LORD. The two main roots whereby a Christian is grounded in CHRIST, are the two fore-mentioned, Resolution and Trust ; the immediate fruit of this rooting, is cleaving fast unto him ; and the closer we cleave unto him, the more we are confirmed and established. The root of a tree is that by which it cleaves unto the ground ; and by how much the deeper it spreads itself, and works itself into the earth, by so much the faster hold it takes. And there is a mutual hold taken ; the root takes hold of the ground, and thereby the ground holds fast the root. A rooted Christian hath hold of CHRIST, and CHRIST hath taken hold of him. Both these are mentioned together : “ If I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of CHRIST JESUS.” (*Phil.* iii. 12.)

Cleaving notes Firmness, and Closeness.

First, Be firm ; stick close to CHRIST. Let it be with you as with the Apostle, Let “ nothing separate you from the love of GOD, which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD.” (*Rom.* viii. 38, 39.) Be sure of this, that he will be with you whilst you are with him : “ Draw nigh unto GOD, and he will draw nigh unto you :” stick fast unto CHRIST, and he will stick fast unto you : CHRIST is a sure friend, and he will stick by all his friends that are faithful to him.

Consider, 1. You are in a wilderness, and must expect troubles to come upon you. Your faithfulness to CHRIST may cost you dear ; you may be forsaken of your friends ; you may fall into the hands of your enemies : yet if ye will be faithful to him, though all men forsake you, though evil men run upon you, CHRIST will stick to

you. So he did to PAUL. "No man stood with me, but all men forsook me; notwithstanding the LORD stood by me, and strengthened me; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." (2 *Tim.* iv. 16, 17.) Here we have, first, The hard case in which he was, and in which Christians must look to be. He was in the hand of enemies, of great men, who were examining him, and before whom he was to answer for his life: Christians may be brought before rulers, and there tried for their lives, and judged for malefactors. He was forsaken by his friends; he had many friends before, but when it came to the pinch, they all shrunk back, and left him alone: Count upon this hard lot, and think it not strange if it come to be your lot. It is not so much to suffer in company, as when any particular person is singled out, as a deer from the herd, and chased alone: the hunters are upon him, and the herd will not shelter him, but shift away from him. That is what you may look for, to be persecuted by enemies, and not to be owned by your friends. But he describes, secondly, His comfort in this his hard lot. Though all men forsook him, yet CHRIST stuck by him. "The LORD stood by me, and strengthened me." This may be your case, and let this be your comfort: though none in the world should own you, yet stick by CHRIST, and he will stick by you in all your tribulations.

2. Again, you must die: sickness may arrest you, and cast you upon the bed of languishing; and death may stand at your bed's-foot, and stare you in the face; and the grave will open its mouth to swallow you up: stick fast to CHRIST, and look to find him by your bed-side to comfort you. O how will it be with you in that hour? "I feel my diseases and languishing; my flesh wasteth, my bones ache, my strength is lost, my heart faints, mine eyes fail, my breath is departing, and all tell me that death is at the door, ready to turn me into rottenness: but O! where is my GOD? Now for a sight of CHRIST!" Those that are gone back from CHRIST, they may look, and look, and cry, Where is the LORD? Where is the SAVIOUR?

But poor wretches, there is no **CHRIST** to be seen. Death comes, and the Devil comes, and sin comes, and puts a sting into death, and the poor sinner is left to grapple with death alone; its gripes, its pangs, its terrors, are upon him, but no Redeemer to be had. Whatever comes upon thee, this shall not; thou that holdest thee by him, shalt see **JESUS** standing by thee; there he will not fail to be, ready to help thee in thy conflict with thy last enemy.

3. Yet again, after death thou must be brought to judgment, where thou wilt meet with a righteous Judge, a malicious accuser, who will have many things to lay to thy charge. But thy Judge hath said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (*Rev. ii. 10.*) Fear not how thy matters shall go in the judgment: I will be there; I will secure thee from coming into condemnation. "I will give thee a crown of life." This will be the portion of those that stick fast to **CHRIST**: he will certainly stick to them; stick to them in all the troubles of their lives, stick to them in death, and stand by them in the eternal judgment. O Christians, stick fast: hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown: hold fast your holy profession: hold on your confidence and your holy conversation; and thenceforth expect that **JESUS** will give you a crown of life.

Secondly. Stick close to **CHRIST**, or else you will never be likely to stick fast. By how much the closer our adherence to **CHRIST** is, by so much the firmer is our standing, and the less danger of falling off. The root of a tree, if it be loosened from the earth, is more easily plucked up: it may be, some small strings keep their hold, which maintain it in life; but if the main root be loosened, it is the more in danger of being blown down. The cleaving of the soul to **CHRIST**, is set forth by the cleaving together of husband and wife; "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife." (*Eph. v. 31.*) The word in the original signifies, shall be glued to his wife. What is glued together, if it shrinks or gapes, loses its hold. Take heed of warping and shrinking from

CHRIST ; the glue will give off if you do, and when you have once lost your hold, you know not whither you may be blown. O take heed of growing to a distance, of wandering from CHRIST : keep you near him, if you would stand firm.

[4.] Solidity in Religion implies a confirmed habit of religion ; a holy disposition and constitution of soul ; the Divine Nature, whereof Christians are made partakers. (2 *Pet.* i. 4.) It is a holy spring or fountain within us, which will flow in religious actions ; and the more maturity it is ripened into, the more freely will it flow forth. A heart that is holily disposed, and hath strong and fixed inclinations heavenward, will find religion sweet and easy to it : there will be less need of force and constraint : that fear which is so necessary to drive on a servile spirit, will be of less use, according to the measures we have attained of this free spirit : such Christians have that within them that will save them much of their labour, which would be otherwise needful. Our work will be easy, and we shall go on more prosperously ; we shall both more abound in the work of the LORD, and go on more evenly and steadily in our course.

O Christians, let this be in your eye ; let this be what you aim at, and labour for, to habituate yourselves to holiness, to get such a settled holy disposition, such a readiness of mind, that your hearts may flow towards God, that your inward stream may run heaven-ward, that you may feel a freedom and enlargement of heart towards godliness of life.

When you have got the habit of religion, by reason of use, and having your senses exercised to godliness, then what Christians are you likely to be ! What thriving Christians ! What flourishing Christians ! What fruitful Christians ! Then your hearts will be streaming hearts, and flaming hearts ; and will mount up and ascend in those flames of holy love and zeal, above this earth and flesh, to live in the light, and love, and joy of the LORD.

What, doth not all this stir you ? Is there such a

blessed state to be had, and is it not worthy your striving after? Come, let us bestir ourselves; let us follow after; let us be reaching on with our might to this holy prize. Be not discouraged at difficulty; be doing, and the LORD will help you. We are workers together with GOD for you; be you workers together with us for yourselves: set your hearts to it; and the LORD will work in you, both to will and to obtain of his good pleasure.

And thus I have showed you what Solidity in Religion is,—to be well grounded and settled in the substantial of Christianity. He that worshippeth GOD in the Spirit, rejoiceth in CHRIST JESUS, and, heedfully shunning all ungodliness and worldly lusts, hath given himself to a righteous, sober, and godly life; he that, being deeply resolved for CHRIST, and firmly trusting in CHRIST, doth with full purpose of heart cleave unto him, sticking fast to the LORD, and keeping close by him, till by reason of use, holiness is habitual to him;—this is a pattern that I would you would have much before your eyes.

4. Stir up yourselves to Fruitfulness in religion. There is a readiness to good works, standing in the propension or bent of the soul upon holy action; and there is a fruitfulness in good works, or the soul's putting it forth in holy action.

All religion stands in action, either the inward action of the soul, or the outward action of the life. It is the doing Christian that is the excellent Christian; the fruitful field which hath a blessing in it. There is amongst our corn some that looks fresh and strong, and grows up ranker and taller than the rest, but proves to have but little in the ear, it is grown up all in stalk. That is fruitfulness where there is good fruit brought forth, and much fruit: that ground which either bringeth forth no good fruit, or but very little, we count barren ground. Will you call that a fruitful field, which brings forth but here and there an ear;—a few handful of ears to whole sheaves of tares and weeds? Will you call that a fruitful tree which hath but two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the

outmost fruitful branches? It is precious fruit, and plenty of it, that will give us the account of fruitful Christians.

Fruitfulness in religion, is the honour of religion: "Herein is my FATHER glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit. (*John* xv. 8.) And what glorifies GOD, GOD will make glorious before the world. Barrenness is a reproach; it is a matter of sorrow and shame: those Christians who stand as dry trees, should not stand with dry eyes. We read that barren wombs have been the matter of great affliction: How did SARAH and RACHAEL grieve that they had no children? And HANNAH, when she prayed for a child, having yet none, said, "I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken." (*1 Sam.* i. 15.) But however it be upon the account of barren wombs, sure a barren soul should be a mourning soul. Indeed too commonly barren souls are as barren of sighs and tears, as they are of good fruit. You that are empty vines, fruitless fig-trees, how seldom is it that you are upon your knees, bewailing your barrenness?

The sin of barrenness is a provoking sin. There are three such words spoken against barrenness in religion, as are terrible. One word you have in the Parable against the barren fig-tree: "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" (*Luke* xiii. 7.) Another word against another barren fig-tree: "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever." (*Matt.* xxi. 19.) A third word is against the barren ground: "The earth that drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from GOD; but that which beareth briars and thorns is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." (*Heb.* vi. 7, 8.) Methinks these words should make some of your souls tremble. What art thou? A barren soul? A fruitless fig-tree? O how canst thou contain thyself from fear? Is not thine heart terrified within thee, at the hearing of this curse? What if this word should have been spoken to thee,—Cut this man down, cut this woman down; why

cumber they the ground? Or what if he should say to thee, "Never fruit grow on thee for ever;"—never a word of grace prosper with thee; live and die a barren soul;—would it not make thine heart shake? And are not these words spoken to thee? I hope not as an *irreversible* curse. I hope that word is not gone forth against any of you, Cut this man down; never fruit grow on him *for ever*; let him wither, and perish, and die, and burn for his barrenness." Yet if it be not so spoken, as an irreversible curse, it is spoken as a terrible warning: thus much of it doth belong particularly to thee, thou art "*nigh unto cursing*;" and if thou look not better to it, thine end will be to be burned.

Barrenness is a reproach; barrenness is a high provocation: and fruitfulness is an honour, and receiveth blessing from God. Fruitfulness doth both speak Christians grown up to good maturity, and will advance them yet higher and higher. He that lays out most in his life, is still laying up more in his heart: we gather by spending: the more we do, the more we have; no such flourishing Christians as the diligent, doing Christians. There is nothing got by holding in the grace we have; and there is nothing lost by laying it out. A good man brings forth out of his treasure; and the more is brought forth, the more it increaseth within. If ever you would make an increase in inward grace, let it put forth itself in vigorous exercise: there is no such way to grow rich in faith, as by being rich in good works: faith without works dies.

This now is a farther perfection of religion, that I would press you to be reaching after,—Fruitfulness in Religion, or holy action. Be not hearers (or talkers) but doers of the word. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, not being a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (*James i. 25.*) Be doers of the word; and abound in the work of the Lord. That charge, which the Apostle gives with a particular respect to works of charity, receive with respect to every good work: "Do good: be rich in good

works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come." (1 *Tim.* vi. 18.)

O my Brethren, set your hearts upon it, to do all the honour you can to the name and Gospel of God, before the world. Wipe off that reproach of barrenness, by showing yourselves examples of fruitfulness. The world say in your reproach, and in the reproach of your God also, What is this Christianity that is so much boasted of, but a mere shadow? What are these professors, whatever they talk; what do they more than others? Show them what you do, which they will never do.

If you ask me what you should do; it is too long to tell you the particulars, but take the Apostle's answer, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," (*Phil.* iv. 8,)—these things do, and the God of peace shall be with you.

I cannot enlarge further upon the several ways wherein your religious activity should be exercised; you must take these hints:—In general, labour to be doing Christians, diligent, busy Christians, ready to every good word, and fruitful in every good work: have an eye upon, and be reaching to, this active life; hide not your talent in a napkin, put not your candle under a bushel, keep not your religion, your knowledge, your graces, your experiences to yourselves. Hath the Lord lighted up a candle in your hearts? "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your FATHER which is in heaven."

5. Stir up yourselves to Evenness both of temper and course. Evenness of temper is an argument of health and strength; they are weak bodies that are apt to change with every change of air or weather, and they are but weak souls whom every change of their circumstances puts out of frame.

This even frame must show itself in an evenness of course. It is a holy *life* that Christians must live, and

not satisfy themselves with sometimes a holy duty : there must be not only some drops of religion sprinkled here and there upon their paths, but their life must be a holy stream, and the stream must be constantly running towards God and heaven. They must run a race thitherward. He that runs a race, keeps on his way step by step in a continued motion : we must neither turn aside, nor go uncertainly on, sometimes running, and sometimes creeping or standing still ; we must keep our way and our pace ; we must not go jumping heavenward, doing some parts of our duty, and jumping over others ; we must take all along in order as we go.

Christians, it may be that, by the grace already obtained, there is something done in religion at times ; but how many duties do ye let alone ? Sometimes you will pray, and sometimes you will jump over your praying seasons : sometimes you will perform works of piety ; but you will jump over works of righteousness and mercy. Sometimes you will be serious and savoury ; and then you will leap out into lightness and vanity. Sometimes you will take a leap to heaven in your retirements to converse with God ; and then you will leap down again into the mire. Sometimes you will have some holy fits ; and then your proud fits, or froward fits. Sometimes ye run, and then stand still ; diligent for a start, and then idle.

Our *stream*, our *stream* ! O how, and which way, does it run ? Surely you would have gotten much higher, if you had been more constantly rising upwards. But whilst there are such risings and falls, such going on and standing still, or turnings aside ; whilst you are thus working and loitering by turns ;—no wonder it is so low with you as it is.

Know, every one of you, that this in and out course is an argument that yet you have but little ; and it will never come to much, if it do not come to nothing. Now and then a straight step, with so many steps awry ; is this ever likely to bring you to heaven ? You are travelling up the hill, but when will ye get you higher, if as one foot steps forward the other slides back ?

You now see what that pitch of religion is that I am pressing you to, even the highest pitch that is attainable. You see your way before you is an up-hill way : you that are yet but at the foot of the mount, stay not where you are, but get up by the rising ground till you come to the top. Do not stand desponding at the height of the hill, and the steepness of its passage. Do not stand complaining of the difficulty of attaining. Say not within yourselves, "I cannot get on, I cannot get me up to this holy, spiritual, fruitful, steady frame and life : With all my soul I would, but O I cannot ! I stick still below ; I am among the poorest, and weakest, and hindermost of the flock : " do not stand complaining thus ; I often give you warning to take heed of this folly, because I doubt it to be ordinarily a case with very many, who, finding their complaints to give them a little ease for the time, count them to be the cure of their diseases. Complain if ye will, and as much as you see cause ; but let it be in order to the quickening you to diligence, and not either to ease you in your sloth, or to discourage you from your duty.

And thus I have at length dispatched the First General, What it is to stir up ourselves in religion ; having showed both by what Acts, and to what Pitch of religion we should stir up ourselves. I am to show,

II. What Need there is of stirring up ourselves to and in religion. And here I shall not speak to the particular cases of the unconverted, and of weak, or backsliding Christians, distinctly ; but shall speak promiscuously to them as they fall in my way.

Do you ask then what Need there is of stirring up ourselves ? I answer : It will appear there is Need enough, if we consider these two things :—1. Those that fall short of religion, or carefully maintain not that religion they have, will be lost at last. 2. Those that stir not up themselves are never likely to attain religion, or to maintain that little they have.

1. Those that fall short of religion, of true and sound religion, or that carefully maintain not that religion they

have, will be lost at last. Without religion we cannot be saved : without regeneration, which is the beginning of religion,—or without sanctification, which is our progress in religion,—or without perseverance in religion,—we cannot be saved. (*John* iii. 3 ; *Heb.* xii. 14 ; *Rev.* ii. 10.)

(1.) As to sinners that live and die in their sins, there is as much hope of the salvation of the Devil as of them. You that serve the Devil, and continue to live under the power of the Devil, you shall never come to heaven, unless the Devil himself be admitted to meet you there : as you have lived with the Devil here, so he and you must be together in the same place for ever ; and whatever your hopes and talks are of being saved by CHRIST, it cannot be. I must tell you, you that come not to CHRIST, and will be none of his disciples, you shall have no more benefit by the blood of CHRIST than the Devils shall have, and that is none at all. Without sound Christianity you have no part in CHRIST, and without a part in CHRIST you can have no salvation.

(2.) Yea, and those that are come so far on, as to profess Christianity, if they die here, will be also certainly lost. Those that are come out from the drunkards, and adulterers, and scoffers, and total slighsters of CHRIST, and have visibly joined themselves to the disciples of CHRIST, and joined in prayer, and hearing, and sacraments with them ; how much soever they have of external religion, if CHRIST and Christianity be not rooted in their hearts, even these also, after all their hopes and profession, will be lost at last.

(3.) Yea, and those that have sincere religion, if they look not diligently to it, will lose all the religion they have. They will certainly fall and perish, if they neglect the means of their perseverance. And those that are but children in religion, or are fallen into decay, can never be secure, but they also will be lost in the end.

2. Those that stir not up themselves, are never likely to attain to religion, or to prosper in it, or to maintain that little which any of them have.

All this will be made evident,—(1.) From the distance we are at, the most of us, from sound and prosperous religion. (2.) From the difficulty of recovering those that are fallen. (3.) From the difficulty of holding on for those that stand.

(1.) From the great distance we are at, some of us, from sound and prosperous religion. There is as great a distance betwixt unconverted sinners and saints, as betwixt heaven and earth, betwixt life and death. “We know that we are passed from death to life;” (1 *John* iii. 14;) that is, from being sinners to saints: there is as much difference betwixt the state of these, as betwixt the living and the dead.

And betwixt backsliders and the prosperous is as much distance, as betwixt a dying man and a healthful. The distance betwixt backsliders and the prosperous is greater, and more hardly reconciled, than of those that are but children: as you know a man that hath had a good trade and a good stock, but is broken and fallen to decay; there is less hope of his recovering than there is of the rising of a young beginner, how small soever his stock be.

That you may more fully understand how great a distance is betwixt what you are, and what you should be or might have been, I shall advise you to make this threefold comparison.

First, Compare yourselves with some of those that are of your own standing; yea, with some that came in to CHRIST many years since you. O how far are you left behind some of your company! Yea, how much have some younger Christians got the start of you! What fruitful, what lively, what experienced Christians are there, who never had half the time that you have had! Whilst they are become tall as the cedars in Lebanon, do not you continue as poor shrubs that prosper not?

Secondly, Compare yourselves with yourselves; what you are now, with what you were in your former time. Are you as good as ever you were? As holy as ever you were? Or is there not a fall, and a great fall, from what you once had attained to? Is not the sun gone many degrees back with

you? Is not much of your light, and your life, and your heat lost? Where be your eyes, if you do not see what losers you are? Where be your senses, if you do not feel your own decays? Sure it is a sad sign that you have lost all your Christianity, if you have not so much left as to make you sensible how much you have lost. O that I could see you smiting on your thighs as once EPHRAIM did;—or smiting on your breast, as the poor Publican, and saying, “**LORD**, be merciful to me a sinner;”—**LORD**, be merciful to me a backslider; **LORD**, pardon me; **LORD**, receive me; **LORD**, recover me and help me, that I utterly lose not that which I have wrought.

Thirdly, Compare yourselves with that copy which I have set before you, with that pitch of religion which I have pointed out unto you. Are you hungry and thirsty after the highest degree of religion? Have you panting hearts, and longing hearts? Can you say, “My soul is athirst for **GOD**, mine heart crieth out for the living **GOD**? O for more of **GOD**, for more of the holy image of **GOD**, more of the life of **GOD**, more of the power of his grace!” Have you not even lost your appetites; and doth not even desire fail with you? What relish have you of religion in your hearts? Is wisdom entered into your hearts, and is the knowledge of **GOD** pleasant to your souls? Do you taste the sweetness of religion? Can you say with the Psalmist, “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O **LORD**! Sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb; thy testimonies are my delight.” A day in thy courts, an hour in my closet, my retirements with the **LORD**, these are the great pleasures of my life, the very joy of mine heart. Can you say so? Do you find it so? **LORD**, how short most fall here! We have tasted so much of the sweetness of this earth, that we have lost our taste of **GOD**; the world is become too sweet; our gains, and our pleasures, these carnal things, put our mouths out of relish of things spiritual!

I might lead you through all the particulars; by com-

paring yourselves wherewith, you might easily perceive how very great the distance is from that holy, heavenly, tender, fruitful frame which we should be in. And surely, such a great distance from it makes it evident how much need we have to stir up ourselves.

Do not think that a little amendment will serve your turns, or that a little more care and pains will suffice to recover you. Know that you have a great way to go, and if ever you do recover, it must cost you much ; many an importunate prayer, great watchfulness, much labour, yea, many sorrows of heart for your neglects, many a sigh, and many a tear : and therefore much need is there that you awaken your sleepy hearts to it. Fall upon your knees, fall upon your knees ! Bemoan yourselves ; be ashamed of yourselves ; and then stir up yourselves to aim at a recovery.

(2.) From the difficulty of recovering them that are fallen. It is with the consumption of the heart as with the consumption of the body ; there are three degrees of it.

In the *first* degree, it is hard to be discerned, and easily cured. If this disease be but taken in the beginning, a little matter might do the cure ; but in our first declining it is not easy to discern them : consumption comes not as fevers with any violence, but we waste and waste by degrees ; it doth not make men sick at first, but they consume away insensibly. If you would but understand in time, and seek a remedy in time, how much misery might be prevented !

The *second* degree is easy to be discerned, but hard to be cured. The farther it grows upon us, the more plain our case is, but the more difficult is our recovery. There is a consumption of the vitals of religion upon too many ; and some are very far gone : there need not be much pains taken to give you the symptoms by which you may know it ; their backslidings are manifest even to every eye. The paleness of our faces, the shortness of our breath, the wasting of our strength, the inability to labour, and the listlessness thereto, discover how it is with us. O

what weak and listless souls are some of us! Our flesh and our bodies are strong and healthful; but how weak are our hearts, how short-breathed, how quickly tired with every duty? And how pale and wan doth our outward man appear; our very vitals are perished and gone. Such as are so far gone, though their recovery be possible, yet are hard to be recovered.

A *third* degree is plain to be discovered, never to be cured: and then the consumption is ordinarily past cure, when men are past feeling. It is one thing to be without feeling in those that never had any sense of God; and another to be past feeling in those that once had tenderness of heart,—those that have been chilling, and cooling, and hardening so long, till God gives them over to a reprobate mind.

You that are fallen into this disease, consider these things. how difficult your case is, unless it be in the very beginning, and how it will be growing on to be harder and harder, if you prevent it not with speed. Consider this, and then say, if it be not time to look about you, and to go hastily to the physician. Take heed! Will you yet linger on as you have done? Will you be quiet, take your ease, and take no effectual care to recover? Tremble to think how suddenly you may be given up to a total and final apostasy!

But why is the cure so difficult? I answer,

First, Because (as it hath been said) in the beginning it is so hard to be discerned. Who will look after cure, that thinks he ails nothing? This consumption invades by such insensible degrees, that it is not perceived till it will scarcely admit of a cure. This fretteth out the heart as a moth fretteth a garment. When the moth first breeds, there it lies undiscovered, till, by insensible degrees, it eats up the strength of the garment. If the moth seized upon any garment as fire doth, you would shake it off suddenly; but because it consumes by slow degrees, therefore it is let alone till it hath done its work. Friends, is there not a consumption upon you? Is not the moth gotten in? “I

hope not into my soul." Why there is the misery of it ! You will not know that you consume, till ye be utterly consumed.

Secondly, From the indisposition and unwillingness of the heart to seek after a cure. Such indisposition there is to this work, that I am afraid, by all I can say, I shall not be able to prevail with you to make trial what may be done. You acknowledge we have all need enough of this warning ; but when you have heard all, your hearts so hang back from the work, that all that can be said will quickly be forgotten. If you would take the warning, and stir up your hearts, and set to work, there is hope you might be recovered ; but I tell you again, especially those that are far gone, I fear your unwilling hearts will not let you come to any purpose.

Thirdly, From that opposition that is made against our recovery. [1.] There is a stirring Devil that opposeth it. [2.] There are stirring lusts that oppose our recovery.

[1.] There is a stirring Devil that opposes your recovery. The Devil is a Destroyer, and that is his name, (*Rev. ix. 11.*) It is he that hath brought you into this case, that hath destroyed that little grace you had, and is thereby attempting to destroy your souls. The Devil is an Adversary, and a busy adversary, walking up and down, seeking to do you a mischief ; it is he that hath brought you down to this low pass, and he will do all he can to hinder you from ever rising again. The Devil is with you wheresoever you are ; he watches you wherever you go. If you go into your closets to pray, the Devil watches you there, and does what he can to distract and hinder your prayers. When you come to hear, the Devil watches you in the congregation, and strives to catch away every word that might do you good. All these words which I am speaking to you for your recovery, if the Devil can help it, shall none of them stick upon your hearts. Now, having to do with such a busy and stirring Devil, you had need the more to bestir yourselves, that he do not irrecoverably undo you. Resist the Devil : " Be sober, be vigilant." Is he so

watchful to hinder you, and do you mischief? Does he lie at the catch to steal away this awakening word from you? You had need lie at the catch also: catch at every word the **LORD** speaks to you concerning this matter; lay hold upon them, lay them up in your hearts, and never let them slip till they have done the work, and your souls be recovered.

[2.] There are stirring lusts within you that oppose your recovery. Your lusts are your disease, and your disease resists your remedy. There is a body of sin within you; though the power of sin be broken, yet there is much of it still remaining. Though the Egyptians be drowned, or sin as a throne be subdued, yet the Canaanite, or sin as a thorn, is still in the land. Though Christians* have not an enemy to which they are in bondage, yet they have an enemy that is still fighting against their souls: sin hath no longer dominion over them, (*Rom. vi. 14,*) yet it still makes war upon them. This sin is called "a body of sin," (*Rom. vi. 6,*) and of this body there are many members; every lust of our heart is a member of our body of sin. Our evil nature is this body, and there our numerous lusts meet as in their common root, and thence they spring. Now these lusts are they that hinder and spoil us. These are they that have tempted you off from God, and tempted you off from your integrity, and turned you to iniquity, and hitherto hindered your returning. Do not think to lay all the blame upon the Devil, and so to excuse yourselves; no, your own hearts have joined with the Devil; you have been accessory to your own ruin. Some men when they have run themselves out of their estates by riot and drunkenness, will think to lay all the blame upon their evil company: "O this evil company have been my bane." Sure enough they have; and therefore let every wise man be warned, and shun them as the Devil.

* This Paragraph applies to these "Christians," whom the Author, in p. 624, has designated as "*weak*,"—not yet "*sanctified wholly*." (*1 Thess. v. 23.*) EDITOR.

But yet, let not evil company bear all the blame ; it is that evil heart of thine, thine own heart's lust, that betrayeth thee into thy evil company. What could evil company have done, hadst thou not had an evil heart to go after them ? How long might they have enticed thee, and never prevailed, if thou hadst not been drawn aside by thine own heart's lust and enticed ? They are those devils within you, those lusts that war in your members, that have given the Devil those advantages against you. It is men's lusts that bring their souls down, and eat up all their religion : and as I said before of the Devil, so here of lust, that which hath brought them down will hinder their rising.

Do you not find it thus in your experiences ? One lust or other is perpetually rising up to hinder any good that is going in your hearts, and bringing it to nothing. O how many good motions are quenched, good hopes frustrated, good beginnings discouraged ;—how are your duties spoiled, your peace broken, your comforts clouded and lost ;—and all by the malign influences of the body of sin, and the impetuosity of your lusts, its members ! Hence are those outcries that we sometimes hear from the tender-hearted ; “ Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell in Mesech : Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ? ”—Hear, LORD ! cut down, cast out these sons of the bondwoman, that they be no longer a plague or a snare unto me !

And now you see another ground why you have great need to bestir yourselves, because of these stirring lusts that hinder you.—How often must I tell you this ? Whatever faith in CHRIST you have, whatever profession of CHRIST you have made, whatever security you think you have for your salvation, yet if these Jonahs be not cast overboard, you will be drowned in perdition and destruction. Your lusts will never leave enticing and tempting you from one sin to another, from one degree of apostasy to another, till they have damned your souls. If you let them alone, they will become such a rope about your neck as will drag you to the pit.—How near have they brought you to it

already ! Are not some of you even become as dying men ? Have not your souls and your hopes one foot in the grave ? And if you die thus daily, what can you expect but to be buried in the flames ? See what your lusts have already done, and tremble to think what they are still doing. You die outright if you save them alive. And will you not yet stir ? Have they eaten up your hearts, and drunk up your spirits, and left such leanness upon your souls ? Have they withered your branches, and rotted your fruit, and are these worms still gnawing at your root ? How can you but cry out, " LORD, what am I come to ? LORD, whither am I falling ? Save, LORD, or I perish ! Arise, O my soul, cut off the limbs, and smite through the loins of the old man ; nothing but his death can secure my life ! "

Or do the sleepers begin to awake ? O that it might be so ! LORD, awake them !

(3.) From the difficulty of holding on, and getting forward in the way, for those that stand. It is hard to keep our way, and much more to make speed in it ; and so hard, that unless we bestir ourselves to purpose, we shall never come on. The way of religion is an up-hill way. " The way of life is above to the wise, to depart from hell beneath. " The mark we are making toward, stands upon a hill, " the holy hill of Sion : " there the city of God is situate, " Jerusalem which is above ; " our way to it is all rising ground ; and, if we put not ourselves hard to it, we shall never get up.

Sinners are all running downward, and therefore it is that they run so fast. The whole herd of sinners are like that herd of swine of the *Gadarenes*, running headlong down, and never likely to stop till they be choked and drowned in the lake of fire and brimstone.

Christians, you are all bound for heaven ; travellers to the holy hill. Your progress in holiness is your climbing up the hill ; you are getting up the Jacob's ladder which reaches the hill-top. Every holy day you live, every holy duty you perform, every degree of grace that is added to

you, is your getting up so many rounds higher upon that holy ladder : and this is what you have to do, to be climbing higher and higher in the grace of God, and in the works of grace.

And this is the reason of our slow motion ; he that goes up the hill takes the more time, and the shorter steps ; yea, and as one foot goes up, the other slides back.

And hence is it, that there is so much need of the goad and the spur, to prick us on. Down hill there is more need of the bridle. We need not be driven down to the lower valleys which we have left ; we are too apt to be running back : it is to hasten our motion upward, that we so much need the rod and the spur.

And yet we need a bridle too ; *viz.* to restrain our intemperate affections ? How very few self-bridling Christians are among us ! When do we hear such words as, “ I am afraid I am making too much haste to be rich : I am afraid I allow myself too much liberty for the pleasing my flesh ? ” Or if such a word be now and then let fall, yet how little is it hearkened to ? Though we sometimes fear we run too fast this way, yet on we run, and do not lay a due restraint upon ourselves : or if we do a little check our motions earthward, yet do we effectually restrain them ? It is not enough that you say, “ My heart needs a bridle ; ” you must make use of the bridle : when you have stopped your hearts in their carnal course, then you have done something.

When you have considered and tried the difficulty of preventing your motions downwards, and of speeding your way upwards, then you will see farther what Need you have to bestir yourselves.

Lay all together : Is it certain that those that fall short of religion, or fall off from the religion they have, will be lost at last ? Is there such a distance betwixt what we are, and what we should be ? Is it so hard to raise those that are fallen ? Is it so hard to discern the soul-consumption, till it be almost past cure ? Is there such an indisposition consuming souls, and such an opposition made by stirring

lusts, against their obtaining their cure? Is it so hard for those that stand to get on their way? Then certainly every one of us had need to look to ourselves. Thus much for the Second General.—Our next inquiry is,—

III. What it is to take hold of God? In answer to this, I say three things: 1. Our great happiness is in this, that the **LORD** is in us. 2. Our happiness is in this, that the **LORD** is among us. 3. Our taking hold of God is our continuing the presence of God with us, and our preventing his departure.

1. Our great happiness is in this, that the **LORD** is in us. God is then in us, (1.) When the fear of God is within us. (2.) When the face of God is upon us.

(1.) When the fear of God is within us;—when the **SPIRIT** of the **LORD**, the image and holiness of the **LORD**, are within us;—which come all to one. That promise, “I will put my fear into their hearts,” (*Jer.* xxxii. 40,) is the same as those, “I will put my **SPIRIT** within you;” “A new heart will I give you;” (*Jer.* xxxi. and *Ezek.* xxxvi;) or as, “The Kingdom of God is within you:” (*Luke* xvii. 21:)—when God takes up his habitation, and sets up his throne in the hearts of his people; undertakes the government of them by his Word and Spirit; subdues them to himself; reigns in righteousness in their souls; and makes them his willing people:—when the grace of God bears rule in their hearts. It is not God’s being in their mouths, or the grace of God in their lips; but his being in their hearts, his dwelling and living in their hearts, the real and inward sanctification of them by his **HOLY SPIRIT** that dwelleth in them. This is the being of God in his people, and this is the happiness of his people. When God is within us, the Devil is cast out, sin is thrown down, the kingdom of **SATAN** is destroyed. It is people’s misery to have the Devil in them, to have sin bear rule; and therefore it is blessedness to have these tyrants cast out, and the kingdom of God set up.

(2.) When the face of God is upon us; when we live in

his fear, and also in the light of his countenance ; when he shines and smiles upon our hearts ; when he loves his saints, and shows them his love ; when he reveals his good-will to them, and lets them know that they are accepted with him ; when he is their friend, and lets them have the countenance of their friend towards them ; when he is their father, and causes them to feel the bowels, the compassions, and kindnesses of their father, and hereby makes them to joy in his love, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD :—this is blessedness indeed, these are blessed ones, whose GOD is thus the LORD. “Blessed are the people who are in such a case : blessed are the people whose GOD is the LORD.” (*Ps.* cxliv. 15.)—You need not complain whatever you want. If you have no bread in your houses, no money in your purses, no health in your bodies, no rest in your bones, yet have the LORD GOD in your hearts ; it is enough ; you are blessed. Sinners, ye need not boast and lift up your heads so high ! You have money in your purses, you have friends in your houses, you have health in your bodies, you have marrow in your bones ; and yet miserable are you all ! GOD is not in you ; and that, to him that knows what it is, is misery enough to blast all your comforts. The Devil is where GOD is not ; sin bears rule where GOD is not ; and this is the upshot of your boasting, and blessing and comforting of yourselves ! This is all you can say, “Matters of this world go well with me ; I can live a plentiful and merry life ; the sun shines on my tabernacle ; I have the wind on my side ; I am on the warm side of the hedge ; I prosper, I flourish in the earth ; all things go well with me : I have but this one thing to trouble me,—my soul is in the hands of the Devil.” This, if we knew it, is misery enough : and this is happiness enough for the saints, that GOD is in them of a truth..

2. Our happiness is, that the LORD is among us ; that we have the visible tokens of his presence ; that the ark of his presence is among us ; that we have his statutes, his

ordinances, his worship among us; that the doors of his house are open, and the glory of the LORD filleth his house; that the ordinances are among us, and are not as a miscarrying womb or dry breasts, but are fruitful to the propagation of a holy seed, bringing forth abundance of children to the LORD, and nursing up those that are fat and flourishing.

This must needs be a happy time, and all this is the fruit of the presence of the LORD among his people,—when the glory of the LORD fills the house, and the offspring of the LORD are numerous and prosperous; when the golden candlesticks are set up, and the Son of Man walks in the midst of his candlesticks; when there is not only here and there a flourishing believer, but when there are flourishing churches, flourishing companies of believers; when there are not only a throng of people crowding the doors of the LORD's house, but a throng of saints walking in the name of the LORD: "Blessed are the people that are in such a case," by the presence of the LORD among them.

Yea, and every degree towards such a state, is so far a degree of happiness. When the LORD gives his prophets, and teachers, and ordinances, and any success to the propagating of holiness; this is a token and a fruit of the presence of God with them. It is a mercy for people to enjoy their civil advantages, fruitful times and seasons for the good things of the earth, plenty of bread, free and flourishing trades, and freedom from oppression. These are mercies; but these may be where the LORD is not as to his gracious presence: it is encouragement for religion, the plentiful raining down of manna, the bread that comes from heaven, and our thriving by our bread; it is this that evidences the LORD is among us.

3. Our taking hold of God is our continuing this presence of the LORD with us, and preventing his departure. Here I shall show three things. (1.) God may depart from a people with whom he hath been present.

(2.) It is ill with that people from whom **GOD** departeth.

(3.) This is to take hold of **GOD**, to prevent his departure.

(1.) **GOD** may depart from his people with whom he hath been present : and that,

First, From particular Persons ; from whom he may then be said to depart, [1.] When he hides his face from them. [2.] When he suspends the influences of his grace. [3.] When he loosens the reins of government. [4.] When he denies them the benefit of his protection. [5.] When he turns away his heart from them, and rejects them.

[1.] When he hides his face from them, and withdraws the light of his countenance. Thus he withdrew from **DAVID**. (*Ps. xxx. 7.*) **GOD**'s people may forget **GOD**, may grow secure and careless ; and the **LORD** will not countenance the best of them in their sins : if they forget **GOD**, he finds a way to remind them of him, by conveying himself out of their sight : the clouds upon his face, and the darkness upon their own spirits, make them remember the light which they once had.

[2.] When he suspends the influences of his grace, and withholds his **SPIRIT**, from them. This was the case of **DAVID**, when he prayed, "Renew a right spirit within me." (*Ps. li. 10.*) Then those dews and showers of his grace, which are necessary to the holding our souls in a flourishing state, are restrained ; and hereupon the grace we have received, withers and decays.—O friends, is it not winter with many of our souls ? Have not the influences from above evidently failed us ? We have wasted out our summer, and driven the **LORD** to a distance ; and now our good things die away within us : the cold hath withered our fruit, and the sun doth not revive it : the **LORD GOD** is sadly withdrawn and gone far off from our souls. If Christians would be so wise as to keep themselves near to the **LORD**, and so to keep the **LORD** near to them, it would be ever spring and summer with them, and they should know winter no more. O let us hold ourselves under the divine influences ! Take heed

how you put the **LORD** far from you; take heed of wandering from the **LORD**, lest he punish your wanderings from him, by removing himself from you.

[3.] When he loosens the reins of government, and leaves them to themselves and their own foolish hearts; takes off his bridle from them, and lets them run their own course; suffers their lusts to rule them, and lets them alone to walk in their own counsels. Thus he withdrew from Israel, “I gave them up to their own hearts’ lusts.” (*Ps. lxxxi. 12.*) This is a worse case than the former. It goes ill with those souls, where the gracious influences of **God** are suspended: that field or that garden is in poor case that wants the sun and the showers; but when it wants the care or the eye of the husbandman too, what good can be expected from it? When grace is restrained, and sin is not restrained, to what a pass will such souls quickly grow?

God’s government is upheld in men, by the upholding of conscience in its vigilancy, in its tenderness, in its authority. When conscience is tender and watchful, and they hold themselves under its inspection and government, their case so long is hopeful. As long as **God’s** government is kept up, as long as conscience is kept tender and wakeful, though they cannot now see his face, yet they are still diligent in seeking his face; though the **LORD** seems to cast them off, yet they will not cast him off; so long, though their case be bad at present, yet it may be safe at last. But when **God** hides his face, withholds the sensible influences of his grace, and loosens the reins of government, leaves men to themselves, and they follow their own hearts, then whither will they run?

Whatever befall you, pray that **God** will still keep you under government; and look to yourselves that you do not throw off his government. Keep your consciences tender, and hold yourselves under the government of them.

O how many rebukes hath the **LORD** given to backsliders? How many charges to remember and repent?

Do these rebukes stick? Do they work upon you? Have they set you upon repenting or recovering? What have you done, since the LORD hath been particularly dealing with you in this matter? Are there any of you that have done nothing but sleep on and continue as you were? O Sirs, let me tell such of you, that it is to be feared the LORD is departed from you, that he hath loosened the reins of government, and hath left you to yourselves to grow worse and worse, harder and harder, till you be utterly consumed.

[4.] When he denies the benefit of his protection. Here note two things: *First*, The LORD is the protector of his people: *Secondly*, God then departs from them, when he casts them out of his protection.—*First*, The LORD is the protector of his people, the keeper of Israel. “The LORD is thy keeper; the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand; the LORD shall preserve thee from all evil; the LORD shall preserve thy soul.” (*Ps.* cxxi. 5, 7.) He is not only the keeper of their substance, of their flocks, and of their herds, and of their houses; but he preserves the souls of his saints. (*Ps.* xcvi. 10.) It is true, every man is to be his own keeper, the keeper of his own soul; we abuse and forfeit the protection of God, if we grow careless, and neglect the keeping of ourselves. “Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well-doing.” (1 *Pet.* iv. 19.) Dost thou say, “The LORD is the keeper of my soul, and I will leave it to him, and will not trust in myself, in my own keeping?” Thou sayest well that thou wilt not trust thy soul in thy own keeping; but dost thou hereupon neglect the keeping of thy soul? Wilt thou not do what thou canst to keep thyself, but wilt grow careless of thine own heart, and leave the whole care upon him? Thou herein forfeitest God’s protection: the same word that promises, “The LORD shall preserve thy soul,” requires thee to keep thine own soul: “Keep thine heart with diligence.” (*Prov.* iv. 23.) We must be every one of us our own keepers, or God will not; but here is our great security, when we have done all, that it is the LORD that is our keeper.

Secondly, Then **GOD** departs from a people when he casts them out of his protection; when he says concerning any person, as he said concerning his vineyard, "I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste, it shall not be pruned nor digged, but briars and thorns shall come up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." (*Isa.* v. 5, 6.) It is one thing for the Tempter to be suffered to break over the hedge, another to have the hedge removed. **GOD** had his hedge still about Job, though he suffered the Devil to leap over it; and this hedge limited him how far he should go, and no farther: but when the wall is removed, and the hedge broken down, and the enemy is let alone to make what waste he will, then the **LORD** is gone from the vineyard. Look diligently if there be any such among you, about whom the **LORD** hath broken down his hedge, whom he hath given up to the world and the Devil, and in whom these enemies hath eaten up all their good, and made their souls a mere waste; in whom religion and righteousness, faith and love, hope and prayer, and all sense of **GOD**, are devoured of the world, and those briars and thorns of pride and lust, of envy and intemperance, are sprung up in their stead.

[5.] When he turns away his heart from them, and rejects them. "The **LORD** hath rejected thee," said **SAMUEL** to **SAUL**; and afterwards, "The **LORD** is departed from me," said **SAUL** to **SAMUEL**. **GOD** deals with particular persons that will not be reclaimed, as with backsliding Israel, concerning whom he said, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart could not be towards this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth." (*Jcr.* xv. 1.) **GOD** had sent Prophet upon Prophet to reclaim and recover them from their apostasies: but when they would not be reclaimed, then this fatal word comes at length, "Cast them out of my sight; my mind is no longer towards them."—You that have been backsliders, that have declined from **GOD** to the world, **GOD** hath sent many a word

to you to recover you, and now he is giving you solemn warning again : what will you now do ? Shall this word be lost, and take no effect upon you ? Will you yet continue to sleep on, and refuse to be awakened ? O take heed ! O awaken ! Who knows, if ye yet refuse, but God may forthwith speak such a dreadful word as this concerning you, “ I have no mind to this backsliding soul ; I will give him a bill of divorce, and send him away.” If you should ask as they did there, “ Whither will he send us ? ”—Why, any whither ! “ Let them go whither they will : send this man to the world which he hath loved ; send him to the Devil whom he hath followed ; let him be gone from me, I have no mind to him ; this backsliding wretch, he hath more mind to the world, to his money, to his trade, to his oxen, than he hath to his God ; and I have no more mind to him, than he hath to me. Since he hath so much mind to the world, and to the service of the Devil, let the world take him, let the Devil take him : give him a bill of divorce, and send him away. What, false to his God, to his conscience, to his religion, to his covenant ? What, an apostate, an idolater ? One that has been so, that will be so ? I have called him back, and threatened him back, and cried unto him, ‘ Though thou hast played the harlot these many years, yet return to me.’ But none of my words will move him ; he goes on his old way : Away with such a wretch ; I have no mind any longer to him ; cast him out of my sight ! ”

Secondly, God may depart *from the Congregations* of his people : and then he departs from these,

[1.] When he shuts up his house, and writes upon the door, “ The glory is departed ; ” when he causes their visions to fail, and his ordinances to cease from among them ; when preaching, and praying, and all his worship, fail ; when, though the candlesticks continue, yet there are few candles left, and those that are not quite put out are put under a bushel ; when Pastors and Teachers, which were burning and shining lights, are removed into a corner.

[2.] When he pulls down his house ; when not only the

candles are carried away, but the candlesticks are broken in pieces; when he scatters his congregations; when the societies of the saints are broken in pieces, and those that went to the house of God in companies, have neither house to go into, nor company to go together;—then is the LORD departed.

[3.] When, though his house stands, and his ordinances are continued, though there be preaching and praying still, yet the Spirit of the LORD is departed; when he doth not continue to bless his house, and bless his ordinances to his people; even this is a departure, and a grievous departure of the LORD from his people,—when he continues not among them to bless them.

O how many congregations are there from whom the LORD is already thus departed! Though he gives his word, yet he doth not bless his word; though the sowers come forth to sow, yet how is the seed rotten under the clods, how little is there that comes up! Though the planters plant, how few young plants do we see come up! O we fade, we fade, we wither as the grass upon the house-top; our life, our strength, our beauty, is fallen and withered! The beauty of love, the beauty of humility, the beauty of holiness, how is all marred! Surely this is the token of the LORD's departure from us.

Thus you have seen how the LORD departs from his people. Observe also,

(2.) It is ill with a people when the LORD departs from them: “Woe unto them,” saith the LORD, “when I depart from them.” (*Hos.* ix. 12.)

It is woeful unto them, particularly, that have something of religion in them. When their pastors, their pastures, and waters fail, even they also are like to pine for want. There are none to whom the famine is so tedious as to hungry souls; the living child will cry for bread, when those that are dead never feel their want. And it will not be woeful only to their sense, so that they will mourn, and lament, and be pierced to the heart, to see such a day; but to some amongst them it will be a worse woe than that.

While some mourn for want of the word, others will pine away for want. Professors, there be some among you that have languished and grown into decay in the fulness of all things; by all the ordinances of the Gospel you have had, by all the manna that hath fallen among you, by all our preaching to you, and praying over you, we can hardly keep life in you; the little good that remains is weak and even ready to vanish away: but what then will become of you in the day of famine, when your manna shall cease, and your waters fail? O tremble to hear this word spoken concerning you, "You shall not mourn nor weep;"—you will not lay it to heart, but ye shall pine away for your iniquities. If in such a day of plenty you are such pining souls, what can you expect but to pine to death in days of want?

(3.) Our taking hold of God is our continuing the Lord among us, and our preventing his departure. This was the sin of those described in the text, that they did not lay hold of God, that is, they took no course to continue the Lord amongst them: God was going from them, and they let him go, and looked not after him: they were too willing to part with God. And this is the case of backsliders in heart, they are too well content that God and they part; their heart is withdrawn from God, and they matter it not though God withdraws from them.

Our laying hold on God imports these three things which are necessary to our continuing him with us:

[1.] Our letting go our idols or false gods. God never departs till there be another god taken in with him; and God will never continue unless these gods be cast away. "They are estranged from me by their idols;" (*Ezek. xiv. 5*;)—they are grown strangers to me, and I must be a stranger to them; they have taken in other gods besides me: "Repent," says God, "and turn yourselves from your idols:" (*ver. 6*:)—if you would have me stay, let them go their way. There is a setting up of idols in the congregation, a setting up of stocks and stones to worship. And there is a setting up of idols in the heart: "These men

have set up their idols in their hearts." (*Ezek.* xiv. 3.) Those that have no such idols as Israel had, those that abhor image-worship, or worshipping of the sun and the host of heaven, those that would tremble to see an idol set up in the house of God, may yet have a heart full of idols. One of the chief of our idols is the world; and our great heart-idolatry is covetousness, or the love of the world. (*Col.* iii. 5.) If God be provoked to depart from us, it is to be suspected that this is the idol that drives him away: our hearts are gone after the world, and thereupon it is that the Lord God is so far from our hearts. Would you lay hold on God? Put away your idols; cast this world out of your hearts. It is vain to pray, "Lord, leave us not:" God will never regard your confessions nor your prayers, till your idols be cast out.

Whenever we suffer, or are likely to suffer, it is our worldliness that hath undone us; the gains of this world, or the pleasures of this world, have been taken into our hearts, and thereupon it is that God leaves us to sink and go to ruin as we do. Cease from your idolatry: away with your earthly-mindedness and fleshliness: your hands are full of dirt and ashes; empty them of these, or you can never lay hold on God!

We cry out against the wickedness of our age, against the atheism, the adulteries, the oaths, and prodigious profaneness, that are among us; and these and such like evils we look on as the reason why God is so angry with us. But besides these wickednesses of the openly profane, there are other iniquities to be found even among us; and this for one, the iniquity of our covetousness, which has thus provoked the Lord against us. "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth and smote him; I hid me and was wroth, and yet he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." (*Isa.* lvii. 17.)—Here note three things:—1. That "covetousness" is "iniquity:" covetous ones are wicked ones, however they may look like holy ones; whatever of God or religion appears, yet their covetousness, where it is predominant, marks them out for wicked ones.

Art thou a professor of religion? Dost thou hear? Dost thou pray? Dost thou join thyself to those that fear God? And art thou yet a worldling? Thou art but a wicked man, whatever thy profession be. 2. The iniquity of our covetousness will make God to withdraw, and hide his face from us. "I hid me and was wroth." 3. Covetous men, how dear soever their covetousness costs them, yet they will go on their way. "He went on frowardly," that is, perversely or obstinately in his way. He would not be turned back, he would not desist from following his worldly heart, how angry soever God was with him for it. O this disease of a worldly heart, when it is rooted, hardly admits of a cure! Beloved, God hath prescribed for you many remedies, and God hath given you many warnings, and your souls have suffered great loss by it. O the impoverishment that hath fallen upon your inward man, by your eager pursuit of the advantages of your outward man; and yet for all this, who will take warning? How little abatement is there to be seen of the zeal of our hearts after earthly things! O it is an evil disease, and a tough disease, that will hardly be purged away. There are some humours of the body that are so tough, that where they abound they can hardly be purged away; but there is no humour of the body so tough, and hard to be removed, as this disease of the soul.

Yet unless you mean to part with God, yea, and to part with him for ever, you must let this idol go. And the like may be said of any other of our idols, any other sins you have set up in your hearts. There can be no taking hold of God, but you must let all your idols go; either these must be parted with, or God and you must part. You that are proud professors, that pride must be laid in the dust; you that are for your credit and reputation, you that are given to appetite, whose god is your belly or your throats, you must come off from all that your hearts are thus set upon, or else, as there is a breach between God and your souls begun, so it will grow wider and wider, till it becomes too great to be ever made up.

What, will ye love this world to the death? Will you love your pleasures, and your ease, and your lusts to the death? Will you sell all that you have, all your religion, all the hopes and the comforts that you have had in it? Will you sell your **GOD**, and your souls, for these vile things? The young man in the Gospel foolishly refused to sell what he had in the world for **CHRIST**; and will you not refuse to sell **CHRIST**, and all your hopes as to the other world, for the trash you have here? Do you not see, do none of you see, how dear they have cost you, and how low they have brought you as to the state of your inward man, already? And will you hold on still; and never give over till you have lost all, and all hopes of ever recovering what you have lost? O be yet advised, and go no farther; "Cast ye away, cast ye away your idols, and yet return to the **LORD**, and he will return to you."

[2.] Laying hold on **GOD** implies our laying hold on the covenant of **GOD**. We have no other hold on **GOD** but his covenant with us; we had need keep the covenant of **GOD** inviolable, for there is all the hold we have either for this life, or the life to come. And this is the hold that we find the people of Israel insisted upon, "Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people;" (*Isa. lxiv. 9*;) that is, thy covenant-people. See, we beseech thee, or remember, O **LORD**, what hath passed betwixt thee and us; thou hast said, "I will be your **GOD**, and ye shall be my people."

Our only hope is the covenant of **GOD**; and this is necessary to our laying hold on the covenant of **GOD**, *viz.*, to repent of our covenant-breaking, and to renew our covenant with him, and return to our obedience.

It is a vain pleading from the covenant of **GOD**, or from the faithfulness of **GOD** to his people, if they have been false in the covenant, and will not repent: our engaging fidelity to **GOD** for the future, and our being faithful to our engagement,—this is our only way to take hold on the covenant of **GOD**.

You that are backsliders, that have been unfaithful to God, you have broken the covenant of your peace ; and as to yourselves, you have hereby taken the most effectual course to make void the covenant of God ; you have loosened the ALMIGHTY from his bond to you ; God is far from you, and may never look upon you more, but may depart from you for ever, and leave you to perish in your revoltings : and though God be gracious, and abideth faithful, yet unless you will come into new bonds with him, and so lay hold on his old bond to you, you can expect nothing but that he leave you, and forsake you for ever.

This therefore you have to do for recovery :

First, To acknowledge your unfaithfulness to the LORD. "LORD, I confess I am a backslider, and herein am become false to thee : I have covenanted to love thee, and to serve thee, with all mine heart, and with all my might. But woe is me, thou hast but half a heart from me. Mine heart is divided. O how much of it hath this world carried away from God ! Instead of serving thee with my might, I have been an idle servant ; the LORD forgive me, my business hath of late lain another way than about God and my soul ; I have been serving my pride, and my covetness ; this world hath too much of me, insomuch that many a time, when I do any thing in the service of God, I do it but by halves ; my strength hath gone out for the world, and woe is me, there hath been but little left for God but my weakness and weariness. Yea, and though I find the sad fruit of this my neglect in those wastes that are grown upon me, though I see myself become a poor, withered, decayed thing, yet I am not much troubled at it, but am still going on in the same busy life for this earth, and in the same neglect of God. O I have been an unfaithful servant, and an unfaithful steward of the manifold graces of God : I have so wasted my talents, that I have almost nothing left." Thus confess unto God your covenant-breakings.

Secondly, Renew your covenant, and return to your

fidelity. To repent, and not return, is but a mock repentance; to confess, and not amend, is but a mock confession. Remember that word, "If thou wilt return, I will bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me." (*Jer. xv. 19.*) You that confess your backslidings, will you return? You see how it hath been and is with you; shall it be better for the future? Are your hearts set upon reviving the work of **GOD**, and recovering out of your earthly, lazy way? Will you promise to the **LORD**, that through his grace, and the help of his good **SPIRIT**, you will henceforth set your hearts to be more faithful to him, to follow the **LORD** fully, to stick faster to your religion, to be true to **GOD**, and to your conscience, and to the covenant of your **GOD**? **O** that there were such a heart in you all! This do, and then though you be gone back from him, yet he will bring you again; though you be fallen so low, yet he will raise you up, and you shall stand before him.

Thirdly, Then trust upon the covenant of **GOD**; return to be faithful to him, and he will not leave you, nor cast you off, for your former unfaithfulness.

This is the way to take hold of the covenant of **GOD**; and your taking hold of the covenant will be your taking hold of **GOD**. After such forsakings and such declinings, there is reason enough to be afraid lest the **LORD** cast off such unfaithful ones; and there is no hope but he will do so, if you thus return not; he will then be lost to you for ever; he will go farther and farther off from you; he will be gracious to you no more, nor accept you, nor any of your service, nor of your prayers for yourselves, no, nor of the prayers of any others for you; but will say concerning you as once, "Pray not for this people for their good: when they fast I will not hear their cry, and when they offer an oblation I will not accept them." (*Jer. xiv. 11, 12.*)

I tell you again, you that are in this case, and will not see it, nor confess your unfaithfulness, but will satisfy yourselves, and think you are well enough, or at least excuse yourselves, and say, your case is made worse than it is; or if you do confess, "I am a backslider," yet will not renew

your covenant, but hold at the same pass; look for nothing else but this, that the soul of the LORD will be utterly loosened from you, and he will say concerning you, "Give them a bill of divorce, and send them away: let them alone; let them pine away in their iniquities, till they be past recovery or redemption."

[3.] Our recovering our communion with God. Our communion with God stands much in these things:—

First, In our mutual acquaintance; God's with us, and ours with him. God is acquainted with his people, and he requires them to come into his acquaintance: "Acquaint thyself with God." (*Job xxii. 21.*) Acquaintance stands in our knowledge of God,—we cannot be said to be acquainted with them we know not; and in such experimental knowledge as is got by converse together,—we cannot say we are acquainted with every one we know; converse or walking together is necessary to our being acquainted. The nearer and more intimate our acquaintance with God is, and of the longer continuance, the more hold we have of God. God will not easily lose his acquaintance; and those that are acquainted with God have tasted so much of the sweetness of walking with him, that they will take the more heed how they lose that acquaintance. When persons are intimately acquainted by their friendly converse together, this acquaintance knits their hearts together, as DAVID's to JONATHAN, so that they will not easily be separated. Hast thou used thyself to intimate converse with God, and thereby got experimental acquaintance with him? Thine heart will hereby be knit to the LORD, and the LORD's heart knit together with thine. Acquaintance cannot bear strangeness; it is grievous to us when our acquaintance become strangers to us. Do you suffer your hearts to be estranged from the LORD? Can you forget God, and keep at a distance from him? Can you lose your intimacy in heaven? Are your delightful thoughts of God restrained, and is not this grievous to you? It is a shrewd sign that God and you were never well acquainted. You that are the friends of God,

keep your acquaintance; take heed of wanderings, take heed of distances and estrangements; get the experimental delights that arise from your intimacy with him, and that will hold you near him. And you that have lost your acquaintance, O recover and revive your old intimacy in heaven.

Secondly, In mutual acceptance. This is a special part of our communion with God, our complacency in God, and his complacency in us. Acquaintance take pleasure in one another; their company is grateful and acceptable.—1. God is accepted of his saints. They have a hearty liking to him, and are glad of his presence. They have all the intimations of his love and kindnesses to them. Not only such a word as this is spoken to their heart, ‘I love thee, mine heart is towards thee, thou art mine, my delight is in thee;’ (O how acceptable, O how pleasant are such words!) but they have also the manifestations of the will and counsels of God to them; they accept his commands; they love that the Lord should tell them of their duty; (“His statutes are my delight;” *Ps.* cxix. 77;) and they accept his rebukes and corrections, and his punishments of them for their sins, (*Lev.* xxvi. 41,) knowing that he corrects them in love, that they cannot do without his chastisements, and that the very rebukes of his countenance are sometimes as necessary for them, and as beneficial to them, as the light of his countenance.—2. They are accepted with God. He accepts their persons: “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” (*Eph.* i. 6.) He accepts their approaches to him: “In mine holy mountain of the height of Israel, there will I accept them; I will accept you with your sweet savour.” (*Ezek.* xx. 40, 41.)—Offer your offerings, lift up your voices, pour forth your prayers; they shall be a sweet savour, a savour of rest to me.—Now whilst God finds rest in a people, he will not depart. “This is my rest, here will I dwell for ever.” (*Ps.* cxxxii. 14.) Acceptance with God, and rejection from God, are so contrary, that whilst we have the one we need not fear the other: whilst God is accepted with us, we may be

sure we are accepted with him: whilst **God's** ways please us, our ways will please the **LORD**; "When a man's ways please the **LORD**, he will make his enemies be at peace with him:" (*Prov. xvi. 7:*) and so long we may be secure that our friend will not become our enemy, but will live in love, and continue his abode with us.

Thirdly, In mutual correspondence; in frequent and friendly intercourses. **God** will be sending down to his saints tokens of his love; and his saints will be sending up presents to the **LORD**, tokens of their love to him. There is a **JACOB's** ladder betwixt heaven and earth; this ladder is **CHRIST**, by which there is constant coming and going: there are spiritual blessings; the blessings of grace, the blessings of peace, that are sent down from **God** to his saints: and there are spiritual duties; holy affections, holy desires, holy prayers and praises, which by the hand of **CHRIST** are sent up before the **LORD**. It is the very life of Christians to be either receiving or sending up to heaven: they must hear often from **God**, or they cannot live; "I will hearken to what the **LORD God** will speak." (*Ps. lxxxv. 8.*) And whilst they live, **God** shall hear often from them; there are messengers and messages that pass daily betwixt **God** and them: they are often sending up, and the best present they have is their hearts; "I lift my soul to thee." (*Ps. xxv. 1.*) They will be sending up their desires to the **LORD**, and their sighs after him: If they have nothing better, they will be sending up their tears, and their sorrows, and their complaints to the **LORD**: "All my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee:" (*Ps. xxxviii. 9.*) If it be well with them, then their praises are sent up; if they want any thing, then up go their desires to the **LORD** for supply; if they ail any thing, whatever it be, they pour it out into the bosom of their friend. Some messengers or other are daily sent up; and whatever the messenger be, if it be a prayer, or a sigh, or a tear, this is still the message, "Tell him, that I am either sick of love,—or sick for love, for a heart to love the **LORD**."—Such intercourses there are betwixt **God** and his saints;

and these are a special part of their communion with God, and a special security against distances and estrangements betwixt the Lord and them. And it is to be observed, that whenever there is a parting betwixt God and souls, there is a failing of these friendly intercourses. Declining souls, how seldom do they look upwards ! They are so busy below, that they have no leisure, and they grow so carnally-minded, that they have no will, to have much to do with God ; they restrain prayer, and restrain holy meditations ; the Lord seldom hears from them, and when he does, it is so coldly and so dully, that he can take no pleasure in it. It is a sign that there is a breach betwixt the Lord and you, when you are fallen into a neglect of spiritual duties. Do your affections heaven-ward flag ? Does the fervour of your desires fail ? Are your prayers shortened and straitened ? Are you seldom, and remiss, and flat, in your retirements with God ? Can you not say, at least, My sighs and complaints are daily before him, and my groanings are not hid from him ? What a danger is there that God and your souls may utterly part, if you have thus lost your correspondence with him !

Fourthly, In often reckoning. By this our communion with God, and our friendship with him, are maintained. Often reckoning keeps long friends : whilst we keep our account clear and fair, so long there is the less danger of a breach : we run upon score daily ; we go upon score for mercies received from God, and we go upon score for sins committed against God ; and where there is such scoring, there must be often reckoning.—

1. Our score of mercies should be answered in our praises and more abundant duties : and a reckoning must be kept both of what we have received and what we have returned ; of what the Lord hath done for our souls, and what our souls have done the more for his name. Thus we should reckon for these : “ O my soul, the Lord hath done great things for thee ; he hath brought thee from darkness to light, and hath saved thy life from death : when thou wert going on in thy sins, running with the multitude either

after thy covetousness or after thy companions, in the lusts and in the lewdness of thine heart, when thou wert making all the haste that thou couldst down to hell, there grace met thee; and whilst it let others run on, it singled thee out, and brought thee back out of that death's road, and hath brought thee into the way of life, and of a dead sinner hath made thee this living soul. O what a wonder of mercy was there! And since, how many a kindness hath it showed thee? How often hath the same grace met thee in the house of God, and taught thee, and instructed thee, and quickened thee, and comforted thee? How often hath grace met thee in thine own house, met thee in secret, met thee upon thy knees, and enlarged thine heart, and helped thee to pour out thy soul before the LORD, and poured in upon thee such a sense of the kindness of God to thee, as hath delighted, and even ravished thine heart? And what multitudes of other instances have there been of the renewed kindnesses of the LORD to thee? O to what a reckoning do thy mercies rise! Hast thou kept the account by thee? If thou hast, what hath been returned in answer of the loving-kindness of the LORD? As it was said concerning MORDECAI who had saved the King's life, 'What honour and dignity hath been done to MORDECAI for this?' (*Esther* vi. 3.) Canst not thou say, The LORD hath saved my life from death, and done for me these great things; what honour have I done to the LORD for all this? And if upon thy reckoning it be found that there hath been nothing done, or but little done, then thou wilt see that there must be more done, or God will be angry.—

2. Our score of sins should be reckoned up, in order to the getting them crossed by faith in the blood of CHRIST. Thus therefore thou shouldst go on; "O my soul, thou seest what God hath done for thee; but what is it that thou hast done against the God of thy mercy? Hast thou not grown secure? Hast thou not grown wanton? Hast thou not been lifted up in the pride of thine heart? Remember thy frowardness and quarrellings, thy backbitings and tale-bearings; hast thou no lies, no false and fraudulent dealing,

to put down upon thy account? Dost thou not use to come before the **LORD** with such a hollow heart, and such hollow duties, as if thou meantst to mock him to the face? Art thou not either a backslider, or a loiterer? If thou hast not lost ground, at least, hast thou not lost time? Hast thou no slothfulness, and negligence, and non-proficiency, to write down against thyself? Hast thou not somewhat against thyself for thy covetousness, and over-eagerness about the world? Hast thou no wrongs of thy conscience to be remembered? Dost thou not find much of these, and many more evils, for which thou art run in score with thy **GOD**? And what hath there hitherto been done for the crossing out of the score? Surely if thou goest on thus, thou art likely to hear of him in another way than thou wouldst, or, it may be, not to hear from him at all.

Beloved, the keeping good reckoning betwixt the **LORD** and us being so necessary to the continuing of his presence and favour with us, I shall give you some short directions concerning it.

1. Let every one especially look to his own personal reckoning. We must reckon for our people also;—how great things **GOD** hath done for our nation and his churches amongst us; and how great have been the sins of our people. What have our princes and our priests, what have our magistrates and our ministers done? What have the sins of our congregations, of our neighbours, of our families been? We are each a member of the same body, concerned in all these; and therefore must keep a public reckoning. But our special reckoning, which we must most insist upon, must be our own personal reckoning. Concerning our mercies we must say as the Psalmist, “Come, and I will tell what the **LORD** hath done for my soul.” (*Ps.* lxvi. 16.) For our sins, we must say to ourselves, what **ISRAEL** was rebuked for not saying, “There is no man that repented nor said, What have I done?” (*Jer.* viii. 6.) We may some of us be telling too much what others have done; the sins of princes and great ones, the faults of

our neighbours and acquaintance, may be too much in our mouths; though they be not so much as they should be upon our hearts, yet our tongues will run and catch up every evil report, and be spreading it abroad, making it our ordinary talk, raking up all the evil news we can hear in town or country, as if we were the very sinks to gather in all the filth of the places we live in, and then casting back the stink of it in our discourses. This is a wicked practice, which I have more than once warned you of; and O that it were amended! But while we vainly talk, what this man or that woman hath done, and how foolishly, how proudly, or how frowardly, they have behaved themselves; O how seldom is it that we mind our own reckoning,—“**LORD**; what have I done? O my soul, what hast thou done?” Here our chief business lies, to mind and make our own personal reckoning. “Let every man prove his own work,” saith the Apostle. (*Gal.* vi. 4.) Let every man search his own heart; let every man take an account of his own ways and goings.

2. Do not under-reckon. Do not carelessly or deceitfully skip over any of your faults; make a plain and perfect account; deal faithfully betwixt **GOD** and your souls. Be not like the unjust steward: when there is fifty or a hundred owing, do not take your bill and write down but twenty: do not say to yourselves, as the **LORD** to the Church in Pergamos, “I have a few things against thee;”—(*Rev.* ii. 14;) a few small faults I have. **GOD** may have many things, and great things, against you; and if you will reckon truly, you may find many and great things against yourselves,

3. Level your accounts.—(1.) As to the mercies that you have received: the way to level them is to see to it, that ye walk worthy of all the mercies of **GOD**, and that you receive none of the grace of **GOD** in vain. Let it not suffice you that you live better lives than sinners, that have received no such mercies as you have. “I thank **GOD** I am not as this publican,” no, nor as this Pharisee;—shall that suffice you? You may be as neither of these, and yet

GOD may have much against you. You ought to live up to all the light you have received, to all the love you have tasted of, to the experiences you have had of the manifold kindnesses of the **LORD**. There are some of you that **GOD** hath done more for, and bestowed more upon, more knowledge, more helps, more grace, than upon multitudes of weaker Christians : your life must be as much above the ordinary rank,—your care, and your zeal, and your diligence, and your faithfulness, must be as much above the lower sort of Christians,—as you have been set above them in what you have received. Some of you must say,—The **LORD** hath been abundantly gracious to me ; he hath not done by every Christian as he hath done by me ; his grace hath abounded ; his kindnesses have abounded ; **O** how deeply hath my soul tasted how gracious the **LORD** is ! And what should you hereupon say further ? This you should say,—What shall I render ? How shall I live ? Study, **O** my soul, to walk worthy of all this grace. **O** let me have my conversation in heaven ; let my conversation be in all things as becometh the Gospel : let me be holy, harmless, lively, fruitful, that **I** may show forth the virtues of him that hath called me out of darkness into his marvellous light. **GOD** hath been marvellously gracious to me ; he hath showed me marvellous loving-kindness ; “**He** that is mighty hath done for me great things ;” help, **LORD**, help me, **O** my **GOD**, that as thou hast made me such an instance of thy great mercy, I may become an instrument of thy greater praise.—(2.) As to your sins ; the way to level the reckoning for them, is by getting the scores to be crossed, and having them all blotted out. Get them crossed, first, by Repentance, “Repent ye,—that your sins may be blotted out.” (*Acts* iii. 19.) Whatever sins you find upon your account, there they must stand against you, till by repentance they are blotted out. Set about repentance, every one of you. Have you lived an earthly and worldly life ? **O** repent that you have. Have you been proud, or self-conceited, or self-willed, or of a froward and contentious spirit ? **O** let your souls and all that is within you say,—It repents me, **I**

am grieved at the heart, that ever I have been such a wretch. Have you, under all your professions of **CHRIST**, lived a carnal, careless, heedless, unprofitable life? What should you say? O it repents me that I have been no more spiritual, and diligent, and useful in my generation! Repent and reform, repent and amend: let it grieve you at the heart, that you have lost so much time, that you have lived to so little purpose, that you have been such barren vines, such fruitless fig-trees, in the vineyard of the **LORD**: and now let your root spring forth, let your branches shoot up, let your buds and blossoms appear, and grow up to more fruitfulness: this is repentance, and nothing short of this. Amend your ways, and come you to a better life, a more holy and heavenly life: that is the way to have all your former sinfulness and unfruitfulness blotted out. Get your sins crossed, secondly, by Faith in the blood of **CHRIST**. It is not your own tears that will wash away your sins; it is only the blood of **CHRIST**: your iniquities must not only be purged, but be pardoned too; whatever repentance may do towards it, it is the blood of **CHRIST**, and faith in his blood, that must both get them purged and pardoned. Do not only say, —If I have done iniquity, I hope I shall do so no more; I hope through the grace of **GOD** I shall never live as I have lived:—but besides this you must get your pardon for what you have done. Now this is your way to level your accounts concerning your sins, to repent of and amend all your evils, and to sue out your pardon through faith in the blood of **CHRIST**.

And now you see what it is to lay hold on **GOD**;—to continue his presence with us, by casting away our idols; by laying hold on his covenant; by recovering communion, getting into a holy acquaintance with **GOD**, living so that you will both accept of **GOD**, and be accepted with him, maintaining a constant intercourse betwixt the **LORD** and your souls, letting him hear often from you, and listening and longing to hear as often from him, keeping even reckonings betwixt the **LORD** and you, keeping a

reckoning of your mercies, and a reckoning of your sins, levelling your accounts, walking worthy of your mercies, and getting the scores of your sins crossed, washed away by repentance, and pardoned by the blood of **CHRIST**. This is what you have to do, if you would take hold of **God**, and continue his presence with you.

Is the **LORD** within you? I hope he is in many of you. Would you that he should abide and continue with you? I know you would, You that are Christians, I know ye would all say, Woe to me if the **LORD** depart from me. I know it is the desire of every sincere heart among you,—Let the **LORD** dwell in me, and walk in me, as he hath said he will; let **CHRIST** dwell in mine heart by faith; **LORD**, leave me not; “take not thy **HOLY SPIRIT** from me;” if all the friends I have in the world forsake me, if mine house must go, and mine estate go, and my health go, and my life go, yet let not the **LORD** depart from me; let the **LORD** still dwell in my soul, dwell in me as my teacher and instructor, dwell in me as my governor and my guide, dwell in me as my portion and treasure, dwell in me as my refuge and protector; let but the **LORD GOD** continue with me, and influence me by his grace, and quicken me by his **SPIRIT**, and guide me by his counsels, and hold me by his right hand, and lift up the light of his countenance upon me, and so long mine heart shall be glad, and my glory shall rejoice, my flesh also shall rest in hope,—in this hope, that he will show me the path of life; I shall behold his face in righteousness, and when I awake, I shall be satisfied with his likeness. Is this your mind? Is this your desire? Now you know what you have to do that it may be so.

IV Stirring Religion will take hold of **God**.

What might have been said on this is in great part prevented by what hath been said already; yet something I shall add, and show, **FIRST**, What is meant by Stirring Religion. **SECONDLY**, That Stirring Religion will continue the Presence of **God** with us.

FIRST, What is meant by Stirring Religion.

1. Negatively. Not headiness in religion; not a hot, a mistaken zeal about the lower and more uncertain things of religion; not such a spirit of fire as was in those disciples, who would needs call for fire from heaven to destroy those that were not followers of them; not a stirring up of strife and contention, a making breaches and divisions, and propagating our own opinions by censuring and judging those that are not in every thing according to our own size:—this headiness, and fierceness, and hot censoriousness, this is not the Stirring Religion I mean.

2. Positively. An active, lively, zealous pursuing of that which is religion indeed, or the substance of sincere Christianity. Some vain ones there are, who, upon the hearing this headiness and fierceness, this hot and mistaken zeal, blemished and decried, will turn the edge of such reproofs against godly zeal, and all fervour and activity for God; and every one that goes beyond the drowsy multitude of professors, is cried out against, as one of these heady high-minded ones. Such is the craft of the Devil, that if he cannot blow up coals of wild fire, which under the pretence of kindling will devour all serious godliness, he will on the other hand quench and cool that genuine fervency of spirit wherein we ought to serve the LORD: if he cannot make men heady, he will do what he can to make them heartless, and cold, and lukewarm, in all the matters of God.—Take heed of both these extremes, of being heady or fierce on the one hand, and of being cold or lukewarm on the other. Of heady ones, God would have us take heed and turn away from them; and as for lukewarm ones, he will spue them out of his mouth.

The Stirring Religion I mean is a lively activity of soul for God, and for advancement in real godliness. A stirring spirit is opposite to a sleepy, slothful, careless spirit, which is nothing moved by all that the Scripture speaks, when it presseth us to be “fervent in spirit, serving the LORD,” (*Rom. xii. 11.*) “to be zealous and amend,”

(*Rev.* iii. 19,) “to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints,” (*Jude* 3,) “to strive to enter in at the strait gate,” (*Luke* xiii. 24,) to fight, to wrestle, to run, to make haste, to be fruitful in good works,—and the like. After all these pressing and quickening words, there are a sort of slow bellies, sleepy, lazy professors, who will but creep on when GOD would have them run; who will lie down and loiter out their time, when they should be fervent in spirit; who will be idle when they should work, and silent when they should speak; who let their lazy hearts alone to their own slow and easy pace, and so are overgrown with rust, and suffer their religion to be even strangled and choked up by their flesh, which they so much indulge. This stirring religion is the opposite to such a sleepy heartless religion: it is a blowing up of the coals which GOD hath kindled in us; as *TIMOTHY* is exhorted, “Stir up the gift of GOD.” (2 *Tim.* i. 6.) The word is, Blow up the coals; so Christians are to stir up the grace of GOD within them.

I need say the less here, because I have told you so much already. It is our being awakened, and vigorously following after that savoury, solid, fruitful religion, in which I have already instructed you.

Whatever holy principles we have received from the Word of GOD; whatever holy dispositions have been wrought into our hearts by the SPIRIT of GOD, such as faith, the fear of GOD, or love to the LORD JESUS; these must be all set on work and held to their works;—that so the knowledge of GOD may bring forth the life of GOD; that the habit of faith may bring forth the life of faith; that the love of CHRIST and the fear of the LORD may constrain us to walk on in the law of our GOD; that the light that is set up within us may break forth and make our paths to shine; and not only so, but that the holy fire, which is kindled and blown up in our hearts, may bring forth a zeal of GOD in our lives; that we may be Christians, and Christians in earnest; busy for GOD, busy

for our souls, striving against sin, and striving for mastery, fighting against sin, and fighting for the victory; ready to every good work, and fruitful in good works, doing what we can to rouse up this sleepy world, to raise up the tabernacle of DAVID that is fallen; helping on and building up one another in our most holy faith, laying out our strength in following the LORD, and laying hold every one on the skirts of his brother, and leading them on with us; living in love, and all the fruits of christian love, and hereby adorning our holy profession, and walking worthy of the LORD unto all pleasing;—this is that which I mean by Stirring Religion.

SECONDLY, Stirring Religion will continue the Presence of GOD with us: for,

I. It will work out and drive away whatever offends or would provoke GOD to depart. GOD will never depart without cause: it must be a great matter that must part such dear friends as GOD and the souls of his saints: GOD will never depart from his people till there be some sin entertained, and loved, and allowed, that bids him depart. Every sin says to the LORD, as those wicked ones, who said unto GOD, “Depart from us;” (*Job xxi. 14;*) but though every sin says thus, yet GOD will not hearken to its voice unless it be a sin that is suffered to command in the heart or life. Sin says to the Lord, Depart, GOD shall not rule here; and if thou be of the mind that *that* sin shall stay with thee notwithstanding, if thou art willing to entertain such a traitor, if thou hadst rather venture the displeasing GOD, than have thy sin cast out; this the LORD will not bear. GOD says concerning every sin, “If ye love me, let these go their way;” let this pride go, let this covetousness, let this frowardness go. If thou sayest, O with all mine heart, LORD; I would be glad with all my soul to be rid of them; O that I might never be proud, or froward, or carnal, or earthly-minded any more; I know it is an offence to the LORD, and it is a grief of mind to me;—if thou sayest thus, and

sayest truly, and wilt stand to thy word, God will not depart from thee.

God will not depart for unallowed and resisted sins. If whilst thy sin says to the Lord, "Depart from me," thy soul says to thy sin, "Depart thou rather;"—God will hearken to the voice of thy soul, rather than to the voice of thy sin. Thy sin says to the Lord, "Depart:" but if thy soul say, "Lord, let me be loosed from my sins, but stay Thou with me;" God will not depart from thee. But every allowed sin, every loved lust, and corruption that thou wilt not hear of parting with, provokes God to depart. If thou art of a proud heart, and art resolved to maintain thy pride; if thou art of a covetous earthly heart and life, and wilt not hear of desisting from thy covetousness; if thou art carnal, and foolish, and froward, and wilt continue so;—then God will not stay with such a soul. What, love your pleasure more than God? "Even take them for me," says the Lord; "I will be no more a God to them."

Now Stirring Religion will work out sin, especially every allowed sin. The life of a Christian is a warfare; there is a conflict betwixt the flesh and spirit. "The flesh lusteth," (*Gal. v. 17.*)—lusteth, that is, fighteth; sin fighteth against grace, and grace fighteth against sin. Sin fights for the Devil, to set him up, and to lay the government on his shoulder; and grace fights for God, to lift the Lord up, and to give Him the pre-eminence in the soul. God will no longer stay in the heart, than he may have the pre-eminence; if he may not have the pre-eminence, he will be gone and leave you to the Devil; in such a case never talk that you hope God is within you; where sin or the world bears rule, God is not there.

When grace revives, and the heart takes part with grace, nourishing, and cherishing, and abetting the better part, then sin will be put to it, and must away. Christians, your hearts would quickly be too hot for your sins, if the grace that is in you were once well roused up. When the live

coals are blown up into a flame, the smoke is consumed and vanisheth.

Do not sluggishly lie down and complain that you cannot master your sins ; that you are proud, and cannot help it ; that you are earthly, and worldly, and cannot help it ; that you are froward, and passionate, and peevish, and cannot overcome your passions : do not say, you cannot overcome, you cannot prevail ; if there be grace in your hearts, and you will set to it, to stir up the grace that is in you, this will overcome. What ! do you think that if your love to CHRIST were blown up into a flame, it would not quench the flame of lust ? It is a sign that religion is asleep, grace is asleep, conscience is asleep, when your earthliness thus rides in triumph over you : put your grace to it, let it but engage heartily in the fight, and sin will quit the field.

Loitering, and idleness, and laziness, beget and nourish evil humours ; exercise and activity will subdue and work them out : he that lives a stirring life is usually the most strong and healthful.

If you would be hearty and healthful, and overcome those corruptions that are the diseases of your souls, resolve upon a stirring life ; pray, and let no praying satisfy, but stirring prayer ; let your thoughts be stirring, let your affections be stirring, let conscience be stirring, let your conversations be stirring conversations : be not the carcases of Christians that have no life ; show forth the spirit of Christianity as much as possible ; be all soul, and life, and spirit, and keep yourselves in lively action, and then let your sins stand before you if they can. The quick running rivers keep themselves pure ; they are the dead and standing pools that gather mud and dirt.

What will ye do ? Your light grows dim, and your day misty ; your waters are muddied ; ye are a company of dark, polluted souls, such as the LORD can take little pleasure in ; what must ye do to help it ? If you will bestir yourselves, you may help all. Get religion to be afloat, let that living stream be running, let the coals be

blowing ; and then you shall see your mud will be cleansed, and your dross will be purged away. Never think it will be better by sitting still and complaining how bad it is. To work, to work with these lazy hearts ! To work with those earthly minds ! Rouse ye up out of sleep ; up and be doing ; and see if you find not the same success against your sins as the **LORD** promised against the Devil : “ Resist the Devil, and he shall flee from you : ” (*James* iv. 7 :) Resist sin, and it shall fall under you.

Now if ye can but get your sins out ; if ye can subdue your iniquities so far that not one of them be allowed ; if your special sins, your most beloved lusts, those that have most of all taken with you, that have been your special hinderances either in holiness or comfort, be mortified and brought under ; you shall not have reason to complain, that the **LORD** is departed from you : that which would have driven Him away will then be removed.

2. Stirring Religion will improve and increase those good things, which the **LORD** will delight in, and will not forsake. As it will work out iniquity, so it will work up grace and holiness. Stirring Christians will be thriving Christians : it is for want of action and industry that our souls are in this poor case. It was once said, “ Except we had lingered, we had returned the second time.” (*Gen.* xliii. 10.) And so, if we had not lingered and loitered, we might have had twice as much grace, twice as much holiness, as now we have : it is our lingering that keeps us so poor ; we may thank our sloth and our carelessness that there is so little of God in us. While your souls flourish in grace, the **LORD** will never leave you nor forsake you. The more you have of the grace and holiness of God in you, the more the **LORD** hath to lose : the greater treasure the **LORD** hath in your hearts, the closer guard will he keep about it, that it be not lost. Those of you whose religion hath so abounded that your soul is filled with the fruits of religion, fear not : God will stand at your right hand. If you make the Most High your habitation, and keep his habitation clean and well furnished, he will delight to

dwell with you. No gracious person, that made it his work to please the LORD, could ever say, The LORD hath forsaken me. Keep close to GOD, keep up the holiness of GOD, and GOD will never be gone. If at any time, while you are walking uprightly before him, your heart should whisper to you, GOD is departed, give check to such a thought, and say as the Psalmist did, "This is my infirmity,"—this is my mistake; the LORD is still with me, and holdeth me by his right hand.

V I am to show, *fifthly*, How we should stir up ourselves. To the directions I have hitherto occasionally given, I shall add these that follow:—*First*, Make your advantage of stirring Providences. *Secondly*, Put yourselves upon stirring Thoughts. *Thirdly*, Get stirring Affections. *Fourthly*, Get stirring Consciences. *Fifthly*, Be much conversant in stirring Society. *Sixthly*, Be much exercised in stirring Duties.

First, Make your advantage of stirring Providences;—times of trouble, and affliction, and persecution; especially such troubles as threaten the eclipse, if not the putting out, of the light of the Gospel. Such Providences are awakening Providences; and that upon a double account: 1. As they are signs of a Storm coming: 2. As they are tokens of a Night approaching.

1. As they are signs of a Storm coming. When workmen in the fields lie loitering or asleep under the cocks, if they espy a storm rising, then they are all up, and every man falls to his work, that they may despatch it before the storm falls, and they be beaten out of the field.

2. Threatening Providences are tokens of a Night approaching. What a stirring Providence this is, will appear if we consider the properties of Night. These are as follow:—

(1.) Night is dark. Night is the dark part of our time: both are joined together as signifying the same thing; "Children of night and of darkness." (1 *Thess.* v. 5.) It is the dark that makes it night, as it is the light that makes it day. When the sun is set, the Sun of Righteous-

ness that shines in the Gospel, what spiritual darkness follows! Those parts of the world where the Gospel is not, are the dark places of the earth; and whenever the light of the Gospel is removed from those parts where it hath shined, darkness overspreads them.

(2.) Night is cold. The light of the sun hath heat going with it: as the sun withdraweth, it grows cold. It was given by CHRIST, as a sign of night approaching on Jerusalem, "The love of many shall wax cold." (*Matt.* xxiv. 12.) As the sun grows low, the cold increases; and when it is but almost night, much more when night hath overtaken us, when its darkness hath overspread us, that is the cold part of our time. Whatever heats there are now upon our spirits, it is to be doubted how cold we may grow when night overtakes us. If the love of so many, if the religion of so many of us, be waxen so cold already, when it is but almost night, it should make us tremble to consider, how much colder we are likely to grow, when it comes to be quite night with us.

(3.) Night is a time of silence. It is often called the silent night. Those that now speak to you, and call upon you to keep you waking, may, in the night that is coming upon us, be silenced, and not suffered to speak any more to you. And when the watchmen must hold their peace, that is a sad and dismal time.

(4.) Night is a time of sleep. "They that sleep, sleep in the night." That is likely to be the unhappiness of people, that, whatever be the miseries of a spiritual night, they are likely to fall asleep under all, and to be without sense of their invaluable loss: it will leave men stupid and senseless. Yon that do not prize nor improve the Gospel-light, this is likely to be your case: when it is gone, you will not bewail its loss, but your souls will fall asleep. O if you be such sleepy souls whilst you have the light with you, if the word of the Gospel will not awaken you, what a deep sleep will the want of the Gospel bring upon you! Friends, you have need to rouse up, every one of you, now whilst the Gospel calls to you,—*"Awake, thou that sleepest."* If you

will not, but will continue, under the preaching of the Gospel, a company of drowsy souls, whilst you have the light among you, how do you think it will be with you when night overtakes you? The Devil will say to you then, as CHRIST did once to his sleepy disciples, "Sleep on now." (*Matt. xxvi. 45.*) Nay, CHRIST himself may do the same;—since ye would not watch in the day, whilst ye had light, now even sleep on while ye will; sleep on to the death.

And you that hope you have life in you, and yet will not be awakened by the day-light, but will sleep on still, whom neither the lightning nor the thunder of the Word will awaken, pray tell me what dead sleepers you also are likely to continue in the dark and silent night?

(5.) Night is no time for work. "The night cometh, wherein no man can work." Work there is, that lies upon every one of you, and such work wherein your life is concerned. I will not say only with the Apostle, "He that will not work shall not eat," (*2 Thess. iii. 10.*) but He that will not work shall not live: thou shalt die the death, who dost not in the day work out the work which God hath committed to thee to do. You have every one of you your work to do; and it is a great work, and of great consequence. You are to work for your living, for an eternal livelihood; you are to work out your salvation. That is your work in the general; and in this there are many particular works comprehended. There is the work of repentance and mortification of sin; there is grace to be gotten and improved; there is your peace with God to be made. Have ye done these works? Have you repented? Are your sins mortified? Have you grace in your hearts? Have you made your peace with God? You that have, there is still all this to be maintained and carried on, that ye lose not the things which you have wrought. But are all these things yet to do with so many of you? Are you yet without repentance? Have you yet to seek for grace? Have you got never a drop of the holy oil into your vessels? Are you without the knowledge of God, without faith in

CHRIST, without repentance? Is your peace with God yet to make? Doth the wrath of God still abide upon you? What, and yet asleep? What, and yet such idle, careless, loitering souls? What if this work should never be done? If you should never have more of CHRIST, and his grace; never have more of faith and repentance, than you now have? Why then you must go down among the dead! Look ye down; cast an eye down on those chambers of darkness, that place of pitch and brimstone, that place of fire and everlasting burnings; look ye down into that horrible pit, and see where you must lie, and what your place and your portion must be for ever, if you arise not and work these works of God:—ye cannot live, but must die; and that is the death you must die, you must burn, you must be tormented night and day for ever and ever!

You see there is great work to be done, and to be done by every one of you; you see what will follow if it be not done,—you must die the death. O methinks now this word should be a stirring word to you; awaken, every one of you; arise, and apply to your work: “the night cometh when no man can work.” And let it not suffice you to say, “I hope this work is done, and therefore there can be no such danger if I be fallen asleep:” but know, that if the grace which you seem to have, makes you grow secure; if you grow bold to be idle and careless upon the confidence that the work is done; that confidence of yours is a deadly sign that the work is not done, no, nor savingly begun upon you. Whatever work there may be done upon you, your life lieth upon your careful and vigorous carrying it on: if you do not hold out to the end, and keep working to the end, ye cannot be saved. And is not this a stirring word to you also that are sleeping and loitering professors? Awake, or perish; to your work or be damned!

Secondly, Put yourselves upon stirring thoughts. Our thoughts are apt to be busy, and too busy where they should not; like little children which will be busy from morning

till night about doing nothing. Keep your thoughts employed, and well employed. There are wandering thoughts which are too busy, roving and flying up and down this way and that, which, like the eyes of a fool, "are in the ends of the earth." (*Prov. xvii. 24.*) There are the wanderings of our thoughts after sin, and vanity, and impertinencies; we are thinking too much and too often of what we should not think. And sometimes there are wanderings after good things; sometimes our thoughts wander to heaven, wander up and down about things spiritual and eternal; though we think sometimes of these better things, it is but with wandering thoughts; though we light upon them, yet we fix not. We are not like the bee which wanders from flower to flower, but pitches and stays upon each flower till it hath got the honey; but we are more like the fly that leaps up and down, that is here and there and every where, sometimes upon a wall, sometimes on a flower, and sometimes on a dunghill, but stays nowhere. Our better thoughts are so transient, that they are to no purpose. Sometimes one Scripture comes to mind, but before any thing is made of it, away we go from that to another. Such hoverings up and down there are from this thing to that, as bring an utter confusion of heart. These also may be reckoned among our vain thoughts, against which we are cautioned: "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" (*Jer. iv. 14.*) Not only our thoughts of vanity, but our thinking of good things in vain, and to no purpose, these also are vain thoughts. Exercise your thoughts upon good things, upon the matters of God and your souls, and exercise them to some purpose.

That your thoughts may be stirring thoughts, so as to stir up your hearts towards God and godliness, they must be,

1. Searching thoughts; looking upon, and looking into, the things of God. "My spirit made diligent search." (*Ps. lxxvii. 6.*) Searching looks deep into things. There are three great deeps into which we should be searching;—the deep of the heart, and what we can find there either of good or evil;—the deep of the pit, the infernal pit, for what

we can find there to awaken us ;—and the deep mysteries of **GOD** and his Gospel, for what we can find there to keep us doing. If you would be thinking more what there is within you, and what a world of wickedness there is in your hearts ; if you would be thinking oftener what there is beneath, what a dismal place your sins are preparing for you ; if you would be thinking more of the mysteries of **GOD** and godliness, of the counsels, and instructions, and ways of **GOD**, of the kindnesses and compassions of **GOD**, of the severities and wrath of **GOD**,—looking narrowly and deeply into them ; such thoughts as these would be awakening and stirring thoughts : but then they must be,

2. Working thoughts ; looking into these things, and staying, and dwelling, and working upon them. Think upon your evil hearts, and never leave thinking and thinking, till you be affected with what you find in them ; think till your hearts ache for the evil you see in them ; think upon your sins till your hearts tremble and turn from your sins. It was said of **PETER**, “ When he thought thereon he wept.” (*Mark xiv. 72.*) “ I thought on my ways,” said the Psalmist, “ and turned my feet to thy testimonies.” (*Psa. cxix. 59.*) Think on all your evils, till your hearts be thus affected with them, and thereupon be put to flight, to make a hasty escape from them : think on **GOD**, and on holiness, and on grace, till your hearts be athirst for **GOD** and his grace, so as to put yourselves upon following hard after him. Think on these things with an eye to yourselves : yet again, bethink yourselves, whether you have escaped, or how you may escape, the evils that are within or before you ; whether you have obtained, or how you may obtain the good things you desire. Think how it is with you, how much you are under the power of sin, how short you are of the grace of **GOD**, or, if you have any, how very low it is with your souls in this respect, how little you have gotten, or how much you have lost. And when you find how bad it is, then think farther, “ Is it good for me, is it safe for me, to continue at this pass ? Is there any hope that I may recover out of this case ? Is it worth my pains to seek an escape ? What shall I do ? Shall I venture

on in this idle, trifling, carnal way, as I have done? Shall I venture an eternal loss, rather than put myself to it to recover? Shall I venture my soul on these cobwebs, these rotten and deceitful boughs, on which I have hanged my hopes? Shall I sin, and sleep, and loiter, in hope that yet I shall obtain mercy? Is it not most evident, that the hope which serves for nothing but to secure men in a carnal, sinful, careless way, is a lying hope, a damning hope? It is a lie, this carnal hope; it is a lie that I have in my right hand; I shall be undone by it for ever and ever; there is no hope but I shall be lost and perish eternally, unless I shake off my sins, and shake up mine heart to follow on after the LORD."

Would not such thoughts as these be stirring thoughts? Could you sleep in your sins or under your backslidings, were you more exercised in such thoughts as these? O put yourselves upon such thoughts; think of the sad case your souls are in, and think till you weep over yourselves; think of the dreadful things you are in danger of, and think till you tremble; think of the things you have received and heard from the LORD, and think till they pierce and enter into your souls.

I beseech you in the LORD, that you deny me not this request, that you will every one of you bestow some thoughts upon your souls. What, will you deny me in this? Will you not grant me thus much? I do not now persuade you to spend your money upon your souls, or to be at the charge of all your substance for your soul's recovery: what I would desire of you at present is, that you would every day spend some serious thoughts about them; and what, will you not do thus much, nor spare a few thoughts for your eternal welfare? Is not the escaping the fire worth your thinking of? I know you will say, "O it is worth thinking, and working, and running, and labouring, all that ever I can, and spending all that ever I have, to save my life, to save my soul;" every one of you will say so; and yet, for all that, I doubt there are many of you that will not be persuaded to do this little thing,—to spend some serious thoughts daily upon it.

Well, whether you will remember this or forget it, that my soul may not be guilty of your eternal miscarriage, of your dying in your sins, or of your sleeping to death in your languishing state, I once again warn you, to bethink yourselves how it is with you, and every day to bestow such serious thoughts upon the important matters of **GOD** and your souls, as may tend to your recovery.

Thirdly, Get stirring affections.

1. Stir up godly sorrow. The Apostle wrote such a letter to the Corinthians, as made their hearts ache: “I made you sorry with a letter:” (2 *Cor.* vii. 8:) and this sorrow, what a stir it made in their hearts! It stirred up “care,” and “fear,” and “indignation,” and “vehement desire,” and “revenge” upon themselves for their faults and neglects.

O that my preaching to you might have the same effect upon you, that the Apostle’s letter had upon them; that I might make you sorry, sorry at the heart, for the case that many of your souls are in; yea, and set you to it, to stir up this godly sorrow in yourselves. The King said to **NEHEMIAH**, “Why is thy countenance sad, since thou art not sick?” (chap. ii. 2.) I may say to you, Why is your countenance not sad, since you are so sick? What, sick at heart, and yet so merry? Look inward, and see how it is with you; probe your sores and wounds, till you have made them bleed and smart. Sure you have forgotten what hath been said, if you yet find not for what to mourn. Remember yourselves: is it no matter of sorrow to you to see what your sin hath made? What, is the head sick, and the heart faint, and the whole man become “wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores;” and is all this nothing to you? What, is your religion, the Gospel, and the name of your **GOD**, wounded by you,—by your backslidings, and by your walking in a way so unworthy of that worthy Name, and does not this move you? Have you grieved your **GOD** by your falls, by your follies, by your falsehood to his covenant, and declining from his way? Shall your **REDEEMER** weep over you, because of the hard-

ness of your hearts, and the SPIRIT of grace be grieved, by whom you have been sealed to the day of redemption ; and will not this grieve your hearts ? O study what matter of sorrow you have, and desist not from that study till tears come. What, is it with you as it was with Israel ; are you which were once “ holiness unto the LORD, and ” as “ the first-fruits of his increase,” (*Jer.* ii. 3,) now laid in common to the world ? Have you “ changed your glory for that which doth not profit ? ” (*ver.* 11.) Have you “ forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed out ” to yourselves “ cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water ? ” (*ver.* 13.) Is the LORD become as a wilderness to you, and as a land of darkness ; and is this world become your paradise ? Have you lost the “ kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals ; ” and is your love to CHRIST swallowed up of your lust after vanity ? See, if this be the case of any of you ; and if it be, O make not light of it, but lay it deeply to heart ; and let your own “ wickedness correct ” you, and your “ backslidings reprove ” you ; and “ know and see that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that you have thus “ forsaken the LORD,” and that his fear is so much departed from you.

O that my word may put you to grief, and make you sorry. What, art thou not sorry for all this ? Canst thou not yet say, “ I am pained at the heart for mine iniquities ; my backslidings reprove me, my foolishness corrects me, and makes my soul within me to mourn ? ” Art thou at ease in such a case ? Is thine heart quiet, as if all were well ? O how little hope is there then of thee that thou wilt be recovered ? If I could but make you sorry, if you would but stir up a godly sorrow in your souls, O how mightily would this work to your recovery ! Then what fear would there be of continuing thus any longer, and what indignation against yourselves for your own follies, in departing thus from the living God ! Then what care would there be, and what vehement desire after a speedy escape and recovery !

2. Stir up fear. But what cause have you of fear ?

Search, and you may find cause enough. Is there no matter of fear in your present case?

(1.) You that are in your sins; you ignorant, impenitent, ungodly ones, is there no fear for you? Are your souls safe? Are they not in danger? Is there no fear for unbelievers? No fear for the drunkards, the covetous, the proud, liars, and loose livers? Art thou such a one, and is there no fear what may become of thee? Art thou under condemnation, and yet not under fear? As the penitent thief said to the other, "Dost not thou fear God?" (*Luke xxiii. 40.*) Fearest thou not God, sinner, who art under condemnation? And if thou fearest not God, fearest thou not the Devil neither, and fearest thou not hell neither? O stupid, senseless souls! What, under condemnation, and yet not afraid?

(2.) You that hope you have grace, and yet continue low in grace, is there no fear concerning you? No fear of idlers and loiterers? You that have but little, and satisfy yourselves with that little, is there no fear that that something may be nothing? Is there no fear that though you think yourselves to be something, and to have something of Christianity in you, something of saving grace, yet you may at last be found to have nothing, and so be deceived? Is there no fear of deceiving yourselves in a matter of such importance? Are you in such danger of being deceived, and yet not afraid? Or if you have something of Christianity or religion in you, is there no fear that you may lose that little which you have, and so come to nothing at last? What means that exhortation, "Hold fast what thou hast?" (*Rev. iii. 11.*) What means that caution, "That we lose not the things that we have wrought:" (*2 John 8;*) what mean these words, if there be no danger of losing what we have?

(3.) You that are already fallen to decay, that have lost your first love, is there no fear of your losing all? Is there no fear, but you shall recover all again? Or is there no fear of you, whether ever you do recover or no? Is there no fear of backsliders, no fear of revolters, and apostates?

Wherever there is danger, there should be fear. What, unbelievers, and in no danger? What, backsliders, apostates, and yet in no danger? What, can you say, "There is no danger to men in my case?" Can you say, "I thank God, whoever be in danger, my soul is out of danger?" There is not one of you dares say so! You have lost the understandings of men, if you confess not, "The Lord be merciful to me, my soul is in great danger." What, are you in danger, and yet not in fear? In such great danger, and yet not afraid? Not afraid of the Devil, not afraid of death, not afraid of hell, when in such great danger of it? When CHRIST says, "Fear not them that kill the body;" (*Luke xii. 4;*) wilt thou say, "No, nor will I fear him that can destroy both body and soul?" O poor stupid souls, awaken your fears; open your eyes, and see your danger! The Lord open your eyes before it be too late, and make you see the fearful case you are in, and so make you afraid! If I could rouse up your fears, it would be as the stirring up a nest of hornets about your ears, which sure would make you run for it. "Happy is the man that fear^{eth}." (*Prov. xxvii. 14.*) If there were more fear in you, there were more hope of you. I should have done God and your souls good service this day, if I could but preach you into fear, if I could but make you afraid of yourselves, if this word might run through all the three sorts of you, the impenitent, the loiterers, and the backsliders: "Woe is me, wretched creature, I am afraid, I am afraid what will become of me; I am afraid I shall go to hell; I am afraid the Devil will have me at last!" If such a word might come through all your hearts, the next word I should hope to hear, would be this, "Well, I see there is no safe abiding thus; I am undone if I continue as I am; arise, O my soul, flee out of this sinful state, and get thee into CHRIST; shake thee out of this sloth, recover out of this languishing, recover thy first love, return to thy first works, or I shall lose my crown and my soul." Stir up such a fear in yourselves; do not hide your danger from your own eyes, till it be too late; dare not to say, "I trust my soul is in no danger;" but

deal plainly with yourselves, and come to understand the truth, and the worst of your case : cease not to study your danger, till you have stirred up your fear ; and when your fear is once up, this, there is hope, will stir up all within you to make after an escape.

3. Stir up desire. Desire is the thirst of the soul ; and thirst is a stirring appetite, as I have already showed. Desire will stir up to labour ; therefore it is that SOLOMON says, "The desire of the slothful killeth him." (*Prov. xxi. 25.*) It is death to the slothful to labour, and yet his desire will push him upon it. "One thing have I desired, that I will seek after." (*Ps. xxvii. 4.*) "One thing have I desired : " that notes a stirring desire. When the motions of the soul run in one channel, and all after one thing, then they run more strongly and impetuously ; and this strong desire puts him upon earnestly seeking the satisfaction of it. "When the desire cometh, it is a tree of life : " (*Prov. xiii. 12 :*) and what is so sweet when it comes, will be the more earnestly pursued before it comes.

Would you be zealous followers of God, and followers of holiness ? Get stronger desires after the LORD and his holiness. Strong desires will pour forth strong cries ; your souls will go on crying after the LORD, crying after his grace, and the power of his SPIRIT, if ye do in earnest desire it. Cold desires, or none at all, leave the soul as a ship becalmed, that stirs not on ; when the wind is quick, and the sails are filled, its motion is swift ; but when the wind lies, it moves not at all. If you inquire into the reason of our slight and slow endeavours in following God, it is because desire fails. Stir up your desires ; get you quick and strong desires, and these will not suffer you to be so sluggish. But how must we stir up our desires after God ?

(1.) Suppress your carnal desires : desire earth less, and you will desire heaven more. A river that is divided into several channels, runs more weakly in either ; when our streams are united, and run all in one channel, they are much the stronger. "Unite mine heart to fear thy name," says the Psalmist : (*Ps. lxxxvi. 11 :*) Let me fear God,

and let me fear none but GOD. So let your souls say, Unite mine heart to love thy name, and to desire thee; let me love nothing but GOD, let me desire nothing but GOD; let me able to say, as the Psalmist, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?” (*Ps. lxxiii. 25.*) Thou hast all my love; and all my desire is towards thy name. When you love nothing but GOD, when you desire nothing but GOD, this will be strong love, these will be strong desires: what you inordinately love or desire besides the LORD, this will abate your love and your desires after him. Your desires after this world, your appetite after meat, and drink, and money, and carnal pleasures, are too eager to let you have any strong desires after the LORD. Quench your carnal thirst, if you would have your souls to pant after GOD and spiritual things: be more indifferent what you have, or how it is with you, in respect of earthly things,—whether you have more or less, whether it be better or worse with you in respect of these; leave it to GOD, to do with you what he will, to let forth these nether streams, or to dam them up, to make you rich or poor, prosperous or afflicted; and the more patient you are of wanting the nether streams, the more impatient will be your thirst after the upper streams. It is hard to find any persons that have a greedy appetite to things below, who have any strong desire upwards. “If any man love the world, the love of the FATHER is not in him:” (1 *John* ii. 15:) and so, if any man desire the world, the desire after GOD is not in him. Methinks this word should shake the hearts of some. There are, I doubt, many that go under the name of Christians, who are as excessively hungry after this world, whose souls are hunting after, and heaping up, whatever they can catch of this earth, with as great zeal as any of those do, or can, who have nothing of Christianity, nor pretend to any such thing. It is a shame and a reproach to the Gospel that it should be so, and woe be to them by whom the reproach cometh: but yet it is too true, that there are, amongst the number of professors, some whose

hunger and labour after the world can hardly be over-matched by any of those that have no part nor portion in **CHRIST**, nor name in his churches.

I pray deal faithfully in this matter with yourselves. Ask your hearts, "How stand I affected to this world?" Are you as impatient when you sink and decay in religion, as if you were sunk and fallen to decay in your outward estates? Can you truly say, "I am not so much athirst to grow rich in this world; but I am more athirst to grow rich towards **GOD**?" Nay, can you say this,—"**I am so much athirst for GOD, that this hath quenched my thirst, and allayed my desires, after this world: I am become more indifferent what I have here, whether more or less: my heart sits loose from all below, through the strength of my desires after GOD.**" Can you say so?

Well, know that it is impossible you should desire **GOD** and this world together: one of the two must fall; you must strike sail as to your earthly affections, or your soul will never hoist up sail heaven-wards. And this is the first direction for kindling and quickening your desires heaven-ward;—suppress your earthly desires.

(2.) Be sensible of your necessity: necessity kindles desire. "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee." (*Ps.* lxxiii. 1.) Whence are this thirst and longing? **O** they are from his necessity. "**I am in a dry land, where no water is.**" I have need of thee, **LORD**,—need of thy water-brooks; for out of thee I have none; it is all a dry land; there is no water, below thee, to quench my thirst.

Would you be satisfied in your desires after more grace? Be sensible of your barrenness and your want. Do you wish to be in a better case than you are? Have you grace enough to supply your necessities? Those that are very poor outwardly, whose poverty pinches them, their necessity will make them beg. How is it there are so many poor, so many necessitous souls, and yet so few begging souls? Even ready to starve for want of bread, and yet crying no more after it? Why, it is because, however we are in

necessity, yet we have not a due sense of our necessity ; our poverty doth not pinch us : men that are extremely poor in the world, their poverty pinches them ; but for souls, the poorer they are, the less they are pinched with it. If you were more pinched with your spiritual poverty,—if those dry and lean souls did but feel how lean you are,—if you were touched with a feeling of your necessities,—if your cold wishes, “I would I had more grace,” were come to, “I must have more ; I must be more holy ; I must be more heavenly-minded ; I must be more zealous for God, and more busy and active in following him ; a necessity lies upon me, and woe is me if I continue as now I am ;”—the sense of your necessity of getting into a better case would enlarge your desires after it.

4. Stir up hope. You say, “I do desire it were better with me ; I see it would be happy for me, if I could obtain ; but, the Lord help me ! I have little hope of it : I have desired so long, and waited so long, and yet it comes not ; but my poor and barren soul, after all, still abides in the same dead and lifeless state as ever, and is so far short, and at so great a distance from that blessed state, that I am even quite discouraged, and am in doubt I shall never obtain.” Be not discouraged : “hope in God.” To stir up this hope consider, (1.) The promise of God. (2.) The earnest that you have already received.

(1.) Consider the promise of God. The hope of the saints is called “the hope of the promise of God.” (*Acts* xxvi. 6.) The promise, which is the foundation of our hope, is our encouragement against all despondencies. Amongst the many promises that we have for our encouragement I shall mention one : “Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be opened unto you : for every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your chil-

dren, how much more shall your FATHER which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (*Matt.* vii. 7—9, 11.) Here I shall show,

[1.] The matter of the promise, or what GOD will give; that is, good things. In *Luke* xi. 13, it is expressed, "give the HOLY SPIRIT;"—there is all that thou needest in one word. In giving the HOLY SPIRIT, is included the giving of all good things. What is it you want, to help your weak and languishing souls? Is it a spirit of wisdom and understanding that you want? Is it a spirit of holiness? Is it a spirit of grace and supplication? Is it a spirit of faith and of power? Is it the teachings, the motions, the quickening, the conduct, of the SPIRIT? How is it with them that are taught by the SPIRIT, led by the SPIRIT, worship GOD in the SPIRIT, and walk in the SPIRIT? So shall it be with you, if ye obtain the HOLY SPIRIT upon your asking him. This grace, the grace of the SPIRIT, shall be sufficient for you, to make the dry tree to sprout, and the barren to bring forth fruit.

[2.] The means of obtaining this promise. Ask, seek, knock; this denotes prayer, importunity in prayer, and the use of all means, that must go along with prayer. Ask, seek, knock: pray, and pray instantly, and follow on after the LORD, and ye shall have, ye shall obtain; this gracious, this all-sufficient SPIRIT shall be yours.

[3.] The assurance of prevailing. This arises, 1. From the promise; ye shall have, ye shall find, it shall be opened; the heart and the hand of the all-sufficient GOD, the bowels of CHRIST, the covenant, all the treasures of the Gospel, shall be opened to you. Thou who art afraid that the heart of the LORD is straitened towards thee, that the bowels of his compassion are shut up against thee, that the treasures of the Gospel are all locked up from thee; ask, and knock, and all shall be opened. If all the help that is in heaven, if all the riches of CHRIST, if all the treasures of the Gospel, will recover and raise up that weak and withering soul of thine, take the right course, and thou shalt have it; all these treasures shall be opened; thou

hast God's word for it, the word of promise, which God that cannot lie hath given thee to put thee out of doubt. —2. From experience. Every one that asketh receiveth. There is no man in the world that hath taken this course, that ever failed: find out any one if thou canst, that can say, "God hath been worse to me than his word;" and surely thou mayest boldly say, "He that never failed any one of his servants will not fail me." —3. From the relation of God to his saints; he is their FATHER; whence he reasons thus: If the fathers of your flesh will not deny the children of their own bowels ("Which of you, if his son ask bread," &c.) any good thing which you need and ask, how much less will your FATHER in heaven, who is a God of bowels, of infinite compassion, deny his HOLY SPIRIT to those that ask it of him?

Christians, study this promise, trust upon this promise: and, whatever your fears and discouragements are that you shall never obtain, use God's means, ask, and seek, and knock, follow on instantly and earnestly in God's way, and then hope in God, and be no longer dismayed.

(2.) Consider the earnest that you have already received, and what pledges God hath given you, for the performance of his promise. What, is nothing of this promise performed to thee? Dost thou answer, "I hope there is; something I have gotten from it; but it is so very little, that this discourages me." Why this little thou hast received is a great encouragement to hope for more. I say, though you have asked, and sought, and knocked, and yet have but little come, yet that very little which you have obtained is great ground for you to hope for all that you need. Every little that you receive from the promise of God, is an earnest to assure you of all that is behind. Have you received but the first-fruits of the SPIRIT, a little grace, a little strength, a little improvement in grace? Is it a little better with you than it hath been? This is a pledge to you from the LORD, that if ye follow on ye shall have more and more. There is hope in what the LORD hath given you, in what he hath done for

your souls: "He that hath delivered, and doth deliver; we trust that he will deliver." (2 *Cor.* i. 10.) He hath supplied and doth help you; hence you may hope, that he will supply all your needs, out of the riches of his grace, by CHRIST JESUS. If the clouds from above have yet but dropped upon you, and that grace which your parched souls, like the thirsty earth, have received, hath come in but drop by drop, you may from those drops have the more hope of a shower that shall rain down righteousness upon you, until your souls become as a well-watered garden, and as a spring of waters whose waters fail not. Is thy soul as the chapped ground, opening and gasping after the influences of the LORD; and hath it begun to drop? Is there something come down? Art thou a little quickened, a little revived? Those very drops are the forerunners of a shower, that will fill all thy furrows. O look about you: see, after all the means that GOD hath been using to quicken and improve your souls, see if any drops be fallen upon you: if it be a little better, if there be something done towards your recovery, be not discouraged that it is no more; there is so much the more hope, that he who hath begun will perfect a cure upon you.

Thus stir up your hope in GOD, by considering the promise, and any little degree of its performance. But beware! I cannot too often give you this caution;—use not this hope to make you secure and careless; say not, for your lives, As bad as it is with me, I hope it will be better; and thereupon sleep on, and neglect to follow after! There is no hope for such a soul. Let not your hope secure you in your negligence, but establish you against your discouragement; let it not secure you against diligence, but encourage you unto diligence. Since the matter stands thus,—as great a distance as there is betwixt your present state, and that prosperous state of soul which you desire and wish for, and as great a difficulty as you imagine it, for you ever to get to such a state,—yet since both the promise and experience give you such ground of hope, that even you with whom it is so very low may get comfortably up,

therefore be encouraged to take all the pains possible. Look on *Acts* xxvi. 7, and there see how hope will work : “Unto which promise, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God night and day, hope to come.” Observe it; God gave them a promise, the promise gave them hope, and their hope encourages and provokes them on, instantly to serve the LORD; and this instant serving of God is their way to the possession of the promise.

Let all this which hath been spoken engage you to all manner of diligence, and fortify you against all manner of discouragements. Come on, Christians, come on in the name of the LORD! You have heard many directions that I have given you, and some more there are which yet remain; O set your hearts to the practice of all these words, and, how hard soever it may seem to be, take the way prescribed, and then commit your way to the LORD. Hope in him, and he will bring it to pass, and give you your heart's desire: only when you have done all, and no success appears, yet still wait for the LORD. As there must be the expectation of hope, so there must be the patience of hope. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way. Be not weary in well-doing; and in the end ye shall reap, if ye faint not. Follow on after the LORD, and encourage yourselves by your hope in God. Pray for more grace; pray for more life, and more power; and pray as men of hope. Strive and stir up your sleepy hearts, and strive as men of hope: as low as it is with you, there is yet hope for you to get up. Be encouraged by the promise: be encouraged by every little that you have received. Hath the LORD but begun to awaken you? Let that be his security to you, that he will do more and better things for you. Are you yet a great way short? Are there many difficulties, yet before you, to break through? Are there any fears and misgivings of heart, that ye shall not obtain? Yet do not discourage yourselves: hope in God, hope in the promise of God, and in the help the promise offers. Be not dismayed: say to your hearts in the words of the Psalmist, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou discouraged, O my

soul? **Hope in God**, and thou shalt yet praise him, who will be the health of thy countenance, and thy **God**. (*Ps. xliii. 5.*) Though my flesh and mine heart fail me, yet he is the strength of mine heart, and in him shall be my hope and my trust." There is a promise before me; and unto this promise, if I can but instantly seek and serve the **LORD**, I have hope to come.

Fourthly, Get a stirring conscience. **God** hath made conscience overseer and ruler in the heart. He hath advanced conscience in the heart to the same dominion to which **POTIPHAR** advanced **JOSEPH** in his house; he made him overseer of his house, and put all that he had into his hand;—or as **PHARAOH** advanced him in his kingdom, when he said, "Thou shalt be over mine house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou." Conscience is subject to none but **God**. **God** is greater than conscience: "**God** is greater than our hearts," (1 *John* iii. 20,) that is, than our consciences. But next under **God**, conscience hath the supreme dominion in the soul; and as the Centurion said to the soldiers, so conscience, where it maintains authority, says to all the faculties of the soul, "to one, Go, and it goeth; to another, Come, and it cometh;" and to every one, Do this, and it must be done.

Now as conscience is faithful and diligent, or as it is careless and negligent, so do matters go in the soul: a faithful, watchful conscience sets the whole soul in good order; a negligent, sleepy conscience lets all run to ruin. When conscience slumbers, the whole soul falls asleep; or, which is worse, runs out into all manner of disorders. When **God** will awaken sleepy souls, he begins with conscience; awaken conscience first, and that will awaken all their powers. **God** awakens conscience, mostly by frights, as the Gaoler by an earthquake, and **SAMUEL** by an affrighting voice from heaven. "Soul, soul, what art thou doing? Why slightest thou the **LORD**? Why fightest thou against **God**?" There is nothing but such thunder from heaven that will rouse a sleepy conscience. But though there is none but **God** that can awaken conscience, yet **God** ordinarily

does it by ourselves : he sets the soul on work upon itself, to its own awakening ; a word, or it may be but a thought, comes into the heart, which is made to stick in the conscience, and to sting it out of sleep : and when conscience is stung, and begins to stir, there is no more sleep, no more quiet in the soul. When the master of the house is up and about, he rouses all the servants. O get your consciences to be awakened, get your consciences to be stirring, and then all your faculties will up and be doing. That conscience may be a stirring conscience, 1. Let conscience open its ears, and hear. 2. Let it open its eyes, and see. 3. Let the mouth of conscience be open, and speak. 4. Let it be quick and tender.

1. Let conscience open its ears, and hear what the **LORD** speaks. Let the voice of the **LORD** have an impression upon conscience : when the word comes into the thoughts only, it is quickly gone, and does nothing ; or when it hath some sudden work upon the affections, that wears off ; but conscience hears the word of the **LORD** : when the word which we preach from God is, as the Apostle's word, "made manifest in the conscience," (2 Cor. v. 11,) then it is in a way to prosper. Let conscience open its ears first ; and

2. Let conscience open its eyes and see ;—see how it is with the soul ; see how sad and miserable the state and way of the soul is ; see how it is likely to be, to grow worse and worse ; see how it should be, and what is to be done that it may be better.

3. Let conscience have its mouth open. Sleepy consciences are silent consciences ; those that see nothing will say nothing. Let your consciences speak to you : whatever the word preaches to conscience, let conscience preach it to the whole heart. O that we could so preach to you, as to set your consciences a preaching to you the same things ; that when we preach to you, "Repent, and recover yourselves out of the snares of the Devil," we could get your consciences to preach repentance to you ; that there were such a voice as this heard within you, "I see I must repent ; I am lost and undone if I repent not ;" that when we give a

rebuke to you out of the word, your consciences also would rebuke you ! If the word calls you, "Thou unbeliever, thou child of the Devil, thou loiterer, thou backslider," let conscience say the same. "It is true, what the word speaks ; I am an unbeliever, I am a child of the Devil, an idler, a backsliding soul ; I cannot deny it ; it is too true what the word speaks concerning me. If the word threatens, "Thou shalt have thy portion with unbelievers, thy place among the children of the Devil, if thou speedily repent not ; let conscience say the same, "This must be my place, and my portion, if I amend not ; there is no help for me, there is no hope for me, if I continue and go on as I am." If the word exhorts you, "Be converted, thou unbelieving soul ; arise, sluggard ; return, O backsliding soul, remember whence thou art fallen, and recover thy first love, and do thy first works ;" let conscience speak the same words ; "Go to CHRIST, O my soul, turn from my sins, make thy peace with God, get thee a new heart, be upright with God, be sound in the faith, follow the LORD thoroughly, follow the LORD fully ; as ever thou lookest for mercy do it, as ever thou hopest for pardon do it ; wouldest thou ever see the salvation of God, thou must seek after the grace of God, and increase and abound therein unto the end.—Then something would be like to be done.

4. Let conscience be quick and tender :—(1.) Let the ears of conscience be open, and let it be quick of hearing. (2.) Let its eyes be open, and let it be quick-sighted. (3.) Let its mouth be open, and let it speak quick and home.

(1.) Let its ears be open, and let it be quick of hearing. Be not one of those fat and gross souls, which are dull of hearing. How many deaf ears do we preach to, that hear nothing, whose hearts will hear no more than the stone in the wall, or the beam of the timber ! And of those that will hear something, how many are dull of hearing ! We have much work, and hard work, to beat any thing into them. O get a hearing ear, and be quick of hearing !

(2.) Let the eyes of conscience be open, and let it be quick-sighted ; so that it may espy and observe the smallest

matter of duty and sin. And let it be tender-eyed, and not able to bear the least of evils ; some men's eyes can see none but the grossest of evils ; can see drunkenness to be evil, or swearing or gross lying to be evils ; but so they do not eat and drink themselves into very beasts, though they sit with drunkards, and waste their time with them, they see no evil in it. Other men see smaller evils, yet their consciences can swallow them : though conscience be quick-sighted, it wants tenderness, and they can dispense with themselves in smaller matters : but you will never come to much in religion, unless your hearts be tender of the smallest evils.

(3.) Let the mouth of conscience speak quick and home. I will not say concerning conscience, as the Apostle concerning the tongue, " Be swift to hear, slow to speak ; " but let it be swift to hear, and swift to speak. Let it speak quick, and speak home. Let it speak home, and speak loud ; let not your consciences be muzzled or mealy-mouthed ; let them speak, and speak closely, and deal plainly with you ; let them not whisper out a warning, or a reproof ; but if they may not otherwise be heard, let them do as the Prophet was to do, " Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet." (*Isa.* lviii. 1.) Let conscience never leave speaking and crying, till it be heard ; such a conscience as this is like to be a stirring conscience.

That is a stirring conscience that will maintain its authority and integrity, whatever difficulties or pains it cost ; which will be faithful in instructing, admonishing, and rebuking, and will not allow that its word or authority be slighted ; which will not suffer itself to be abused, nor to be baffled, or put off with shifts, and excuses, or delays. Such a conscience will be obeyed ; you shall have little ease, it will not suffer you to have any quiet, if you will not hearken to it. As the Apostle said he would not spare, so neither will conscience ; it " will not spare them that have sinned." (*2 Cor.* xiii. 2.) If conscience gives an admonition, or a warning, " Take heed of pride, beware of covetousness, or frowardness, or loitering and cold-

ness in matters of religion :” if conscience gives warning, “Take heed of this worldly, lazy, trifling life ;” and if a warning will not do,—it will check, and chide, and rebuke, and scourge the heart : if its voice may not be heard, it will set in its teeth ; it will bite, and sting, and weary the soul ; if once speaking, or chiding, or scourging, will not do, it will hold on, and lie at the soul from day to day, and give no rest till it prevail.

O what stirring Christians should we be, had we such stirring consciences ! That we sink as we do, shuffle in our religion, turn aside after the world, play the formalist in our duties, let all run to ruin within us, and suffer ourselves to continue asleep,—this is much our consciences’ faults. Conscience lets us alone, and either does not speak, or if it speak, it is too softly ; it does not chide or scourge us ; it doth not come to us with a rod to smite us for our faults. You that can go on in your sins, or go so coldly on in your religion ; you with whom the world is so much risen, and godliness so much fallen ; how is it with your consciences meanwhile ? What says conscience to you in this case ? It may be just nothing ! Conscience is asleep as well as you. O if we could but awaken your conscience, if the stirring words the LORD sends among you might have but this effect, this would awaken you all to another manner of life, and to activity in religion.

If your consciences would fall upon you, and sting you for your neglects, and fright you out of your security, by telling you, and laying before you, the dreadful reward of sleepers, and such idle servants ; if they would cast in some of that fire into your hearts, which your sin and your sloth are preparing for you ; if your hearts would condemn you for your follies, and tell you downright,—“This way I am in is the way of death ; these my paths lead down to hell ; I am sleeping upon a rock, slumbering upon a mast ; the waves are ready to sweep away this sleeping soul of mine, and drown it in everlasting perdition ;”—had you but such a stirring conscience as this, O what a cure, what a change, would it speedily make upon you !

Brethren, awaken conscience, that conscience may awaken you ; look to your consciences, that conscience may look better to you. " Watchman, what of the night ? Watchman, what of the night ? " Is it day-break ? Doth sleep begin to depart from thine eyes ? What, is the watchman asleep ? Awake, sleeper ; it is high time to awake out of sleep ! Speak thus to your consciences, and then hear what conscience will speak to you.

Friend, art thou fallen ? Art thou come to this, that if thou canst but grow rich in the world, thou considerest not how poor it is with thee in thy soul ? Whilst thou hast been so busy for thy flesh, hast thou let fall the care of thine heart ? Whilst thou hast turned aside after thy pleasures, and after thy lovers, hast thou lost the sight of God ? Have thy carnal correspondences and compliances made thee a stranger in heaven ? What says conscience ? Ask, " Is it peace ? Is it well ? Is it with me as it hath been ? Is it with me as it should be ? " Speak, conscience ; go tell this man, " I have something against thee ; thou hast left thy first love ; remember whence thou art fallen ; return to thy first husband, for then it was better with thee than now. What hast thou gotten since thy departing from thy God ? Thou hast gotten more of the world, more friends than heretofore, more esteem and reputation : but wert thou not a better man, when thou wert a poorer man ? Hadst thou not more of a Christian in the days of old, when thou hadst less of this world ? Remember the sweet days that thou hadst, when thou walkedst humbly with thy God ; remember the hopes, and the joys, and the peace, that thou hadst in thy Beloved. Now thou canst snatch at a duty, a word and away, scarce considering what thou dost ; thou hast thy long dinners, but short duties ; long markets, but short prayers, and as slight as they are short. " What says thy conscience to this ? Does it not tell thee that thou hast made a dear bargain ? It is a great price that thy riches have cost thee, that thy ease and thy pleasures have cost thee ! Better thou hadst kept thee a poor man still, and been holy, and humble, and tender, and upright, than

to have made a purchase of the world at so dear a rate as the loss of thine integrity and tenderness. Speak, conscience, and speak home in this matter ; thy word may be heard where mine may not !

Conscience, art thou awakened ? Get thee about, and walk the rounds, and speak according to what thou findest. Go into the city, and observe the professors there. Go into their chambers, and see if thou find them not in their beds, when they should be on their knees. Go into their wardrobes, search after their gaudy clothing, their ornaments and attires, and see if thou find not such habits and dressings as are fitter for a stage-player than a Christian. Go into the parlour, and hear whether there be any more seriousness in their discourses, than amongst them that know not God. Go to their tables, and observe their superfluities and curiosities ; how delicately, how sumptuously they fare every day. Go into their shops and their markets, and observe if there be no lying and deceitful dealings, even as amongst others ; observe how little difference thou canst find betwixt these in their dealings, and those that pretend to no religion.—If I could but set your consciences thus upon you ; or if you would set them upon yourselves ; you would both hear of more that is amiss in you, than now you will acknowledge, and would find no quiet till you set upon amending.

Fifthly, Be much conversant with stirring society and acquaintance, and be stirring among them. And here I shall endeavour the reviving of that too obsolete practice of holy and quickening discourse, the neglect whereof is both a cause, a sign, and an effect of the decay of religion among us. For the recovering and promoting of this holy practice, I shall give you, first, Directions for the bringing upon it, and the better managing of it ; secondly, An Argument to persuade you to it.

For the Directions, they are these that follow.

1. Get your hearts well filled with the grace of God. “ Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Men ordinarily fetch their words out of their hearts. As it is said of a fiery tongue, “ It is set on fire of hell ; ”

(*James* iii. 6 ;) that is, of that hell of malice that is in the heart ;—so of a holy tongue it may be said, all the good that comes from it is kindled from heaven, from that heaven that is in the heart.—It is the abundance of the heart that is most apt to come forth at the lips. In some hearts there is a little good, but much evil ; in others there is much good and less evil ; it is that which abounds in the heart, that which is most in the heart, that hath the command of the tongue.

See that there be grace in your hearts, and that the grace of God abound in you ; a little grace will not do ; that which most abounds within will have the easiest vent : “ I am full of matter, my spirit within me constraineth me : ” (*Job* xxxii. 18 :) I am full of matter, and therefore will I speak. A heart full of grace must and will have a vent by the speech : the HOLY SPIRIT within us will constrain us : where there is little good coming forth, it is a sign there is not so much as there should be within.

A full heart will be the best help for a stammering tongue. Let us get an increase of inward grace, let us get more of the HOLY SPIRIT, of the Spirit of life, and love, and power within us ; and then our friends and acquaintance are likely to hear of it oftener, and to better purpose, than they do. We are empty, we are empty : our insides have no good filling ! “ Be ye filled with the SPIRIT,” saith the Apostle, “ speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs ; ” and the more we speak thus to ourselves, the more freely shall we speak to others. In vain shall I exhort you to use your tongues more for God, till you be nursed up from children to more strength in grace. Would you ever come to be more fruitful and useful in your generations ? This must be your way to it,—get more inward grace.

2. Let your thoughts be working more about holy things. Thinking makes way for speaking : what our thoughts run most upon, that ordinarily our tongues will run upon. We cannot know each other’s thoughts ; but we may give a near guess at them by the words that are

spoken. Men whose thoughts are most in the earth, and who are still thinking of their money, or their trades, or their pleasures, can hardly forbear talking of these things : And if our thoughts were more of **GOD**, and of our souls, of religion, of righteousness, and of holiness, we should certainly have more of **GOD** and of heaven in our mouths.

Be much in thinking : think of the goodness, and kindness, and holiness, and compassions of the **LORD** ; think of **CHRIST**, of his love, of his life, of his death, of his bowels, and everlasting kindness ; think often what great things the **LORD** hath done for your souls ; think what ye would that he should do for you. Much thinking on **GOD** and holy things will leave a holy tincture on your hearts, and will by degrees do much to the begetting holy habits and dispositions in you. The **LORD** uses to convey much of his holy image and likeness upon the heart by the thoughts. Such of you as find but little of the image of **GOD** upon your hearts, consider if you be not too great strangers to the thoughts of **GOD**. How often in a day are your thoughts in heaven ? How seldom is it that you are seriously looking either upwards or inwards ? No wonder if your tongues be so silent of **GOD**, whilst your thoughts are such strangers from **GOD** !

3. Get a zeal for the honour of **CHRIST**, and for doing him the best service you can. Consider often, Wherefore hath the **LORD** made me this living soul ? That I should be "thankful to Him, and speak good of his name." Wherefore am I redeemed ? Why was that precious blood shed for me ? For what was it that **CHRIST** died ? "That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them." (2 *Cor.* v. 15.) Wherefore am I called, and sanctified, and separated from the ungodly world, by the **SPIRIT** of **CHRIST** ? Why was I not left among the men of this world ? Wherefore is it that I was not left among the drunkards and profane of the earth, among the heathens and infidels, among the blind and ignorant multitude ? Wherefore is it that I and

my brethren in CHRIST are called, and are become "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people?" That we might "show forth the virtues of Him that hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." Consider farther, What shall I do to answer these great ends, to serve the LORD, to live unto CHRIST, to show forth his virtues and praises? How happy would it be for me if I could serve to these holy ends! Is it not my duty thus to live? Is not the LORD worthy whom I should serve? Is not CHRIST worthy to whom I should live? What can I do better than to consecrate my life to him? This is a life for a Christian, this is a life for the redeemed of the LORD; so to carry it in their whole conversation, that CHRIST may be magnified in them. O let my love, and my labour, and my care, let the strength of my heart, let the ardent zeal of my soul, be all spent upon this very thing, that CHRIST may be honoured and magnified in me!

If we were wrought up to this holy zeal for CHRIST, would it suffer us to dwell in silence? The zeal of our hearts would open our lips; "our mouth would show forth his praise;" the tongue of the dumb would be loosed, the dumb would speak, and speak good of his name; our delight would be in speaking of our Beloved. Thou dost not so much want a tongue to speak, as thou wantest a heart to speak. Hadst thou more love to CHRIST, more zeal for CHRIST within thee, this would open thy mouth; if thou couldst but find thee a heart, thy heart would find thee a tongue. If thy heart were as hot as that of the holy Prophet was, thou wouldst say as he did, "I am weary of forbearing." (*Jer.* xx. 9:) I cannot hold, but I must speak. Thou wouldst then be as weary of forbearing, as now thou art weary of speaking. Christians, get you such a zealous heart; let your hearts be once firmly set to do CHRIST all the honour you can; be more heartily concerned for the glory of his kingdom, and for having your hand in the propagation of his Gospel. Be more thoroughly

possessed of his love, more firmly devoted to his service, and I need say no more ; this zeal of your hearts would put grace into your lips.

4. Get more compassion to souls. The Apostle, when exhorting Christians to be active for the good of souls, requires, " On some have compassion, putting a difference ; others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." The meaning is,—Put a difference in your dealings betwixt the weak and the wilful ; on the weak have compassion ; deal more gently and tenderly with them, but more roughly with those that are wilful ; save *them* with fear, fright them out of the fire. Compassion must be either as a means for restoring sinners ; and thus some must be dealt compassionately with, others more roughly : (in this sense there must be compassion exercised towards the weak, but not towards the wilful :)—or else our compassion must be our motive to put us upon dealing with souls ; and thus, on all we must have compassion, without making a difference ; or, if any difference be, the worst of sinners must be the objects of our greatest compassion. We must have compassion on the most obstinate and wilful sinners ; upon the wickedest of men ; those that will have no compassion on you, if they have you in their power ; those that have no compassion on themselves ; those that are the most hardened in their sins ;—towards these especially should be our great compassion ; those who are in the greatest misery, in the greatest danger, are the greatest objects of compassion.

O friends, have compassion on one another's souls, and this will open your mouths. Dost thou see a company of poor sinners, held in the snares of the Devil, running headlong to the pit, damning themselves with all their might ? Dost thou see a company of blind sinners, of sick sinners, ready to die of the plague of their hearts ? Dost thou see the Devil butchering and murdering so many, and dragging them on, one after another, as the ox to the slaughter ? Where are thy bowels ? Hast thou no pity within thee towards such miserable ones ? How canst thou say, " I pity them," when thou wilt not speak a word to recover

them out of their misery? How canst thou say, "There is a poor drunkard, I pity him," when thou wilt not speak one word to reform him? How canst thou say, "There is a poor, blind, ignorant soul, I pity his ignorance," when thou wilt not speak a word to instruct him? How canst thou say, "There is a poor worldling, I pity him, to see how he is eaten up of worldly cares," when thou wilt not speak a word to convince him of his danger? How canst thou say, "It grieves mine heart to see how some pine away, and consume; what backsliders they are, how cold and careless and dead-hearted?" How canst thou say, "I pity these backsliders, I pity these wasted and decayed souls," when thou wilt not speak a word, to make them remember from whence they are fallen? If thou wouldst be faithful, who knows but thou mightest save poor, lost, and languishing souls? Dost thou pity them notwithstanding? No! Thou art a hard-hearted one, thou hast shut up thy bowels against them, who shuttest up thy mouth from yielding that help thou mightest for their recovery. Be pitiful, Christians; pity poor drunkards; pity poor, blind, and hardened sinners; pity poor lukewarm and backsliding professors; and in your pity, go speak to them. Parents, pity your poor, ignorant, rebellious children; husbands, pity your poor carnal wives; masters, pity your poor families; every one of you, pity your poor carnal friends and acquaintance; and in your pity labour for their conversion and salvation.

The miseries of poor souls cry in your ears, "You that have the heart of a Christian, pity me." Whilst sinners' mouths are full of scorn at you, whilst they laugh and mock at any good which they see or hear, yet the miseries their souls are in, cry for your pity. Though some of them will reply, if you offer a word about the danger of their states, "What is that to you? Look to yourselves, meddle with your own business;" yet still the more pity is to be showed to them. If you could hear the voice of their misery this would be it, "O an undone, a lost, a perishing soul; a captive to the Devil, yea, and not willing to be

delivered, running on upon mine own ruin, almost past recovery. Is it nothing to you that stand by? Behold, and see if there be any misery like my misery! O be neither deaf nor dumb to me: open your ears, and hear the cry of my misery; and then open your mouths, and tell me what I must do to be saved; but open your bowels first, and that will most effectually open your hearts and mouths.

5. Go always well provided. Get yourselves well furnished with matter for holy discourse. The great hindrance is the want of a heart; but in some, though they have a heart to speak, yet they know not where to begin. But "Every Scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." (*Matt.* xiii. 52.)

Here several things are to be noted:—1. Good men have a treasure within them; they are well furnished, and have in readiness for all holy uses. 2. Their treasure is laid in by instruction, by what they have learned and heard. 3. A good man's treasure is long in gathering; he hath within him "things new and old." 4. A good man doth retain his instruction; old things are not passed away with him; the things that he heard many years ago are still with him; he hath hid the word in his heart, as the Psalmist did, and where he hides it there he finds it. Of **MARY** it is said, that she kept all the sayings of **CHRIST** in her heart. 5. Out of this treasure it is, that he brings forth for the benefit of others: his treasure, though it be hid in his heart, yet it is not buried there.

For want of this provision and preparation, some men are silent, they have nothing to speak; other men, if they speak, speak nothing to purpose: to prevent both these, both sinful silence and impertinent speaking, this is the best course I can advise you to; go always prepared of what to speak. Provide yourselves,

(1.) From the Scriptures. When you read a chapter, lay up in your memories any special things which you find

there. Think with yourselves, Here is a word, that I may shortly have occasion to make use of in my family, or amongst others; and so remember it that you may have it in readiness when occasion shall arise.

(2.) From the Sermons you hear. It would be a special help to holy discourse, if what you hear preached on the LORD's day, you would make the matter of your discourse the week following. Hereby you may the more fix what you hear in your own hearts, and be supplied with fresh matter. I exhort you again to practise this useful direction; what you hear on the LORD's days, discourse of on the week-days.

(3.) From your own Experiences of the dealings of GOD with your own souls. "Come, and hear, all you that fear GOD, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." (*Psa.* lxxvi. 16.) Self-observing Christians have many experiences by them, which may be useful for others. You may be telling one another what experiences you have had of the workings of sin in you, and of temptations; what experiences of the workings of grace, and of your victories over corruption and temptation; what comforts you have had, and how you came by them; what distresses and fears you have been under, and how you were relieved; what difficulties you have found in your work, how long you groaned under them, and how at length you overcame them. Many cases you may have been in, out of which much may be brought forth for the benefit of others, who are or may be in the same.

(4.) From the consideration of the Company, amongst whom at such or such a time you may be likely to be cast. Some days, it may be, you may see your necessary business leading you amongst sinners: you must work with them, in the same field, or the same shop; or you must travel with them the same journey: you may foresee in the morning, that some with whom you must converse in the day may be blind or ignorant sinners, or profane and lewd sinners, or mocking and scoffing sinners: whatever temper they are of, the consideration of it will give you a hint what to pro-

vide : for the ignorant, you must go provided with words of instruction ; for the profane, with a word of reproof ; for all sorts, such words as you judge most proper for their case, and most likely to do their souls good.

Sometimes you may see that your converse is likely to be among Christians. And then consider, whether they be weak Christians, and need your help, and what their weaknesses are, and go provided with a word accordingly ;—a word of comfort to the troubled ; a quickening word to the dead-hearted, or slothful ; a recovering, awakening word to the backsliders. Or else they may be stronger and more judicious Christians ;—then your study should be, to go prepared with such questions, touching your own case, touching any doubts, or fears, or spiritual wants, or difficulties you are under, that you may receive benefit from them.

These directions are all practicable, and may be exceedingly useful : it will cost you pains to inure yourselves to this holy practice ; but by taking pains a while, and the help of God with you, it may come to be more easy : and where it is but seriously set on foot, and carefully carried on, you cannot easily imagine, what an advance to you it will be in the state of your own soul, and what a blessed expedient to propagate religion where it is not, and to recover it where it is fallen.

This is the sum of all the directions hitherto given, *Go always with your bow bent, and your arrow upon the string* ; with a heart disposed to speak, and a word ready to be spoken.

6. Take a right method, by which you may with the most ease attain to this holy use of your tongues. You will say it is hard service, and so it is : but are you willing to try to come to it ? “ Why, what method will you prescribe to us that we may attain ? ” I answer,

(1.) Begin this practice within yourselves ; speak often to your own hearts. “ Commune with your own hearts ; ” (*Psa.* iv. 4 ;) maintain a holy discourse with yourselves. Stir up yourselves in the first place ; say to your own

hearts, "Arise, sleeper,—there is a **GOD** before thee, there is a **CHRIST** before thee, there is a Gospel and a Covenant of Grace before thee; lay hold on this **GOD**, lay hold on this covenant, walk worthy of the **LORD**, and be faithful in the covenant of thy **GOD**." Speak thus to your own souls; reason with them about it; reason with thy soul, in thy deadness, or in thy hardness, or any other case thou art in,—
 "Why art thou lifted up, O my soul? Why so hardened? Fear **GOD**: Why so proud? Why so slothful?" Humble thyself, shake thyself, quicken and rouse up thine own sleepy heart.

Brethren, till we stir up ourselves, we shall never do any thing to purpose at stirring up one another. Kindle a holy fire in your own breasts: set your own affections more strongly working upwards: if we can get our own hearts into a more serious, lively frame, then there is hope we shall effectually help others.

(2.) Next set upon this holy practice in your Families. Inure yourselves to be speaking of **GOD** among your own; with them you can be more free and bold. There is no such great difficulty for a father to speak to his children, or for a master to speak to his household; and by speaking much to these, you will by degrees grow more free and more able to speak to others. Fall therefore more closely upon this practice: fathers, speak often to your children; husbands, speak often to your wives; masters, speak to your servants; servants, speak one to another. "These my words shall be in thine heart, and in thy soul:"—Speak them to thyself first, and then—"ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (*Deut. xi. 18, 19.*) Charity begins at home, and so must all religion: religion must begin at home, in thine own heart first, and then in thine house, and thence thou wilt get ability and aptness to diffuse it abroad.

Consider, Beloved, how it is with you at your homes upon this account? What religion is there going in your

families? How often do your children, and your servants, hear any gracious words from you? Do all you can to make all yours partakers of the grace you have received. Is the word of the LORD in thine own heart? Let your whole household hear oftener of it, as you sit at your tables, as you sit at your fires, or are walking in your houses: it is not now any stated way of instruction, by reading the word, repeating sermons, or catechising, that I am dealing with you about; but that, in a way of familiar discourse, you would be often dropping some gracious word. Have you a conscience towards God? What conscience is that, that will suffer you to live in the neglect of so known and necessary a duty? Can you with any conscience withhold bread or clothes from your own? With what conscience, then, can you withhold counsel and instruction? Will you make yours partakers of all you have in the world, and so act that they shall have no benefit only by the knowledge or grace you have received? Let your bowels instruct you to be kind to their souls: and if you will by any means be persuaded to be thus kind to your own, you will thereby be prepared, and get such a holy habit, as will make it more familiar and easy to live profitably amongst others.

Beloved, hearken to me in this thing; try what you can do. If ever you would stand up in your generations, as persons of any use to CHRIST, and the interest of his Gospel, if you would not stand as insignificant ciphers, or as dumb idols that have mouths and speak not, use your tongues to better purpose at home.

(3.) Next speak to your Brethren and fellow Christians, to those that fear the LORD. It may be you may be more abashed to speak to those that are without; you know not how they will take it; you doubt they may be dogs, that will tear and rend you; or at least that they be swine, and trample under feet, and scorn and despise those holy words: but with your brethren in the LORD you may be more free, in confidence that they will take in good part

the good words you speak, and will also be tender to you, and bear with your infirmities in speaking.

Labour for a more profitable converse, Christians with Christians, believers with believers. This will be more easy, because you may presume one another to be of the same spirit; your good words will be unto them acceptable words, and the sense of that will invite you to speak. Christians have need of one another, to help each other in the LORD; and yet there is a great fault amongst us, that we are not thus mutually helpful. Learn to amend this fault: let us, as we have opportunity, build up one another in our most holy faith; "let us consider one another, to provoke to love and to good works." Do not tempt one another (as perhaps too often you do) to be vain as you are vain, to be carnal as you are carnal; do not chill and damp each other's spirits, by your frothy and impertinent discourses; but quicken one another, and do what you can to whet and set an edge upon each other's spirits, and holy affections. What, have you nothing to talk of when you come together, but of your trades and your fields, or of news, or of the weather? Have you not a God? Have you not souls? Have you not a country whither you are travelling? Are you not upon a journey to that blessed land? Have you not friends and kindred above, that are worth the speaking of? Have you not enemies and temptations here below, an evil world to travel through, many corruptions and afflictions to conflict withal,—and have you not need of mutual counsel, comfort, encouragement, and establishment? How is it that you can find room for so much idle talk, when you have matters of such moment to fill up your time? When do you use to return with most comfort and satisfaction upon your spirits? When you have been vainly merry together, or when you have been edifying one another in the faith?

(4.) In the next place, speak to those which are without, to poor sinners that are yet in their sins. "Then will I

teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." (*Ps.* li. 13.) Your special work possibly may lie amongst the household of faith; but, as you have opportunity, you must do good to all. (*Gal.* vi. 10.) All that need you must be made partakers of your spiritual as well as of your temporal things: those that fear GOD, it may be, may sometimes hear some good words from you; but have you never a word for those that fear not GOD?

O pity your poor unconverted neighbours, and in your compassion do what you can to pull them out of the fire; convince them of their sins, warn them of their miseries, persuade them back from the Devil, invite and allure them to CHRIST; let them hear often of grace and sin, of heaven and hell, of death and judgment, from your lips. See how the compassions of the church work towards the heathen world, "We have a little sister that hath no breasts; what shall we do for our sister?" (*Cant.* viii. 8.) The poor Gentiles, they have no Scriptures, no Prophets, no ordinances, no breasts of consolation: "We have a poor sister that hath no breasts, what shall we do for her?" They pitied the poor Gentiles, and in their pity they consider what they might do for them. And why do not we carry it so to unconverted sinners? We have poor children, poor neighbours, that have no eyes, no heart; that have no CHRIST, no knowledge, no grace; poor blind neighbours, poor hardened ones; poor lost and undone souls! O what shall we do for these poor children and neighbours? Have I never a word to speak, that might do them good? Shall I be silent to them, whilst I see them perishing for want of instruction? Christians, have you the light with you? Are there the words of wisdom and instruction with you? Is there ever a word of grace laid up in your hearts? O keep it not in; withhold it not from perishing souls; speak to poor sinners, affright them from their sins, provoke them to repentance, persuade them to pray, to hear, to read, to consider, and to turn from the evil of their ways;—and who knows what such words might do to their conversion and salvation?

These are the Directions for the performance of this holy practice.

The Argument that I shall use to persuade you to it, shall be from the advantage of this practice for the reviving and improving our own souls in the grace of God. The advantage will be great,

1. From our necessary preparations to this duty. I have told you, that it is necessary to the better performance of this duty, to get your own hearts well furnished with grace, to live more in the affecting thoughts of God, to get a zeal for CHRIST, to do him all the honour you can, and to get more compassion to souls : without these things, whatever our attempts are to converse more profitably and spiritually one with another, we shall make nothing of it ; and these our preparations are our improvements.

2. From the practice of this duty. Holy discourse will keep our graces in action. It is for want of action that our talents grow rusty ; by rubbing up the spirits of our brethren, we shall whet our own. Though the edge of your knife will be blunted by long cutting, it is not so here ; the edge of your spirits will grow keener by use ; your very work will be instead of a whetstone.

Who is likely to grow rich in this world ; he that lets his stock lie dead by him, or he that puts it to use, or employs it in trade ? Those that occupy with their talents, made this return ; “Thy pound, LORD, hath gained ten pounds,” saith one ; “Thy pound hath gained five pounds,” saith another : (*Luke* xix. 13, &c. :) but what could he say, that bound up his talent in a napkin ? What greater encouragement to diligence in trading than the hope of increase ? The hope of the ingathering of the husbandman is his encouragement in his more plentiful sowing. “He that soweth plentifully shall reap plentifully,” (*2 Cor.* ix. 6,) and therefore, “Blessed are they that sow beside all waters.” (*Isa.* xxxii. 20.) The communicative Christian is sowing wherever he comes ; and wherever he sows, thence shall he also reap, and gather his sheaves into his own bosom.

Christians, you say you have but little grace, and it is

likely enough that you say true ; but would you have more ? Go forth to sow with that little you have. The more you scatter, the more you gather. Would you have more love, and life, and power to serve and glorify the LORD ? Be more diligent in shedding abroad what you have. Resolve no longer to keep your religion to yourselves ; put not “ your light under a bushel ; ” put it on a candlestick, that it may give light to others, and God will increase both your light and your life. It is to little purpose to think of hearing more, or of praying more for a better heart ; this alone will never do : converse like Christians, and then ye shall be every day more Christians than ye are. Learn of sinners : drunkards converse like drunkards, rioters converse like rioters, profane hearts had ever a profane converse : what do their tongues run upon ? what is their talk, when they come together, but of their cups, and their harlots, and their sports ? And what is their ordinary fruit ? Why, hereby they not only propagate their own wickedness in others, one drunkard making another, and he another, and these more ; but also, they every one improve their own cursed stock, heating and stirring up their own heart’s lusts. Christians, learn of these brutes. Do drunkards converse like drunkards, and worldlings converse like worldlings ? And do you not see how mightily they grow and improve hereby in their wickedness ? What should this teach you, but that Christians should converse like Christians ? Let your religion be the business of your conversation, and then look for as much advance to your souls in godliness by this holy converse, as you see sinners to thrive in wickedness by their wicked conversation one with another.

I have been somewhat large in this direction ; but is there not need of more words than these ? Is not this holy practice sadly let fall amongst us ? Doth not the world, something or other of it, either quite shoulder it out, or thrust it into a narrow room ? Our heads are so full, and our hearts are so full, and hence our mouths are so full, of carnal things, that there is little room left for a few words about God, and the things of eternity, to be interposed : and

O what is the fruit? Surely that dreadful fall, which is so visible in the spirit and the whole practice of piety, is both the mother and the offspring of this grievous neglect; we are fallen sick, and therefore are speechless; and then we spend and waste more and more by silence: whilst sick bodies waste by speaking, sick souls waste more by silence.

What shall I say farther in this matter? The LORD heal a poor, barren, languishing people! The LORD touch our hearts with a coal from his altar, and then touch our lips with a coal from our hearts! Brethren, I hope you come hither to learn your duty, and I hope you have a conscience that will put you upon the practice of what you learn. Have you learned what an advantage it is to have lips of knowledge, and what a duty it is that your speech be with grace? Remember what your Master said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (*John* xiii. 17.) I would not that a man of you should be so unhappy as to know and not to do. Do you know and believe that holy communication would be an advance to your religion? Then what shall be your practice in this matter? Have you a tongue for the world, a tongue for your flesh, and no tongue for God? O might I hear that word from your mouths, "Thy word, O LORD, is within me as fire; I will speak that I may be refreshed; LORD, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise."

Sixthly, Put yourselves upon stirring duties. I shall mention only two:—1. Prayer. 2. Fasting.

1. Prayer. Prayer in the text is noted to be a stirring duty: "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself." Had they prayed, and prayed as they ought, this would have stirred them up to take hold of God; but neglecting to pray, they therein neglected to stir up themselves.

Prayer is a stirring duty. (1.) It stirs up the LORD to their help: "Stir up thyself, and awaken to my judgment, my God and my LORD." (*Ps.* xxxv. 23.) The God of Israel sometimes seems to be asleep, as ELIJAH once said, mocking, of that false god Baal, "It may be he

is asleep, and must be awakened." (1 *Kings* xviii. 27.) Though he be "the keeper of Israel, and never slumbereth nor sleepeth," yet he sometimes carries it towards them, as if he were asleep, and expects to be awakened by their cries unto him. (2.) Especially, prayer tends to stir up ourselves.—There is a sort of dull, and cold, and formal praying, that is good for nothing, but to lay our souls asleep. When conscience begins to stir, and run upon sinners, and fright them for their neglect of God, then they will go to their prayers and blind devotions; and these must serve them as a charm to quiet conscience, as DAVID'S music did to drive away that evil spirit which vexed SAUL. Some sinners' consciences will not let them be quiet, but haunt them, and fright them into something of religion: something must be done, which they call praying; and then they are at ease, and go on quietly in their sins. These men's praying serves them for nothing, but to lull them asleep in their sins.—But Prayer, rightly performed, will stir and awaken: Prayer is "a striving with God," (*Rom.* xv. 30;) "a wrestling with God;" (*Gen.* xxxii. 24;) and this is our most effectual striving with God, and wrestling with God, our striving with and stirring up our own hearts. Praying is not the saying of some good words, but the calling up all our powers to come in and join in seeking the LORD. That you may particularly understand what a stirring duty prayer is, consider,

[1.] That in prayer we set ourselves under the eye of the great and mighty God of heaven and earth. It is a drawing nigh unto God; a lifting up our eyes to the everlasting hills; a presenting ourselves before the throne of God, the throne of his grace; a setting all the attributes of God before our eyes, his almightiness, his all-sufficiency, his infinite greatness, dreadfulness, goodness, and grace, which all make up "that fearful Name, the LORD our God." (*Deut.* xxviii. 58.) And surely such a sight of the glorious and dreadful God will be a stirring sight.

[2.] In prayer we come to deal with God about all the

wonderful and astonishing things of eternity ; we are to have eternal life and death in our eye, when we pray ; and what will stir us, if eternity, if a sense that we are now treating with the eternal God about eternal things, will not ? O, a sense of this, that we are begging for our lives, begging for our immortal souls, begging the everlasting kingdom, seeking our escape from everlasting fire,—a deep sense of this upon our hearts will awaken them !

[3.] In prayer there is a ripping open of all the affrighting evils that are in our hearts. Confession unbowels the soul, fetches up all the rottenness of the heart, and lays open all deadly diseases that are in the heart. Every wicked thought, and filthy lust, and vile affection, all the falsehood and hypocrisy, all the pride, and malice, and envy, and frowardness of the heart, are in our confessions brought forth, and laid open before the LORD. The devils are roused that lodged within us, and were taken too little notice of ; and all the danger that our souls are in, by these our wickednesses, will in our confessions be made to stand before our eyes : and there cannot be such a discovery of our wicked hearts, and of the danger we are in, but it will awaken us.

[4.] Prayer is the uniting of all our powers, and the engaging them all in seeking the LORD. It strains every string, it bends all our forces upon the duty ; it sets all our faculties, our understandings, our memories, our wills, our affections, our consciences on work. As the Psalmist said, “ Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name ; ” (*Ps.* ciii. 1 ;) so should we say, “ Pray to the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, call upon his name.” Prayer is not tongue-work, or knee-work, but soul-work ;—“ Bless the LORD, O my soul : ”—and it is not a piece of a heart, one string of the instrument, but every string, that must be strained and struck up ; understanding, memory, will, affections, all must join : “ All that is within me, bless his holy name.” All our faculties, and all our graces, our faith, our love, our hope, our desires, whatever we have of God within us, all must be called forth to join in seeking him.

[5.] Prayer is not only the employing and exercising of

our souls, with all their faculties and graces, but the putting them forth to the height; not only the striking every string, but the straining every string to the height. The word in the original, which is translated, "Prayer without ceasing," (*Acts* xii. 5,) signifies, instant, earnest prayer. "With my soul have I desired thee: (*Isa.* xxvi. 9:)—the straining and working up all within us, every faculty and grace of our hearts, to the height; the stirring all our strength in the work; this is that "praying instantly," which is required, (*Rom.* xii. 12,) that "praying fervently," (*James* v. 16,) that "crying," and "crying mightily unto God," unto which the Scriptures promise audience.

Now when prayer hath thus roused up our sleepy souls, set all our faculties and graces a stirring within us, and so produced a heat in the heart, by the joint and vigorous exercise of all within us in the duty,—when we have prayed our souls awake, and all our graces awake, and our heart is waxen hot within us,—we are therein prepared and put in readiness for, and disposedness to, and shall feel ourselves bent upon, the practice of every holy duty.

This therefore is my next direction; Put yourselves upon praying, and such stirring praying. Go, set the LORD and all his glory before your eyes, and get a sense of eternity upon your hearts; rip open, and lay forth to the light, all that filthiness and rottenness that are within you; bend all within you to seek the LORD, and go cry unto him; and cry so loud, that your own souls may be awakened by your cry. Do not neglect prayer, and do not deceive and undo yourselves by your prayers; do not pray your souls asleep, do not pray your consciences asleep, but awaken them.

It is a miserable thing to consider, how little some are in secret prayer; sometimes they pray, and sometimes they cannot tend it; their closet is so seldom visited, that it may be said of the way to it, as of the way to Sion, "The ways of Sion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts:" (*Lam.* i. 4:) the grass grew upon their paths, because they were so little trod. It is a miserable thing

that there is so little praying, such seldom praying, as there is; but a worse evil than this, is, that that little which is, is worth nothing. We go to pray, many of us, as if we had a mind to mock God, and provoke him to his face; we go to this duty, as if we had a mind to lay up our souls to sleep, rather than to stir up and awaken them. It is no wonder there is no more light in our paths, when there is no more life in our duties. It is no wonder that there are so many gray hairs on the head, so many wrinkles in the face of our religion, when we are so cold at the heart. When our secret recesses and retirements with God are so heartless and spiritless, it is no wonder that sin, and lust, and vanity, swell and abound; or that grace and holiness sink and disappear, when that which should kill sin, and keep grace, (the soul of duty,) is so little to be found.

If ever you would recover the beauty of your ways, begin in secret, and revive the power of prayer. Pray constantly, pray fervently, and be fervent in prayer; pray and strive with God in prayer; pray and strive with your own hearts in prayer; pray and wrestle against the Devil, and the world, and your sins, in prayer. Such praying would make the nest too hot for the Devil, and your sins; such praying in the morning might be a means to keep you warm all day; and such praying in the evening would make you awake warm the next morning.

Consider with yourselves what you mean to do in this thing. Will you begin this night? Go not to pray as at other times, but put yourself upon the life of the duty; and then I shall hope to see a blessed and visible change upon the whole frame of your conversation. What say you, therefore? Will you do it? I am in great earnest with you in this thing; since the success of all that I have said, in order to the recovery of the decaying interest of religion among you, depends so much upon this one thing; and therefore I pray deny me not; and that you may not deny me, take particular notice of this one word more that I shall add,—Remember these words in the evening, when you are going to pray; then remember what I have now spoken from the

LORD to you, and accordingly set your hearts to it : and the LORD grant you the presence of his gracious and almighty SPIRIT, to help you herein, to the praise of his grace, and the comfort and advantage of your souls !

For the more effectually fixing this direction upon you, and for your improvement by it, I shall here remind you of two directions.

First, Be so earnest and intent in this duty, that you may feel your hearts enlarged, in the lively actings and exercise of grace ; and so raised and warmed by your sensible communion with GOD, as may put you into a spiritual and heavenly flame, that, if it be possible, you may come off your knees in a more lively disposition of soul, than you had in your entrance upon your duty. Do not satisfy yourselves with the work done ; but let your endeavours be, to get something more of GOD, which you may have to carry away with you when you depart ; that you may come out of your closets, as MOSES came down from the Mount, whose “ face did shine,” (*Exod.* xxxiv. 29,) which was a token that he had been conversing with GOD. O let there, at such times, be a shining and a burning light raised up within you ; come from your duties as men coming out of heaven, with the very sun-beams shining in your countenance, and with some tincture of heaven upon your spirits. We come many times with no other spirit from our duties, than that in which we come out of our shops or fields ; with no more sense and savour of GOD, than if we had never been near him. O, it is a sign that thou hast but trifled in thy duties, that thou neither hadst, nor much mindest to have, communion with GOD in them ! Certainly, sincere communion with GOD will leave some divine impressions behind it. Well, every time you go to pray, labour hard for it, to get yourselves into such a divine and spiritual frame, before you have done.

Secondly. Whatever more spiritual frame you experience in duty, be careful to keep it alive afterwards. See to it, that your spirits do not presently sink and cool, and grow dull and carnal again, when you have been thus quickened and

spiritualized. Hath there been a holy fire kindled in you ? O keep it burning, keep it flaming, and let it not be covered over with ashes : get your hearts to be alive in your duties, and keep them alive from duty to duty. In the Old Testament, though their sacrifices were offered but morning and evening, yet the fire that kindled them was required not to go out night nor day ; there must be fire kept alive from the morning sacrifice to kindle the evening sacrifice, and fire left from the evening to kindle the morning sacrifice. O friends, how often is it the case, that though at our morning sacrifice a fire be kindled, it is quenched and lost before the evening, through the carelessness and negligence of our hearts ! Sin and the world have a whole day's time to quench and put out, what an hour's duty hath been kindling ; and so at the return of our duty-seasons, we find our hearts at the same loss, and in the same deadness and hardness, as before. Beloved, though there be some difficulty in these two directions, of getting our hearts into a lively frame of duty, and of keeping up that holy frame from duty to duty, and it will cost you pains to practise them to purpose, yet the advantage you will hereby gain will be abundantly worth all your pains ; and therefore I pray remember them. If you do in good earnest intend advancing in religion, let these two directions be before your eyes every day : you have them preached to you, and you have them written for your use ; the LORD write them upon your hearts, and hold them before your eyes ! This course will be as the whetting our instruments, and keeping them keen for our work. How much work may be done, and with much more ease, by a cutting than a blunted instrument ! A dull heart will do little, and not without much pains. By the course prescribed whet your spirits, and keep them with a good edge ; and then all your work will be the more easily carried on. To this I shall add,

Thirdly, Let your prayers be pursued in your practice. Whatever grace you pray for, whatever sin you pray against, follow after the one, and fight against the other, in your daily practice : let prayer and practice join hand in hand,

and both drive the same way. Think not you have done your whole day's work, when you have prayed morning and evening. Religion must be the business of your whole time: "Be thou in the fear of the LORD," be thou at the work of thy LORD, "all the day long;" (*Prov.* xxiii. 17;) and make it not merely the business of an hour or two. When you have been praying that God would help you to live in the spirit, to set your affections on things above, and to have your conversation in heaven; when you have ended your prayer, what should ye now do? Why, think on heavenly things: let your thoughts throughout the day, run upon these holy things:—to pray for a heavenly mind, and never to think of heavenly things till you come to pray again, what will such praying come to? When you pray for a willing, obedient, and fruitful life, what should you do? Go and take pains with your hearts, to bring them on, and to hold them close to your several duties. When you have been praying against sin, for power over a proud heart, or a froward heart, or a covetous, worldly heart, what should you now do? Why set your watch against your sins; take heed of every proud thought, of every froward word; beware of all covetous practices; set yourselves to the mortifying of these sins, and to restraining yourselves from the actings of them:—to pray against covetousness, and as soon as you have done, to leave your hearts loose for it, to carry it as proudly, or as frowardly as before, to be as busy for the world, as eager in hunting after it, what is this but to set your prayers and your practices together by the ears, to destroy the things you have been building, to destroy by your practices what you have been building by your prayers? Whilst this hath been the voice of your prayer, "LORD, deliver me from a proud, or froward, or covetous heart," your practices say, "I care not whether this prayer be heard or no; I had rather be let alone, and left under the power of them." If ever you would that your praying should come to any thing, let your prayers and practices drive the same way. Let it not suffice you to pray for a more mortified heart, and a more self-

denying course; but set to it to put your prayers into practice. Let the stream of your care, the stream of your endeavours, run the same way with the stream of your prayers; and that is the stirring prayer I would have you give yourselves to, such as may effectually overpower the stream of your life, and carry it on according to the stream of your prayers.

If of all that I have said, these three last words might be remembered;—(1.) If in every prayer you henceforth make, you would diligently strive to get up into a spiritual and lively frame; (2.) If you would carefully maintain this blessed frame afterwards, from duty to duty; (3.) If you would set to the practice of those things which you pray that God would enable you to perform;—O what a cure would be wrought! O what a blessed change might we expect to appear upon you and all your religion!

2. Fasting and Prayer. In the former particular I spake of Prayer as an ordinary duty, here as an extraordinary one, annexed to that of Fasting and Humiliation.

Hitherto I have spoken mostly to our personal cases. Now I shall speak with more respect to the public case of our people and age, and shall direct you, (1.) How you may most effectually stir up a spirit of prayer, in your Days of Humiliation; (2.) How you may most successfully perform this duty.

(1.) How you may most effectually stir up a spirit of prayer, in your days of humiliation.

[1.] There is something in the very Abstinence, that conduceth to the stirring up the spirit of prayer. Abstinence is pinching upon the flesh; and should be so much, in such days, as may afflict the body first, and thereby the soul. The abstinence of a Fast should be afflicting abstinence, as far forth as the body will bear it, without prejudice to its health, and so becoming a hinderance rather than a furtherance of the duty.

There is a two-fold failing too common in our Days of Humiliation.

First, In the Time: mostly what we call a Day of Hu-

miliation, comes to no more but a few hours of prayer. It is said of a Fast, ~ It shall be a sabbath of rest to you : ” (*Lev. xvi. 31* :) that is, 1. It was to be a whole day, as a sabbath is ; 2. It must be wholly spent in the proper exercises of it ; a sabbath of rest it must be in this extraordinary duty ; there must be a laying aside of our ordinary works, and the whole time must be spent either in the public or private worship of the day. How seldom is it that we hear of such a Fast ! Some hours, as I said, we sometimes spend together in seeking the LORD ; but when do we keep a day to the LORD ? The morning of the day is usually as other mornings ; we are as busy at our callings, and it may be, more busy to despatch our work out of hand ; and so we come hot out of our shops and fields, with our heads full, and hearts full, of our worldly affairs, and as soon as ever the public duty is over, then away we go to our work again. Is it such a Fast as the LORD hath chosen ? Will ye call this a Day of Humiliation ?

Christians, it is well that you spend some hours in prayer, but call not that a Day of Humiliation. Whenever you set apart a day for fasting, let it be a sabbath of rest to you : begin it in secret, and separating yourselves from all your ordinary works, hold you to the duty of the day, as your strength will bear it, to the end of the day. Let the private part of it, both before and after public exercises, be spent as your LORD’S-Days are, in suitable converses with GOD. Were this more observed, we might expect more of spirit and of power in the duty, and more fruits afterwards.

Secondly, There is also a failing in the Abstinence of the day. How often have I known it, that the abstinence in a day of humiliation, hath been no more than the sparing of one meal, which hath been made up by a larger breakfast, and perhaps a feast, or at least a full meal, at supper ? No particular rules for the degree of abstinence can be prescribed to all sorts of persons ; but this should be observed in the general ; 1. That there be such abstinence used, both as to quantity and quality, as may best subserve the spiritual duties of the day, especially that of afflicting the soul ; and

therefore 2. That not only our full meals be forborne, but no wine or strong drink, no, nor so much as a pipe of tobacco, be allowed for the present pleasure or refreshment of it : if it be really needed, as in some cases it may, and by some persons, let it be used : but if DANIEL would eat no pleasant bread, and neither flesh nor wine came into his mouth ; (*Dan.* x. 3;) if the Jews be reprov'd, (*Is.* lviii. 31,) that in the day of their fast “ they did find their pleasure ; ” then any thing taken as an exhilarating refreshment, which is not necessary to the present duty, is a transgression.

Well, this will be something towards the stirring us up in prayer,—self-afflicting abstinence. But,

[2.] Especially, a deep consideration of the case we are in, will most effectually do it : tempests will teach even profane mariners to pray ; if any thing will do it, afflictions will fetch out our very hearts in our prayers ; and is not iniquity an affliction ? Surely, if it be, we are in an afflicted state ; for consider how grievously iniquity doth abound ! I shall not now lead you a voyage over the seas, and remind you how it is abroad ; how the Devil drives almost all the world before him, filling them with all unrighteousness ; and what a small handful there are that follow CHRIST, and how very little of serious religion there is in those few. Let us at present inquire, how it is with us at home. To put in but a word of the profane rout, the open enemies of religion, whose wickedness hath left the covert of the night, and who are grown up to that impudence as to show their shame in the sun-light ;—not to speak much neither of their prophets and teachers, amongst whom (though there are that deal faithfully, yet) some of them cannot, others will not, tell them of their transgressions ; (what snuffs are there in some of the candlesticks ! what dark lanterns are many of those that should be burning and shining lights ! seers without eyes, lame leaders, sickly healers of the hurt of the daughter of our people !)—to let these pass also, let us consider how it is with the sinners in Zion, with those of us who profess to have separated ourselves from the follies and filthiness of the land. What is our religion ? What is our right-

cousness? What a tattered maimed thing! Ah, how little religion is there in our religion? How little of the spirit, how little of the power; how glorious soever the form appears? How much unrighteousness is there mingled with our righteousness? Is not our gold mixed with dross, and our wine with water? What a spirit of vanity, what pride, headiness, censoriousness, peevishness, are to be found among us? What wood, and hay, and stubble, are built upon the foundation?

And amongst them that were once better, how many are there that must go on with the complaint, and confess, "We all do fade as a leaf,"—we wither, and waste, and consume, and are even dried away? And it is not here and there a fading leaf; does not the tree fade, so that it is but here and there a leaf that is not withered? Were it only a few backsliding persons, the matter were not so sad; but is it not a backsliding age? May we not be called a backsliding people, for the multitude of backsliders that are amongst us? Scarce living enough to serve for mourners over the dead!

Were it only the wilderness of the world, and the tents of the uncircumcised, that we had to complain of, it were sad enough. But O! the field of the Lord, his floor, his fold, his family, his vineyard! What tares are there in his fields? What a deal of chaff in his floor! What a general bane is there among his flock,—few sound ones left! What a hospital is his house, of blind, and lame, and sick souls! What wild vines fill up his vineyard!

Should you see your houses fallen into ruinous heaps, your fruitful fields become a prey to the locusts and caterpillars, your flocks dying away, your poor children, that were once strong, beautiful, healthful, and hopeful, one bewitched into a changeling, another a cripple, another a lunatic, a fool, or idiot,—O how would such a sight rend your bowels, and tear the very caul of your heart! And is not this lamentable case, the case of the household of God?

But is this all? May we not go on with the complaint?

“And yet there is none (very few) that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee.” O what hard work have the poor Ministers of CHRIST to stir any of these miserable souls, to bring them to their senses, to bring them to their knees, to awaken them to seek out after their recovery! They will not stir up themselves; nor will they be stirred up by us, by all our cries and callings upon them: though we call upon them, yet we cannot bring them to it, to call upon GOD. Some of them will not be brought to know their disease: and those that cannot but know it, yet will not consider it, nor concern themselves so much about it as to seek their cure; but there (poor wretches) they lie, dying away in their sleep themselves, and every one infecting others with the same lethargy, and going on to rock one another, till even a whole country become a generation of sleepers!

Open your eyes, and see if the symptoms of desolation be not visible among us; go into the city, go into the villages, go into the sanctuary, go into our habitations, and see if death be not come up into our windows, and desolation ready to enter. How is it that your mouths are not sounding with such lamentations as these,—“My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart: my heart maketh a noise within me, mine eyes do fail with tears, my liver is poured out. O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the fallen daughter of my people.”

(2.) How you may most successfully perform this duty. In answer to this, take these few directions:

[1.] Make GOD your friend, and see that there be no standing controversy betwixt him and your souls. See that you be sincere converts to GOD, and have a good conscience towards GOD; see that ye be reconciled to GOD by the blood of JESUS, and that matters be kept fair and clear betwixt GOD and your souls. Is it peace betwixt the LORD and you, or is there not a particular controversy that he hath with you? Consider, if the LORD hath not somewhat against you, and such as hath provoked him to

anger : make your own peace first, and then you will be fit to be intercessors for others.

If I had a petition to present to the King, I would not put it into the hands of a rebel ; no, nor into his who was under his prince's frown. I would put it into the hands of a favourite, and so should have the more hope to speed. If you would do your friends a kindness in heaven, see that you hold your own friendship there. "If I regard iniquity in mine heart, God will not hear my prayer." (*Ps. lxxv. 18.*) Pray for whom you will, for yourself, or your friends, it is like to come to all one as if you held your peace ; God will not hear you, whilst you regard iniquity in your hearts. Hast thou sin in thee, and sin that thou allowest in thyself ? Whatever it be, great or little, open or secret, purge it away, and cast it from thee ; or God will not hear thee. "The prayer of the upright is his delight." (*Prov. xv. 8.*) Give me the holy souls, the humble, the tender, the watchful, the Daniels, the Noahs, the plain-hearted, them that walk with God, and are highly favoured of the Most High, to appear before the Lord for me.

Those that are in their sins, and strangers from God, and those that have declined in godliness, and are become wanderers from the Lord, what hope is there of any service that their prayers will do ? "God heareth not sinners ; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." (*John ix. 31.*)

Beloved, a poor languishing nation calls upon you for the help of your prayers ; but, alas, what help is there in them ? To have a company of hard-hearted, impenitent, and dead sinners, or of sick, and loose, and carnal professors, together to pray ; there is as much hope in it, as if the blind, and the lame, and the bed-ridden of a nation, should be gathered together into an army to fight : as great success is likely to be obtained by such a congregation assembled to pray, as by such an army gathered together to fight : one sincere upright-hearted saint will do more than a whole congregation of praying sinners.

Indeed it is the duty of sinners to be present in the

exercises of humiliation : and there may be this advantage of it ;—they may by this means be converted ; and so there is one more added to the number of God's remembrancers ; there is one more soldier added to the praying army. If there were hundreds of thousands of converts more brought in, so many would there be added to wrestle with God. By every new convert, God's interest is increased in such a people ; the more converts there are, the more hath God to lose, if such a people should miscarry.—This is the first direction, if you would that your praying should be to any purpose, make God your friend.

[2.] Make often use of your friend in your personal cases ; live a praying life ; those that are much in prayer, are most likely to be mighty in prayer. He that deals much with the Lord in prayer, will have many experiences of God's gracious dealings with him in answer to his prayers. You will hereby prove, that prayer is not an insignificant duty ; you will never give up your cases for hopeless, whilst there is this way open to go to God.

He that uses to go before the Lord, will be the more able to go with boldness and confidence before him : he that hath been often heard for himself, in his personal or family necessities, will speak with the more confidence for his friends or people. He will say, " I have seen how prayer will help a distressed person, and a distressed family ; and why may it not prevail for a diseased and distressed nation ? Since I have found that the Lord hath heard me, when I have been seeking him for myself, and for mine house, what hope doth this give that he will also hear me, now I am seeking him for his own house ? "

Beloved, when any of you that fear God are under any pressing straits, and desire the help of prayer, to whom do you use to seek ? You do not call together the lazy, and the idle, and the careless ones, that use not to call upon God ; you do not send to such to come and pray for you ; but you will pick out and call together the praying people, those that are most conversant in this duty ; your consciences tell you, that if there be any whose prayers are

likely to help you, these are they, the men of prayer. Be you such, in both these respects,—be ye thus prepared, be the friends of **GOD**,—and be often with **GOD**; and then **I** will add no more, but as the Prophet: (*Joel* ii. 15, 16, 17 :) Then come and “sanctify your fasts, call your solemn assemblies; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders; let the bridegroom go forth out of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet;” let the tradesmen come out of their shops, and the husbandmen out of the fields; let the ministers and people of the **LORD** weep before his altar; and let them say, and cry, and cry aloud, “Spare thy people, O **LORD**: heal thy languishing heritage; be not angry with them till thou hast consumed them; let not the ungodly say to them in thy reproach, Where is your **GOD**, your **CHRIST**, and your religion?” And who knows but the **LORD** may hear, and, whatever evils be upon us, and to whatever distance he is withdrawn from us, he may yet return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, and may be jealous for his land, and pity his people and heal them.

For a Conclusion, let me add a word or two, both to those that have heard, and to them also that read these words. **I** am unwilling to make an end, before the work be done, for which all this hath been spoken and written. Have **I** been all this while beating the air, or speaking to the wind, or writing in sand? Must **I** at last sit down with the grief of the disappointed? Mine heart and mine eye is upon success; **I** have been ploughing in hope, and harrowing and sowing in hope: O Thou who art the hope of Israel, make thy servant partaker of his hope!

Where is the **LORD**?—He who hath said, “My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which **I** please, and shall prosper in the thing whereto **I** sent it.” Wherefore hath the **LORD** spoken? Is it that we may go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken? Is it for the hardening of those that have sinned, that they may not repent? Is it for the sealing up of the eyes of those that see not, that they may be the

more blind? **GOD** forbid, **GOD** forbid! We hope better things; we long, we wait for better issues; and if the **LORD** hath any pleasure in us, if utter ruin be not determined upon us, he will humble and heal us. Success is of **GOD**. O, our **GOD**, we have no might, nor know we what to do: only our eyes are upon thee!

But though it be the **LORD** that gives success, it is we and you all that must seek it, and be working towards it. It is not the best physician that can cure you, unless you take his medicines, and follow his prescriptions: he that reaches down his hand to help you out of the pit into which you are fallen, will not lift you out, unless you will do what you can to help yourselves.

In order to your obtaining good success, let me ask,

1. Thou whose eyes are now upon these words, art thou one of them whose cases have been here opened and lamented? Art thou a sleeper, a loitering or backsliding soul? Whilst thou hast been looking on this glass, hast thou not seen thine own face in the company? Hath not this word found thee out, and said unto thee, even unto thee, as **NATHAN** to **DAVID**, "Thou art the man?" Or hast thou so much as asked the question of thyself, "Am I not one of them?" If thou hast not, read over again; go back before thou read forward; consider again and again, before thou conclude, "I am none of them, whoever they be; mine heart, I hope, is right with **GOD**; I am free." Put me not off with an "I hope I am none of them," but inquire more narrowly, till thou hast put it out of doubt what thou art.

2. If thou seest thou art one of those wretched souls, art thou content to continue thus? Is it safe, is it comfortable to thee thus to live? Wilt thou die a backslider? Wilt thou venture it to continue as thou art? Art thou at a point with **CHRIST**, that thou wilt have no more of him than thou hast; and that he shall have no more of thee? Wilt not thou come back to be only his? Wilt thou say as those, "There is no hope;" (*Jer. ii. 25*;) no hope of prevailing with me? Wilt thou say, "I have loved

strangers, and after them will I go?" "I love this world, I love my carnal friends, I love my ease and my idleness, and my liberty, and I cannot part with them; the life I live is better than that severe life you call me to." Art thou indeed of this mind, and dost thou mean to hold thee of the same mind till thou comest to the grave? Do thy tender-hearted friends weep over thee, and dost thou bless thyself, and say thou art well enough? Carest thou not that thou perish? Fearest thou not that thy sickness and thy sleep may be unto death? Man, what meanest thou? What a heart hast thou, that either thou wilt not know thou art in an evil case, or dost not regard whether it be so or no? Hast thou never a tear to let fall over thy miserable soul? Never a sigh to breathe out after redemption? If thou sayest, it is not so bad with thee, take heed; how canst thou say, I am not polluted? How canst thou say, I am regenerated? "See thy way in the valley, and know what thou hast done:" (*Jer. ii. 23:*) trace thyself in all thy goings and dealings with God in the world. Ask thy closet, which is so seldom visited; ask thy Bible, which is so seldom looked into; ask thy companions, and thy unsavoury converse with them; ask thy family, and thy unprofitable converse with them; ask thy fields and thy farms, thy shop and thy money, with whom thy heart has so long dwelt; yea, and ask thy conscience a little more strictly than thou usest to do, and see if all will not tell thee, that the charge of the Lord against thee is too true. And hast thou yet no mind to amendment? When shall it once be? What never? Must we leave you thus? Must we continue preaching to you, and crying after you, so long in vain, till the Lord say to us, "Let them alone, speak no more to them, pray no more for them, let them perish in the hardness of their heart." Shall this be all the good we can do, to mourn over you, that we can do you no good? Or shall there be yet hope among you concerning this thing, that at length ye will repent and return?

The truth is, our spiritual diseases so lurk, that they are not easily discerned; and having pleasure in them, the

patient is impatient of a cure. "LORD, if thou wilt," says the leper, "thou canst make me clean." "Sinner," says the LORD, "if thou wilt, I will, be thou clean;" but though GOD would, yet sinners will not.

What DEMAS is there of you, that hath forsaken the LORD, and embraced this present world; what DIOTREPHES, that, from walking humbly with GOD, has his heart lifted up, and loveth the pre-eminence;—that do heartily wish, O that my soul and this world were once again parted? O that the LORD would humble me, and lay me low, and bring my aspiring heart to the dust? How few of all that are fallen are willing to rise! How few of all that have wandered are willing to return! O how light do they make of all our calling upon them; and after all we can do to reduce them, they hold on their way! Dost thou not see, dost thou not feel, that for thy part it is just thus with thee? Thou that art proud, covetous, or slothful, art thou not content in this wretched case? Really, Sirs, I must fear, that if I had the tongue of men and of angels, it would hardly change your mind and ways. I have seen so great disappointments hitherto, that I fear how it may be still; and under these fears, my soul, travail thou in pain, and thus groan, being thus burdened:—

"LORD, have I not called upon them? LORD, have I not called after them?" Hath not my very soul been poured out to them and for them? And after all, have they heard? Have they repented? Are they recovered? What they will do, O LORD, thou knowest; but thy servant is in great doubt. Ah, LORD, art thou not he that canst and must do the cure? When, LORD, when shall it once be? O when shall it be said again, "He hath made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the sick to rise and walk, and the dead to live?"

Carnal Professors, let not these words depart from your hearts till they have done their work; till they have showed you your folly, and taught you "the wisdom which is from above;" till your own mouths be forced to acknowledge, "I have wandered from my GOD, and turned to

mine own way, and this my way is my folly ; and now, through the help of the **LORD**, I will return.” Wilt thou so ? Wilt thou return and recover ? I will then add but this one word more : When thou art recovered, do thy best towards the recovery of thy brethren : pity thy fallen friends, and help them to arise : who knows what a small beginning may rise to in the end ? A few returned persons may fetch in more, and these more ; a few souls raised from the dead, may be the first-fruits of a more glorious resurrection ; the light and the life which is sprung up in thine heart, if it be well improved, may enlighten and enliven many. **O** be solicitous, first for thine own recovery, and then for the recovery of more : so shall there be, after all our darkness, a hopeful dawning towards a comfortable day ; so may we hope that our shining lights, which now stand so thin, “ as a beacon on a hill, as a cottage in a vineyard,” may grow so numerous, that we may become a land of light, and our Jerusalem may be made a praise in the earth !

THE
NATURE AND NECESSITY
OF
GODLY FEAR:

BY
THE REV RICHARD ALLEIN.

Heb. xii. 28.

*Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably
with reverence and godly fear.*

THE
NATURE AND NECESSITY
OF
GODLY FEAR.

PROV. xxviii. 14.

Happy is the man that feareth alway.

YOU will not expect that I should spend time in inquiring after the connexion of these words with the foregoing or with the following parts of this chapter, if you consider the book in which they are found, “The Book of Proverbs;” wherein many precious truths are laid together, but not connected together;—this book being rather a golden mine than a golden chain. The words of the text are an entire proposition, which may be resolved into,

1. A Subject, “The man that feareth,” together with the circumstance of time, “alway.”

2. An Attribute, or something affirmed concerning this man; “Happy;” he is a happy man.

For the opening of these words briefly.

“Happy,” or “Blessed,” as it is in the original.—“The man that feareth;” that is, say some, The man that feareth all the evil that is before him, the misery that is before him, the danger that he is in. Others say it means, The man that feareth God; and others, He that walks warily, with counsel and care, that he neglect not his duty nor fall into danger. Put all these interpretations into one, and you

have the full sense of the words :—He that, walking under an awe and reverence of God, and a sense of the danger he is in, wisely and warily orders his steps, that he be not surprised by sin or by wrath.

“Alway :” The Chaldee renders it, *Omnia*, That feareth all things; that feareth himself, his eyes, his ears, his tongue, his table, his estate, his business, his company, his friends, and his enemies;—that is, as far as they may be inlets, or instruments, or temptations to sin. But the word is “alway,” that feareth at all times, that is never secure.

The Doctrine that I shall hence insist upon is this :—*A life of holy fear is a blessed life.* In the opening hereof, I shall more particularly inquire, I. What that Fear is, to which blessedness is pronounced. II. What that Blessedness is, which is pronounced concerning this fear. In handling these points, I shall together give the Proof of the Doctrine.

I. What that Fear is concerning which blessedness is pronounced. There is a fear that is our Weakness : as, 1. The Fear of the faint-hearted, a natural cowardice. There are spirits in whom every little danger, or but the shadow of a danger, shakes their hearts, and puts them into anxieties. In what perpetual bondage do some live ! How restless are their hearts, like the troubled sea ! In what a daily and hourly succession of vexing disquietudes do they live ! 2. The Fear of the Scrupulous, about some supposed moral evils which concern their practice ; who, through weakness of understanding, or the abounding of melancholy, often fancy that to be sin which is no sin, and thereby fright themselves from the use of their liberty, and sometimes from their very duty. They are afraid lest every morsel which they eat, and every garment which they wear, should be too much, or too good ; and thereby scruple themselves out of their convenient food, and all comely apparel. In this fear there is a mixture of good and evil. There is something good ; an aversion from sin and tenderness

of running into it: and there is something evil; a mistake, counting that evil which is not evil. And this weakness, as it is evil, so it is mischievous too. It leads us into sin: we may sometimes sin for fear of sin. And it brings us into bondage: we may say concerning this fear of sin, as the Apostle doth concerning the fear of death,—there are some, “who through fear of” sin “are all their life time subject to bondage.” (*Heb.* ii. 15.) Yet of the two, it is much a less evil than the other extreme; a scrupulous conscience is better than a dissolute conscience; it is better to strain at a gnat than to swallow a camel. Yet this groundless and mistaken fear is an evil, and to be suppressed.

Again, there is a fear which is men’s great Wickedness; a Fear of Religion and Righteousness; a fear of the labours and severities of religion, and of those sufferings to which it may expose them. Sometimes men fear the *yoke* of CHRIST; they dare not be his disciples; his yoke, they doubt, will be too heavy for their necks. The foresight of being tied up so short from every sin, and of being held so close to constant duty, scares them back from CHRIST; they dare not be his disciples. “I would be a Christian, but I am afraid how I shall ever be able to bear his yoke.” But mostly they fear the *cross* of CHRIST; they have heard what CHRIST expects, “If any will come after me, let him take up his cross;” (*Matt.* xvi. 24;) and they see that it so falls out, that no sooner is the yoke taken upon the neck, but the cross is presently laid upon the back. He that will be a sincere Christian must be a suffering Christian. “All that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS must suffer persecution.” (*2 Tim.* iii. 12.) “Must they so? Then serve CHRIST who dare for me.” They dare not be followers of THE LAMB, for fear of being a prey to the wolves.

There is a fear which is men’s Punishment; the Fear of the Guilty. A guilty heart is a terror to itself, and makes almost every thing else a terror to it.—These fears are men’s misery: and it may be said, with respect to these, “Happy is the man that never feareth.” But

what is it the "Blessed Fear?" Or, what is there in it? In short it is this. It is such an aversion of the heart from all manner of future evils, whether of sin or of misery, of which we apprehend ourselves in danger, as puts the soul upon making the best provision it can for its security against them.

The object of this Fear is sin, together with all the fruits of it. The proper nature of it is an aversion or starting back from it. The effect of it is to put the soul to provide for its security against it.

There are implied in it these following particulars.

1. There is Understanding in it. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have they that do it." (*Ps.* cxi. 10.) They are wise and understanding men that fear. As we love not, so neither do we fear, but whom or what we have some apprehension of; our affections follow our apprehensions; as our love (we cannot love but what we apprehend to be good) so our fear; we cannot fear but what we apprehend to be evil. Our mistakes are the ground of the inordinate workings of our affections; when we apprehend that to be good which is not good, we love what we should not love; when we apprehend that to be evil which is not evil, we fear what we should not fear; when we apprehend that to be good which is evil, we love what we should fear; and when we apprehend that to be evil which is good, we fear what we should love.

The reason of our sinful fear is our ignorance. Ignorance both causes us to fear when we should not, and leaves us without fear of what we should fear.

(1.) Ignorance is the reason why we fear what we should not. How is it that there is so much fear of men in the world? It is, because we understand them not, what a vain thing, what a weak thing they are, how short their power is, and how little it is that man can do. Did we know more, how great the power of God is, and how terrible the wrath of God is, surely there would be more fear of God in the world: and did we know how little

there is in the power of man, and in the wrath of man, we should ease ourselves of much of that fear which now torments our spirit.

(2.) Men's ignorance is the reason why they fear not what they should fear. Why is it that the ungodly fear no sin? Because they know it not. "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?" (*Ps. xiv. 4.*) Sure enough they have none; "for they eat up my people as they eat bread;"—they would not dare to be such persecutors of the people of God, they would be afraid to touch them, if they did but know what they did.

How bold are sinners upon sin? How venturously do they run on? They lie, they swear, they commit adultery, they covet, they defraud, they oppress, they persecute. But how is it that they are not afraid to do thus? They know not what they do.

They are the men of understanding, that fear to transgress. Christians, those whose minds are enlightened, dare not do as others do; they see what sin is; they see it to be abominable in the sight of God; they see it to be dangerous and deadly. They know God, and thereby understand sin, which is contrary to Him. They know the kindness of God, and "the terrors of the Lord," and see that sin is an abusing of kindness, and a disobliging of goodness, which makes us forfeit God's love, and exposes us to his wrath and indignation.

They know the worth of a soul; they have learned from their Lord, (*Matt. xvi. 26.*) that the whole world is not a price for it,—neither sufficient to be its ransom, nor to recompense its loss. They live in the invisible world; and have taken a view both of that life which is the reward of the righteous, and of that death which is the recompense of sinners.

They see that sin is the loss and the death of the soul, the only poison that can kill that immortal part: by this alone immortality is swallowed up of death. They understand that sin, as it is the worm that gnaweth at the root of all their hopes for hereafter, so it is the wormwood

which embitters all their comforts here : this is the rust that eats out all their treasures, the moth that frets out all their garments, the stain that mars all their beauty : in fine, this it is that hath filled the world with vanity and vexation of spirit, and hell with torment. And hence it is that they fear it and fly from it.

2. There is Faith in this Fear. It is but a little that we can see of the evil of sin ; our understandings at the best have much dimness upon them ; but the weakness of our sight is helped by faith. Faith helps us to see with God's eyes : it looks on all things as God looks on them. The Lord hath told us what he sees in sin, what a snare it is, what a plague it is, and what a womb it is, big with all manner of miseries and mischiefs. God's mouth is eyes to faith : by faith we understand that it is even as it hath been told us of the Lord.

Faith helps us to a present view of sin, and to a foresight of all that is behind ; of all those floods which this serpent is casting out of his mouth to devour the soul ; of that woe and that wrath which it is bringing upon sinners, both here and hereafter. God says, " The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (*Ezek. xviii. 20.*) He speaks it of sin *in specie*, the whole kind of it, little or great,—the least sinful words, even vain words, and the least sinful thoughts ; yea, even of sin *in semine*, the inward brood of sin that lies in the heart, the evil dispositions and inclinations of the soul, which have not broken forth into act. The word is general ; " The wages of sin is death ;" (*Rom. vi. 23 ;*)—believe God, believe and tremble.

3. There is Love in it. This fear hath love lying in the bottom of it, from whence it arises ; both the love of God, and that innocent self-love which God hath planted in us, and which it is not our sin but our duty to maintain.

There is a fear concerning which the Apostle saith, " Perfect love casteth out fear ;" (*1 John iv. 18 ;*) but of this it may said, Sincere love worketh fear. Fear is love's servant, whose office it is to preserve what and whom we love, from being offended, hurt, or lost. He that loves,

will fear to lose or grieve what and whom he loves. Dost thou love God? Thou wilt fear to displease or offend God. Dost thou love thy soul? Thou wilt fear to lose it. As in good things temporal, if thou love thy friend, thou wilt fear to disoblige him, and if thou love thine estate, or thy name, or thy health, thou wilt fear whatever may prejudice thee in them; so in good things spiritual, our love will set our fear to be a guard about them. It cannot be, but where there is love, and a hazard of losing what we love, there will be fear.

Our love sets all our affections on work. What we love, if it be absent, we desire it; if it be possible to be had, we hope for it; if we have it, we joy; if we lose it, we grieve; if we be in danger of losing it, we fear.

4. There is in it an Aversion from evil, both from sin, and all the fruits of sin. The three former particulars are the causes of this fear, but this is in the nature of it. The understanding discovers sin, (1.) To be an evil, a corrupting evil, that will pollute the soul, a destructive evil that will undo it: (2.) To be an evil hard to be escaped. It sees the soul to be in danger of it every day and every hour. Evil, as evil, is the object of hatred, not of fear; there is no fear of sin in heaven, because there is no danger of it. To hear of plague, or sword, or famine, or earthquakes, or fire, in the Indies, or any other remote parts of the world, doth not move fear; we are in no danger of it: but when the plague is in the town, when the next house is on fire, then we are startled: (3.) To be an evil not to be endured, an intolerable evil: hereupon the heart shrinks back from it, and is in pain till it can be secured against it.

5. There is Foresight in it. Fear is of future evil, apprehended to be coming on. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil." (*Prov.* xxii. 3.) This prudent man is the very same with this fearing man, as appears by the next words, "and hideth himself," for it is fear that makes men hide.

A bold sinner is blind, and cannot see afar off, (1 *Pct.* i. 9.) *μωωπαζων*, purblind, one that can see things very near,

but through the weakness of his eyes cannot see at a distance; he is but short-sighted. Sinners are men for the present, and they look not to what comes after. But says the Apostle, "We look on the things that are not seen;" (2 *Cor.* iv. 18;) as on the good things, so on the evil things not seen.—He that fears God, sees what is out of sight to the blear-eyed world. He sees evils in the beginning of them; he sees midnight in the evening; he sees the winter in the autumn; he sees evils in the causes of them; he sees the storm in the cloud, the birth in the conception.

Sinner, how is it that thou art so secure? Friend, what seest thou? Some it may be will answer, as the Prophet's servant when he first went up to Carmel, "I see nothing." (1 *Kings* xviii. 43.) Others will answer as he did at his last going up, "I see a cloud," but it is but a little one, no bigger than a man's hand. But the Prophet saw a great rain in that little cloud. Sinner, thou that yet seest nothing, nothing to trouble thee, nothing to make thee afraid, look again, and again, even unto seven times: dost thou yet see a cloud rising? Do not say it is a little one; take heed, lest, if thy foresight do not, thy sense should quickly tell thee what a storm there is in it.

Christian, how is it that thou art so secure? Art thou blind also? Dost thou not see the spark in the thatch? Dost thou not see the thief at the door? Hast thou a treasure within? Hast thou a God, a conscience, a soul? Hast thou grace, hast thou peace, hast thou hope? And dost thou not see the thief breaking in, and the fire breaking out,—that lust that is in thine heart, and the temptations that are at the door, ready to steal away or burn up every good thing thou hast? How is it that there is no cry heard within thee, "Fire, fire; Thieves, thieves? Look to thyself, save thyself, O my soul, from the mischiefs and miseries that are coming upon thee."

O my friends, when you see what sin and the temptations thereof have done to others, is it not to be feared what it

may do to you? May I not say to you as PETER did to SAPPHIRA, (if you look not more carefully to it,) “The feet of those that have buried thy husband, are at the door to carry thee out.” (*Acts* v. 19.) The same sins, the same temptations that have slain your friends and buried them, behold, their feet are at the door waiting for your souls also!

You are men of like passions, and subject to the like temptations with other men; there is the same pride, the same love of pleasures, the same fear of sufferings, rooted in your natures: and do you not feel these evil roots sometimes budding, these fires kindling? And have you not often suffered loss by them? Yet you hope you have a little faith, and some affections for things above; but let lust alone awhile, venture on temptations awhile, and O what leanness of soul, yea, what sickness, yea, what death, may it bring upon you! What carcasses may these living souls quickly become! Lift up your eyes, and look before you: foresee the evil, before you be surprised and swallowed up by it.

6. It hath Forecast in it. Fear will make us to beware: it will set us on considering, and contriving, and casting about how we may best escape the danger. Fear hath care going along with it. The fearless ones are the careless and the heedless ones. A fearing Christian will be a circumspect Christian: he looks to his steps, and takes heed to his ways that he sin not: he will keep his enemy in his eye, that he fall not upon him at unawares. He is tender of transgressing, and therefore keeps his watch, and stands upon his guard continually. He sees that he walks among temptations and snares, and therefore looks diligently to his foot that it be not taken: he sees how loose and heedless ones smart for their folly; he sees that prevention is better than repentance; and therefore though he will repent when he is fallen, yet he would rather make as little work as may be for repentance: that he hath been kept from iniquity, he prizes at a higher rate than repenting of iniquity.

A prudent man is a provident man. "I see," saith the fearing soul, "I see I am in danger ; my soul is in danger ; my life is in danger ; I stand in jeopardy every hour. Evil is before me, and it may come upon me ere I am aware. And what if it should come upon me ? Put the case that I should be overtaken, overtaken of sin, and overtaken of wrath, how bitter will then my folly be unto me ? Nay, evil will come upon me, and I shall not escape, if I look not better to it. But is there no way to prevent it ? Is there no security from the snare, no refuge from the storm, no shadow from the heat ? Must I fall ? Must I sin and be miserable, and perish, and is there no remedy ? How may I escape ?" These are the forecastings of the fearing soul. And when they have found him out his way, they hold him to it ; when they have discovered a refuge, they hasten him into it. The manslayer needed no other monitor ;—the avenger of blood at his back, and the fear in his heart, made him hasten to the city of refuge.

Let me here by the way address a word or two to this age and nation. Doth faith see nothing of a flood coming upon us ? Is there such a deluge of sin amongst us ; and doth not that prophesy to us of a deluge of wrath ? Lift up your eyes, stand and look through the land, eastward, and westward, northward and southward, and tell me what you see. Behold, a flood cometh ! A flood of sin is already broken forth upon us ; the fountains of the great deep are broken up ; the windows of hell are opened ; and is there not a mighty stream of iniquity running down, even from all parties among us ? From one party, the openly profane, behold a flood of atheism and infidelity : amongst those that still bear the name of CHRIST upon their foreheads, what multitudes are there that are Pagans in heart and life : a flood of oaths and curses, and blasphemies : are not many men become like that beast which arose out of the sea, having "the name of blasphemy" upon their heads ? (*Rev.* xiii. 1 :)—a flood of "filthy lusts and stupendous adulteries : " what a new Sodom is sprung up out of the old ?—a flood of fury and rage is broken forth, such

a flood as the Serpent cast out of his mouth after the Woman, (*Rev.* xii. 15,) persecutions raised upon those that separate themselves from the filthiness of the land.—And besides these streams that come by the way of the wilderness, behold another stream that rises even in the garden of the LORD ! The waters of the sanctuary are become a muddy stream and a troubled sea, that cast up mire and dirt. A mixed stream comes forth,—divisions, contentions, unrighteousness, unmercifulness, with but very little truth and righteousness among it. The waters of grace and peace, the still waters, are but low waters, and run so softly, as if the fountains were quite dried up ; and instead thereof, pride, haughtiness, headiness, and uncharitableness, how do they swell amongst us, and rise higher every day !

In this flood of sin, how easy is it, for him that hath eyes, to see a flood of wrath even running in upon us ! But all this while, where are the Noahs amongst us ? What preparation is there making for an ark against the flood ? How is it that we are so secure ? Many amongst us are crying, “ A flood, a flood cometh ! Can our land any longer bear the iniquities of it ? Can the soul of GOD but be avenged of such a people as this ? ” But how few of us are heard crying, “ An ark, an ark, to save us from the flood ! ” And of those that cry, An ark, how very few are there that are preparing an ark ? How is it that we are not every one shifting for ourselves, and hiding ourselves from the evil to come ? I do not mean shifting, to hide ourselves by our wits, much less by our wickedness :—woe to such shifters, who make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, to save themselves from drowning ; who choke themselves in the mud, to save themselves from the waters ! But how is it that there is no more care taken to hide ourselves in GOD, and to lodge ourselves in the ark of the covenant ? What hiding-place have we but CHRIST ? What ark can we have, that will bear us above the waters, but the ark of the covenant ? There we may be safe in

CHRIST, and out of danger ; in covenant with God, and out of fear of the wrath of God.

How is it that there is no more inquiring, "Am I in CHRIST? Have I broken my covenant with death, and disannulled my agreement with hell? Am I no longer in league with my sins and this evil world? Have I broken with them all, and am I gotten within the bond of the covenant of God? If I think I have, yet am I not mistaken? Many souls have thought themselves within, yet died without; and am not I mistaken also? Is the thing sure? Is CHRIST mine indeed?"

How is it that there is no more asking the way to the city of refuge? O how is it that we do not awaken our slumbering spirits, and call upon our careless hearts? "Come on, my lingering soul, make haste, get thee up to the rock, to the sanctuary: awake, thou sleeper, carest thou not that thou perish? Come, my soul, enter thou into thy chamber, and hide thyself till the indignation be overpast."

How is it with you? Are you busy in considering, and forecasting, and inquiring how you may escape? What is it that your fear of a deluge hath put you upon? Is there any more circumspection in your goings? Any more tenderness of sin? Are you throwing off those weights that will sink you with the multitude? Are you busy in breaking down your sins, and building up yourselves in hope of the salvation of God? Behold how generally other matters still take up our time and thoughts! We are building houses, and planting vineyards, and buying and selling, and marrying and giving in marriage, seldom giving ourselves leave to think of the flood that is coming to take us all away. O fear, and let your fear set you at work to save yourselves from misery and ruin!

By this time you may see What this Fear is, or Who is this man that feareth. The man of understanding, that so knows God, his goodness and severity; that so knows sin, its malignity, and the misery that it exposes to;—that so believes God;—that hath such a love for God and his own

soul, and such an aversion from sin ;—that so foresees the danger he is in, of running into sin, and falling into misery, that he wisely and warily looks to himself, keeps himself from iniquity, and hides himself from those miseries, which the rest of the world foolishly venture upon, and are destroyed by ;—this is the man that feareth, this is the happy man.

II. What is that Blessedness that is pronounced concerning him that feareth? “Happy is the man that feareth.” To Happiness two things are required: 1. *Sufficiency.* 2. *Security.*

1. *Sufficiency.* He that is in want is in misery: whatever he hath, if he hath not all he needs, yea, all that he desires, in the fulness of its sufficiency, he is in straits. The pain of what he desires and hath not, embitters the pleasures of what he hath. No sufficiency, no satisfaction; and short of satisfaction, so far short of happiness. He must have all things that would find rest in any thing. He that possesses whatever he can desire, that is a happy man. Only to this must be added,

2. *Security.* What we have to-day, may be lost to-morrow. He that hath most, and holds it by an uncertain tenure, may be in greater perplexity than he that hath nothing. Therefore can there be no happiness in any thing under the sun: for besides the insufficiency of these worldly things, (the whole earth is too little to fill the soul, all this great world is not enough to fill the little world, man,) besides this, were they sufficient, what security can be had for the continuance of them to us? They are all but casualties; they come and go; they have all their wings, and who knows how soon they may take their flight? At the best, “the things that are seen are but temporal:” Whereas there must be durableness in the matter of our happiness: it must be durable riches, an enduring substance, an inheritance that fadeth not away.

Now this is the Happiness of him that feareth, he hath sufficient; and what he hath is in safety.

1. He hath a sufficiency. This fear, as appears from

what hath been spoken, is a religious fear. The fear of **God** is sometimes taken for all religion ; here only for one particular branch of it, yet such as argues the truth of religion, and entitles the soul to the whole revenue of religion. He that knows, believes, and loves **God**, and therefore fears and flees from sin and wrath, is certainly a good man, and shall have his inheritance with the just.

This is the man who “shall inherit all things,” (*Rev.* xxi. 7,) and “shall want nothing.” (*Ps.* xxxiv. 10.) He is provided for, for soul and for body, for this life, and that to come. The promise is his portion, and in the promise there is all things. There is bread in the promise, and clothes, and houses, and lands, and friends ; there is grace and glory in the promise. And to have an inheritance in the promise is to him as good as to have it in hand, and in some respects better. Thou art a fool, who sayest with the prodigal, “Give me my portion ;” it is better where it is ; **God** will look better to thee, than thou to thyself.

2. He hath security. All that he hath is in safety. He that hath most, and is in danger of losing all, (as I said before,) is in greater perplexity than he that hath nothing to lose. The poor man sleeps in more quiet than he that hath his house full of treasure, if he be in danger of the robber. Enough is not enough, it will never content, whilst there is hazard of losing all. The man that feareth hath enough, and all he hath is in safety : “Whoso hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, he shall be quiet from fear of evil.” (*Prov.* i. 33.) He that feareth shall be most free from fear : the fear of **God** will fortify him against the fears of the world.

Particularly consider these two things.

(1.) The matters wherein his happiness lies are sure. The mercies of **God** are sure mercies, that will never fade, nor can be taken away. If there be uncertainty in what a Christian hath of this world, he is well enough notwithstanding ; these are not his happiness ; he may be as happy in his greatest penury, as in his greatest plenty.

The matters of a Christian's happiness are sure and certain things. The portion of the world is not capable of being made sure. As MR. GOUGE says well; "The world flies; sometimes it pitches upon one family, and then how happy do they account themselves; shortly after it takes it flight thence, and away to another, and thence to another, and another; and who knows whither? The world runs upon wheels. The wheel of Providence is ever turning; now one is at the top of the wheel, and then another comes up; and he that was just now at the top, by and by tumbles, and the wheel runs over him. How often do rich men break, and poor men get up for a while in their room, and then tumble down after them! To-day thou hast an estate, and dwellest at ease in thine own ceiled house; but who can tell where he may find thee to-morrow? To-day thou livest, and art in health, and nothing ails thee; to-morrow thou mayest die, the grave may cover thee, and worms may be feeding upon thee. Such an uncertain world this is, and at such uncertainties are the things thereof; and there is no preventing of it. It cannot be otherwise: the wisest, the wariest, the most industrious man in the world, do what he can, can never be at a certainty for two days together. The thief, the moth, the fire, sickness, and death, may quickly divide betwixt him and his portion, and take away either him from it, or it from him. But the treasure of the man that fears God is a treasure that faileth not, an enduring substance."

(2.) His very fear is a means to keep what he hath in safety. "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (*Jer.* xxxii. 40.) God holds us by certain cords, which should they break or give way, we should certainly be lost. One of these cords is Faith. "We are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation." (1 *Pet.* i. 6.) Another is this Fear: "I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Whereupon we may say also, "We are kept by the mighty power of God," through fear, "unto salva-

tion." God makes use of our fear of losing all, to prevent our loss. As if we should cease to believe, so if we should cease to fear, we should be undone at last. Upon a little loosening of this cord, how often do we suffer great loss ! When we take head, and grow bold and venturous ; when we forget our danger, and so lay by our armour ; how much mischief do we run ourselves into ! Hast thou never lost thy peace and sense of the love of God ? Hast thou never lost thy delight in God ? Hast thou never fallen by thy folly into sin, into a vain and carnal frame, into a dead and barren state, and thereby provoked the Lord to withdraw and hide his face from thee ? Dost thou not often see this to be thy case ? Why, thou shouldest have feared in time, and all this mischief might have been prevented. Whilst fear stands centinel, the enemy hath the less hope of making an invasion upon thee. But where this fear is not, that soul dwells like the wealthy nation, " without care, and having neither gates nor bars," (*Jer.* xlix. 31,) and so becomes a spoil to the enemy. Where care is the gate, and fear hath bolted the gate, there all is in safety.

This fear may expose to temporal evils. How much do Christians often lose by this fear ! They lose their friends, their estates, their liberties, and sometimes their lives, upon this very account, that they are afraid to sin against God. And yet all this while they are in safety ; and when they have cast up their accounts, they are no losers, though they have lost all they had ! Their souls are in safety ; and that is enough to save themselves harmless under all their sufferings.

He whose face is filled with the contempt of the proud, whose back is bowed down that the ungodly may go over it, whose name is made a scorn and derision, whose goods become a spoil, and his very life a sacrifice to the rage of the cruel,—if he does but come off with the safety of his soul, that makes him abundant recompense for all. As CHRIST saith, " What shall it profit a man to gain the

whole world and lose his own soul ?" (*Matt. xvi. 26,*)—so may it not be said, What shall it prejudice a man to lose all the world, if he save his own soul? Thou knowest not what a soul is, or what the salvation of a soul is, thou knowest not what eternity, or what that life and death means, who canst not say, Let me escape that death, let me obtain that life, and it is enough! O study the world to come more, and secure to thyself the eternal inheritance; and then, whatever thy condition be here, thou wilt say with the Psalmist, "I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest: for thou, LORD, makest me dwell in safety." But more of this hereafter.

By what hath been said, it appeareth, that the man who feareth is a happy man; and it hath been shown wherein this happiness lies. There is no happy man in the world, if this be not he: when he is at the lowest, it is better with him than with the best of sinners. Some sinners will grant that he who fears God will have the best of it in the other world; but yet they conclude, that themselves have the better of it here. But they are mistaken: even in this life a godly man hath the better of sinners. He knows little of God, he hath little understood the joy of faith, the pleasure of love, the ease of sincerity, the peace of conscience, the gain of godliness, that would exchange lives with the best of sinners in this world. The very hopes of the saints fill them with more joy than the greatest possessions of the ungodly.

He that is otherwise minded is guilty of one of those absurdities,—either to think that God is not better than his creatures, or that the ungodly enjoy as much of God as those that are godly. If God be better than the world, and if God be the present portion of the godly, and of them alone, then he that feareth God is the happiest man even in this life. But O what will his blessedness hereafter be! What advantage will he have of sinners in the other world! When the comparison shall no longer be betwixt God and the creatures, betwixt the fulness of heaven, and the

fatness of the earth ; when the question shall no longer be which is best, peace of conscience, or the prosperity of the world,—the hopes of glory, or the pleasures of sin ;—but which is the best, the pleasures of the saints, or the plagues of sinners,—the fruition of God, or reprobation from God,—the joys above, or the pangs beneath ;—then shall it be considered, then shall it be discerned, who are the happy persons, those that fear God, or those that fear him not.

The APPLICATION is that which I chiefly intend, and this shall be by way of information, exhortation, and direction. I shall put them altogether. For the more effectual carrying on whereof, I shall inform and warn you, I. Of the Reasons why you should fear. II. What you shall fear. III. How you shall improve this holy fear.

I. The Grounds and Reasons why we should fear.

And, 1. We have reason to fear because of our Ignorance. Men's ignorance is the reason why they fear not, and yet it is a great reason why they should fear. Who have so great reason to fear as the blind ? Every bush may be a thief, every sheep may be a wolf, every lamb may be a lion, for ought he sees to the contrary ; every step may be into the ditch, or into the fire, or into the water ; wherever he stands, or sits, or dwells, he knows not who or what may be near him : and have not such men reason to fear ? Particularly by reason of ignorance, (1.) We know not our Way. (2.) We know not the Dangers that are in our way.

(1.) We know not our Way. "He that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth." (*John* xii. 35.) Whither art thou bound, soul ? Thou art a traveller ; but to what city, to what country, art thou travelling ? "O, I am going to Canaan, to the New Jerusalem ; I am travelling heavenwards." But dost thou know the way to that good land ? Some of the most ignorant will answer, "Whither I go I know, and the way I know ;" when the truth is, they neither understand the one nor the other.

The way to GOD, though it be a straight way, and leads directly on by a line, yet it is hard to hit upon. If I were to give but one general direction for finding the way to heaven, this should be it : Take your first turning upon the right hand, and then keep straight on, without turning either to the right hand or to the left. The way that thou art now going is to hell ; but there is a turning on the right hand just before thee,—Repentance, which is our turning out of the way of death into the way of life ; take that turning, and then turn no more, but keep straight on to the end of thy life.

But as straight a way as the way of life is, it is not so easy to keep us in it. There are many turnings out on either hand, and at every turning stands a deceiver, calling to passengers as they go, “ Turn in hither, this is the way, walk in it.” The Pharisee stands at one turning, and says, “ This is the way,” the formal observation of the externals of religion. The hypocritical zealot stands at another, and says, “ This is the way,”—the spirituals of religion ; “ Believe in CHRIST, and then live to thyself.” The sectary, of whatsoever sect he be, says, “ Here is CHRIST, this is the way of life, turn in hither, be one of us, and thou shalt do well.” The flesh stands and cries, “ Hearken to none of these ; they are all blind guides, and will lead thee into their own ditch ; come take this great and beaten road in which thy forefathers have gone ; follow the wise men, and the learned men, and those multitudes that thou seest going before thee ; trust in the mercy of God, and trouble thyself no farther.” And the Devil stands at every one of these turnings ; and if he can but persuade thee to take one of them, it comes much alike to him which it be.

Now what shall a poor ignorant soul do in this case to hit the right, when there are so many false ways ? Since he does not know the way himself, and is likely to meet with so many false guides, how can he but fear that he may be misled and lost ?

(2.) By reason of ignorance, we know not the Dangers

in our way. If we have some apprehension that the way is dangerous, yet we know not in particular where the danger lies ; and so, ere we are aware, we may fall into it. Some young travellers, though they are told they go a dangerous road, yet know not the dangerous places, nor the dangerous persons that they fall upon ; a thief starts out of a bush where they never suspected him ; and when he comes, by his fair language and carriage, they take him for a friend, and suspect not that he comes upon any evil intention, till their loss too late teach them what he is.

“ What harm is there in such a fashion, in such a recreation, in cards, or dancing ? What harm is there in a little mirth, or in merry company ? They are not drunkards, nor swearers ; there is nothing amongst them but honest mirth and pleasantness ; what hurt is there in that ? ”— Why, what harm is there in falling among thieves ? What harm is there in being robbed of all thou hast ? Hast thou never been a loser by such friendly thieves ? Hast thou lost none of thy precious time amongst them ? Nay, have they not stolen away thy heart ? When thou camest amongst them, thou hadst some savour of God and religion, and some holy seriousness and tenderness ; when thou returnest, thou seest it is lost ; thou hast left all thy religion behind thee. Is this no harm ? When thou hadst been served so once, wouldest thou be content to be served so again ?

If thou hadst a cup of pleasant wine before thee, and one should tell thee, “ Take heed, there is poison in the cup,” wouldest thou say, “ What harm is it, if there be ? ” Why, this may be the case : In all those little things (as thou countest them) there may be poison in the cup ; the pleasures that are before thee may be the price the Devil is offering thee for thy life. Therefore fear that there may be such danger, and you never know or suspect it.

Nay, the Devil lies in wait, not only in those places and ways which look suspicious, but every where, even where he is least suspected. When could men think themselves

more secure from the Devil than when they are with God in duties and ordinances? But doth he never meet them there? Hath the Devil never met thee in thy closet, or in the congregation of the LORD? How is it at this very hour? Now, when we are come together before the LORD, and when the LORD is warning us of the danger we are in; is there not one standing behind, and out of sight, either stealing away your hearts from minding the warnings, or else contradicting the word, of the LORD? "LORD, open the eyes of these men!" I now use that prayer for you, which the man of God did for his servant, and in answer to which it is said, 'So the LORD opened his eyes, and he saw all the mountain full of angels, chariots of fire, and horses of fire.' (2 Kings vi. 17.) If God should so open our eyes, I trust we should see this house full of the angels of God ministering to us: but withal we should see this house full of devils attempting to deceive us; a devil at every ear, a devil at every heart, trying his skill to stop the one, and harden the other, from receiving this word of the LORD. Not one of us is more secure than JOSHUA the High Priest, of whom we read, that when he was "standing before the LORD, SATAN stood at his right hand to resist him." (Zech. iii. 1.) It may be, you do not think it is so: why therefore fear, that the Devil should be so near, and so busy with you, and you neither understand, nor will believe it though it be told you. Such ignorance is cause enough of fear.

If you that have known CHRIST many years should have been told, that if you looked not better to it, the Devil would meet you at the very threshold of Christianity, and hold you there from making any farther progress; that he would keep you babes in the grace of God; that he would keep you all this time so weak in the faith, so cold in your love, so barren in your life; that all this while you should have gotten no more victory over the world and your hearts, no more acquaintance with God and your own souls, than some of you have at this day;—and if when you had been told that you were in danger of being served thus, you had

answered, "I do not fear it;"—I should have made bold to tell you, "You do not know what a Devil he is with whom you have to do:" and now you know him better, by observing how he hath dealt by you hitherto, you will at length I hope learn to fear.

2. Another reason why we should fear, is, because of the Deceitfulness of our Hearts. Whatever our dangers are from without, whatever designs or devices the Devil or the world have against us, yet if all were true within us, if our hearts were true, our hazard were not so great. But "the heart of man is deceitful above all things:" so that we may not only say, with the Prophet, "Trust ye not in a friend, put no confidence in a guide;" (*Micah* vii. 5;) but, with SOLOMON, also, "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool." (*Prov.* xxviii. 26.) The deceitfulness of the heart stands, (1.) In its Treachery. (2.) In its Subtlety.

(1.) In its Treachery. The heart of man is false to itself: it is like the Devil, a lying spirit; there is no believing what it speaks; it is full of all guile, and will, if left to itself, betray itself into the hands of its enemies.

(2.) In its Subtlety. It is a crafty heart; it hath many plots and devices to deceive. It hath much of the Devil in it; not only of the falseness of the Devil, (as before,) nor only of the uncleanness of the Devil, or of the malice of the Devil, but of his subtlety. It is true, it is also a silly heart, easy to be beguiled: it is so subtle as to beguile, and yet so silly as easily to be beguiled; like those false teachers, "deceiving, and being deceived." (2 *Tim.* iii. 13.) The most mischievous deceits of the heart are its self-deceivings. (*James* i. 22.) God cannot be deceived; and if men be deceived in us, there is not so much in that: but the deceits which are most to be feared, are its deceiving of itself.

First, God cannot be deceived. He is "the searcher of the heart;" he knows what is in man, better than the spirit that is in him. "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." Our hearts can tell us more of

ourselves, than all the world can tell us; but God can tell us more of us, than we of ourselves. He hath a key to every chamber, a window into every corner, and a candle to search into our inmost parts. "All things are naked and open to Him, with whom we have to do." He sees all that is lodging in us; all the desires, yea, and all the thoughts of the heart are open to his eye. He sees what is doing within us; what good the heart is at any time doing; any good desires that are working; any gracious designs that are going on in the heart. He sees what evil is doing: an evil motion cannot stir, but he is presently upon it.

What are these hearts of ours often doing in secret, when no others, and it may be not ourselves, take notice of them? When our eyes are closed, our hands quiet, and our tongues silent, God knows what is doing within. There may be devilish devices contriving within; there may be dark counsels beneath; the heart may be stealing, or coveting, or committing adultery, whilst there is no noise of any such thing without. Yea, whilst the tongue is praying, and the ears are hearing, and the eye is lifted up to heaven, the heart may be in hell, or on earth, in the field, in the shop, in the market, or who knows where;—but God's eye is upon it!

Friends, who knows where your hearts are, or what they are doing, at this hour? It may be, that now, while God is preaching to you the doctrine of holy fear, of holy watchfulness, and of circumspection, some of your hearts may be *unpreaching* all that God speaks, and may be preaching licentiousness, slothfulness, and security to you,—telling you that there is no such danger, and no such need of fear, as hath been preached. Or if they do not contradict the word which the Lord hath spoken, yet it may be they divert you from minding it, by telling you some impertinent stories about other things, filling your heads with your business or pleasure, and cutting out your work for to-morrow. Look inward, to see if you can find your hearts within; or whether they be not gone abroad, you know not whither. But wherever they are, or whatever they are

doing, the eye of the LORD is upon them ! Men may deal deceitfully with GOD, but they cannot deceive Him.

Secondly, If they deceive men, it is not so considerable ; though that may be our wickedness too. If we hide ourselves from others, if we be worse than they apprehend, there is not much in that. The heart is cunning at this also,—in deceiving men, by palliating evil intentions with specious pretences ; by seeking out corners to sin in, waiting for the twilight or the darkness to be a covering ; by smooth words and fair speeches, beguiling the hearts of the simple ; by putting on the clothing of a sheep upon a wolf or a bear,—the face of a saint to cover the soul of a devil.

Soul, what hast thou been doing to-day ? “ O, I have been praying, and hearing, and fasting, or keeping a sabbath to the LORD.” No, thou lyest !—thou hast been juggling, and cheating, and deceiving men. If these have been the works of thy tongue, or thine ears, or thine eyes,—to pray, to hear, and to praise the LORD,—thine heart hath found other work to do : it hath been making a garment of these prayers and praises to dress up itself in, thereby to set itself off before the spectators ; or it may be, to hide or carry on some design, which needed such a covering.

Thirdly, The heart is thus busy to deceive men ; but still its most mischievous deceitfulness lies in deceiving itself. It is men’s great sin to deal deceitfully with men ; but that which I would now lay before you, as a special reason why we should fear our hearts, is their self-deceivings ; and how much fear should be upon us upon this account, will appear, when we have considered these three things :—
[1.] About what men’s hearts deceive them. [2.] By what. [3.] Of what men’s hearts deceive them.

[1.] About what do men’s hearts deceive them ? About that which they are most deeply concerned to mind. Particularly, First, About matters past, in their self-reflections. Secondly, About matters present, in their judgment of their own states. Thirdly, About matters to come, or their resolutions for the future.

First, Men’s hearts deceive them about matters past,

in their self-reflections. It may be, sometimes a voice may be heard within, "Soul, what hast thou done? How hast thou lived all thy time hitherto? What evil hast thou done, or what good hast thou done?" The heart presently answers, "I know nothing by myself; I know no hurt that I have done; I have lived a harmless and an honest life." The little good that hath been done, looking on it by a false glass, it sees double: and as to all the evils that have been done, for a hundred or a thousand, it takes the bill, and writes down ten, or it may be but one, and that a little one; and perhaps it buries them all in the land of forgetfulness. And by this hiding of sin it comes to pass, that repentance also is hid from men's eyes. And the usual issue of this falsehood of heart, about matters past, is, that it holds men under impenitence.

Secondly, Men's hearts deceive them about matters present, in their judgment of their own states. What art thou? A child of God, or a child of the Devil? A believer, or an unbeliever? Men's hearts will be civil with them, and give them good language. A child of the Devil, a reprobate! These are hard words. Whether it speaks true or no, it will be sure to speak good to them;—"O, a child of God, no doubt;" though perhaps it neither knows what God is, nor the difference betwixt the children of God and the children of the Devil.

A faithful heart will be (as I said before) a self-suspecting heart. The word tell us, there is chaff in the floor, as well as wheat; there are tares in the field, as well as good corn. Now when the question is put, which is the chaff, and who are the tares, every man's heart should answer, "LORD, is it I?" If I should speak thus from the LORD to this congregation, "Men and brethren, there are infidels among you;" this question should run even through the whole company, "LORD, is it I? Am not I one of the unbelievers?" But what do your hearts say to you? "O, I thank God, it is not I; I am none of them; my soul is upright." If a whole congregation should be thus spoken

to one by one, some of the best, that had least reason to suspect themselves, would cry out, "LORD, is it I?" But for the most, and possibly the very worst among them, they would never hesitate to answer, "I am none of them; I thank GOD I have an honest heart." Whence comes this now? Why, that heart of thine hath played the Devil with thee, and deceived thee!

Thirdly, About matters to come. If the case be so plain, that the badness of the life past, and the unsoundness of the present state, cannot be hid, then the heart promises better things to come. "Stay but a while, and I mean to have done with this worldly life, and to live in all things as becometh a Christian." Thus it promises, and its promises must be taken instead of present repentance. How much credit there is to be given to such a promise, the experience of many sufficiently tells. But though the heart hath been a known deceiver, yet still it is trusted.

You that profess religion, and are visibly walking in the way of righteousness;—if you should be asked, "How long wilt thou hold this course? To-day thou art with CHRIST, but where wilt thou be to-morrow? Now thou art with the Disciples, but wilt thou never go over to the Scribes and Pharisees? Thou mayest feel the smart of Christianity; thou mayest become a reproach, and be made a prey; the shepherds may be smitten, and the flocks may be scattered; wilt thou not then forsake CHRIST?"—"God forbid," says the heart presently: "Turn from the holy commandment, and deny CHRIST! No, though I die with him, I will never deny him." Aye, but there was one spake as much before you; it was the word of PETER's heart, (*Matt.* xxvi. 35,) and yet you know what followed. Consider him, and fear how it may be with you.

[2.] By what will our hearts deceive us? By any thing in the world: there is nothing comes, but some evil use they can make of it, either to entice to sin, or to harden against repentance, or to lay asleep in security, or to build us up in presumption. The heart is such an adversary, as can

fight at any weapon ; some way or other it can make use of any thing to serve it in its deceiving work.

By what did EVE's heart deceive her ? By an apple. By what did ACHAN's heart deceive him ? By a wedge of gold. By what did SAMSON's heart deceive him ? By a harlot. By what was ESAU deceived ? By a mess of pottage. By what do poor men's hearts deceive them ? By their want. By what do rich men's hearts deceive them ? By their abundance. By what do evil men's hearts deceive them ? By their lusts. By what do good men's hearts deceive them ? Sometimes even by the good that is in them. The heart of man can make a snare of every creature, condition, relation, or comfort ; can make a net for souls of the coarsest or of the finest thread ; can undo them by their friends and by their enemies, by their prosperities and by their adversities, by their sins and by their righteousness. Wherewithal may this man be enticed to sin, or to neglect CHRIST and his soul ? Some men's hearts find that a harlot will do it, others that a drunken companion will do it, others that gold and silver will do it, others that applause will do it ; some that idleness, others that business, some that friends, others that enemies, some that prosperity, others that affliction, will be the temptation ; and accordingly the heart manages its deceiving work.

Our hearts may deceive us by the best we have,—by our virtues, by our duties, by our privileges ; and this is often the most dangerous deceit. The more generous the wine in which thou receivest thy poison, the more deadly the potion.

I might multiply instances of the several sorts of the heart's deceivings, and show that there is nothing, which may not, in some way or other, be made use of to beguile us.

[3.] Of what may our hearts deceive us ? Even of all we have. Of what did our first parents' hearts deceive them ? Of their portion in GOD, and their place in paradise. Of what did ESAU's heart deceive him ? Of his birth-right and the blessing. Of what did SAMSON's heart deceive him ?

Of his locks and of his life. Of what did that fool's heart deceive him, who is mentioned in *Luke* xii. 20? Of his soul. "A deceived heart hath turned him aside, so that he cannot deliver his soul." (*Isa.* xliv. 20.)

You that believe yourselves true Christians, are apt to think that whatever you be deceived of, yet your souls are safe, and therefore that you have no such need to fear as other men. But it may be you may be deceived in this; and this very confidence, that your souls are safe, may prove their eternal loss. But if you should at last save your souls, yet how many desperate hazards do you run of losing them, by hearkening to these evil hearts? How much of your time do they steal away, which was given you for working out your salvation? How many duties have they lost you? How many ordinances have they lost you, which the interest of your souls could ill have spared? What a dead, and dark, and carnal, and loose spirit hast thou sometimes been bewitched into, wherein God hath been laid by, thy soul hath been forgotten, conscience hath been laid asleep, and all care about the things of God hath been swallowed up in the cares of this life? Is it nothing to thee to be in such a case? Doth it not grieve thee to think whither thou art fallen? And art thou not afraid what the issue may be, and whether ever thy soul may be lifted up out of this pit, whereinto it is sunk so deep in mud and mire? But if thou be asked now, "Friend, how camest thou in hither? Who hath led thee into this dirt? Who hath cast thee into this pit?"—it may be thou wilt be ready to answer as EVE did, "The serpent beguiled me;" or as ADAM did, "The woman deceived me;" thou wilt find some else to father thy faults upon. "The Devil deceived me into this case; the world deceived me; evil company deceived me:" Like enough they did; but what could they all have done if thine heart had not joined with them? "The hand of JOAB is in all this?"—thine heart is the JOAB, that hath dealt thus subtly and deceitfully with thee.

This heart it is that would not suffer thee, when thou

hast been commanded, to accept of **CHRIST**, or deliver thyself up to him. To any else that comes to demand it, thy soul is presently delivered up. Let lust come and require, Deliver up thy soul to me ; let thy companions come and demand, Deliver up thyself to us ; let the world, or let the Devil demand, Deliver up thy soul to me, and let me have the rule and the government of it ;—and up thou resignest it presently : any but **CHRIST** may have thee for asking.

“ Will the men of Keilah deliver me up ? ” said **DAVID**. Will they, **LORD** ? Or may I trust myself with them ? “ Trust them not,” says **GOD** ; “ they will deliver thee up.” Dost thou ask, Will mine heart deliver me up ? will it deliver me up to lust, or to the world, or the snares of the Devil ; or may I trust it ? Trust it not, it will deliver thee up. But to **CHRIST** it will not deliver thee.

It will be telling thee that **CHRIST** is an austere man, and that thou shalt find him a hard master. It will show thee the yoke and the cross : “ How severe is his government ! How short his allowance ! How hard will be the usage thou must expect of him for his sake ! ” And thereupon it will suggest, how much it doth befriend thee in refusing to deliver thee up to him. It will never tell thee of thy need of **CHRIST**, or of the gain that will come in by him ; thou must not be suffered so much as to think of that. If thou turn aside at any time to commune with him, or to look within the veil where his treasures lie, it calls thee off presently, or throws in upon thee the world, its cares, or its pleasures, to turn thee aside from all such thoughts, lest he should gain thy consent. Thus thine heart hath served thee all thy days, so that hitherto thou wilt have none of **CHRIST** ; and thus it is like to serve thee to the end of thy days, till there be no **CHRIST**, mercy, or salvation for ever.

Thus have I given you a short hint of the deceitfulness of the heart ; and is not such a heart to be feared ? Is such a heart to be trusted ?—A heart that will deceive you about every thing that you are concerned to mind ; about matters past, present, and to come ; that will neither let

drink, or whatsoever you do, "do all to the glory of God," and your own salvation. Our future state, whether we are for life or for death, is not to be determined by some few of our deeds, but by the tenor of our whole course: look what thy life is in this world,—so shall thy judgment be.

We are here, in this world, upon our good behaviour for the other world; and the short time we have here is all we have for eternity: our everlasting life or death will be determined by this little inch of time. Do in your day the work you were sent into the world for, and you are blessed for ever; spend your time in idleness, or impertinences,—let your great work be left undone, or but half-done, or done deceitfully,—and you die eternally.

And do you yet not see what cause you have to fear? If you were doing any thing of this world's business, and knew your life lay upon it, it would make your hand shake. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Why should we fear? why should we tremble? Why, because there is so great a work lying upon our hands. What if this work be done, and well done? Then you are made forever. What if you neglect or miscarry in this work? Then you are lost irrecoverably. It is a matter of life and death that you are every day and hour upon. How can you think such a thought without a trembling heart?

What a mighty influence would this consideration have upon your duties? When you go to pray, whether in the closet, or in the family, or in the congregation, were you persuaded that your eternal state were so much concerned in it, would you not fear how you trifled in so great a duty; and would not this fear effectually call in all your powers, to join in so important a service? How would it stand at the door, and keep out all those straggling thoughts, that at such times use to be thrusting in? Would such hasty and cursory praying, such a flat and formal devotion, as you ordinarily take up with, then suffice you? You

would sooner sweat than sleep at prayer; your hearts would burn within you, and not freeze as they too often do; tongue-prayers, and knee-prayers, and eye-prayers, would be of as little account with you, as they are with God; all the males in your flock would be brought in,—you would not dare to offer to the LORD a corrupt thing. You would take your best time, and time enough; you would put forth the utmost of your strength; you would not make your souls to wait the leisure of your flesh, or to take its leavings. What you can spare from the world, what you can spare from business or your pleasures, would not then do the turn; your eating time, your sleeping time, your working time, would be taken up this way, rather than want time for God and your souls. Dost thou complain of sleepiness in prayer, of wanderings in prayer, of want of time for prayer? Think, man, what prayer is for; how much there is depending on the faithful discharge of it; and see if this doth not work such a fear upon thine heart, as will both find thee time, and keep thee waking.

When you go to hear the word, if you considered thus:—I am now hearing for my life; the LORD GOD hath brought me before him, that he may tell me words whereby I may be saved; the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are now opening to me; the MOST HIGH comes down to show me the path of life; that word that falls from the preacher's lips is the word by which I must be saved, and the word by which I must be judged; it is the everlasting Gospel I come now to hear, which is all I have for eternity; I must stand or fall, live or die, according to the success of this word upon me:—As this is the only word of life, so this may be the only time of life: God knows whether this may not be the last warning, the last instruction, the last tender of grace and mercy that I may have for ever; whether my hearkening to, or letting slip, what I shall hear from the LORD this day, be not that which must give the final determination of mine everlasting state:—What would such thoughts, did they sit close upon our hearts,

work? Would they not command thee, Take heed how thou hearest, give heed to the things thou hearest, fear how thou let them slip? Would a deaf ear, a wandering eye, a roving imagination, be then endured? Wouldst thou then suffer, as ordinarily thou dost, those wanton birds to catch up the incorruptible seed as it falls upon thee? Would it not send thee home with a trembling heart, at all such times when thou hast left all thou heardest behind thee?

Consider, where are you at this present; what makes you here this day? Let me reason a little with you before the LORD: How is it that all your spirits are not standing upon the watch-tower, whilst the King of Glory passeth by? How is it that all your ears, and eyes, and hearts, are not waiting for him? Why sit you here all the day idle? Do you not understand what work it is you are upon? O take heed to yourselves; salvation and damnation are before you, and one of the two you are certainly working out. Is it indifferent to you which of the two it be? Is it all one to please God or to provoke him;—to get you nearer, or to put you farther off from the kingdom of God? What think you of such praying, and such hearing, as you content yourselves with? Will the living God be served with such spiritless duties? Is death your way to life? Are these dead and heartless duties, is this dead praying, and dull hearing, that upon which you will venture your souls? Will you pray yourselves into hell? While you have in your hands the key of the kingdom of heaven, will you lock the door with it, and shut yourselves out? Whilst others are swearing, and lying, and coveting, and cursing themselves to hell, will you be hearing and praying yourselves thither? Whither else will such dead duties carry you? Certainly such blessing is as cursing, such hearing is as hardening the ears, such praying is as blessing an idol. Will God regard mockers? Will God be served with wind and words? O tremble! fear lest you not only lose all your duties, but be irrecoverably lost by them!

Again, what an influence would this consideration have upon all the actions of your life, if you were sensible, that all that ever you do hath such a respect to your eternal state, that according to it your final sentence will be. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, you are serving God or the Devil, you are working for life or for death. There are no indifferent actions (considered *in individuo* and with their circumstances) that make neither one way or the other; all our motions are upward or downward.

Our life is our race, and every action of our lives is a step backward or forward,—our going in or out of our way. Nay, our very doing nothing is doing something; if our rest be idleness, it is serving the Devil; if it be a refreshing for our work, it is serving God. We may be in a sense serving God when we are asleep, and we may also by our sleep be serving the flesh and the Devil. We are ever either laying aside our weights, or laying on more weight; we are making us wings, or making us chains; helping ourselves on, or hindering ourselves in our way. We are in this world as merchants trading for eternity. Our whole life is a treasuring up good or evil for ourselves against the last day. We are always either buying or selling, buying the truth or selling our souls: we are upon the exchange every day, and hour, either changing better for worse, or worse for better; every inch of our time is our talent to trade with, and we are still laying it out to our gain or our loss. Our lives are our seed-time; we are still sowing to the harvest; what we sow in time, we must reap in eternity. Our eating and drinking, our working and playing, our talking and our silence, will one way or other spring up to our hands hereafter.

Do you understand this; do you consider it? O what manner of persons should we then be; what circumstances of lives should we then live? Would not this, if it were considered, dam up the stream of iniquity? Would that self-seeking and flesh-pleasing, which take up so much of our time, hold up the head against a sense of the influence they

must have upon our eternal state? Should we then spend so much of our time in doing wickedly, or doing nothing? Would it not find us other work, and work enough for our time, our tongues, our hands, and our heads, and all our powers? But we do not consider or understand.

When you are walking in the vanity of your minds, what do you use to think of this? Or do you think nothing of it? So it is indeed: you think not what you are doing. But stand and pause awhile. When you are serving your flesh, can you think, Now I am serving the LORD, now I am working out my salvation, now I am providing for my soul, and laying up against the time to come? Dare you say, Now I am sowing for eternity; this is that which I would reap in the other world? This mirth, and this jollity, this pride, and this idleness,—let these, and the crop, they will bring forth, be my harvest hereafter? Would not the thoughts of such a harvest make you dread such a seed-time? Or can you say, The time I spend thus I can spare from my soul; heaven is sure to me; now for mine ease and my pleasure; now for this present world,—I have done enough for that to come? Or will you say, These days of my vanity and earthliness will, I hope, be left out of my reckoning; my prayers and my alms, the good that I have done, are so much, that my evil deeds and days will be passed by? But must not every day, must not every work be brought to judgment? Doth not the righteous and all-seeing GOD book down all? Is not the sin of JUDAH written, as well as their tears and duties? Is not every thing noted in this book? And must not all things that are written therein be read in that day? “If you call on the FATHER, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.” (1 *Pet.* i. 17.) If you had to do with a GOD that would never call you to a reckoning, how much or how little you serve him, or whom else you served besides him, the matter were not then so much: but if you call on the FATHER, if you serve such a GOD, who will reckon with every one of you, and for every thing you have done, you had need look

better to it : "Pass the time," the whole time, "of your sojourning here in fear."

To hold this fear upon you, I shall add this counsel :—Through your whole course, and all the parts of it, carry this upon your hearts, "That you are serving the LORD." Do all you do as the servants of the LORD, and look on every duty as serving him. What the Apostle requires of the servants of men, is the duty of every one of the servants of GOD ; "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the LORD : for ye serve the LORD CHRIST." (*Col. iii. 23, 24.*)

When you go to pray, think with yourselves,—This is a duty which we owe to GOD : I am going into my closet, upon a service I have to do for GOD there. When you give an alms, or instruct your families, think,—These are services which I have to perform, not only to my poor brethren or family, but to the LORD ; I have a service to do for GOD amongst the poor ; I have a service to do for GOD in my family ; GOD hath bid me feed the one and teach the other ; and to whomsoever I do it, I will do it as unto the LORD. And in like manner, in all the matters of your life, in the ordering of your whole conversation, let this be still in your eye, and upon your heart,—GOD hath sent me forth as his servant into the world ; I have no business here but for the MOST HIGH ; I am born for Him, I am fed, I am clothed, I live for Him ; all that I have are the talents of my LORD, committed to me to use and improve for Him. I am debtor to no other, I am servant to none else ; whatever goes out any other way is unfaithfulness to Him, whose I am ; and now I go bound for Him ; for his pleasure I was made, and to Him I am devoted ; this life of mine, and every day of it, and every breath of it, I consecrate to the LORD : his servant I am, and that is no work for me, which I cannot call serving the LORD.

What would such a sentiment bring forth ? What care, what watchfulness, yea, what fear would it produce ? What, shall I serve the LORD with that which cost me nothing ? Shall cheap service, and easy service, and lazy

service, and eye service, be all that the **LORD GOD** shall have of me? I dare not serve my Governor so, and how will my **GOD** take it? But what, shall I divide my service betwixt the **LORD** and any other master? Shall my flesh be served, shall my pride be served, shall my covetousness, shall men, be served? Shall this heart, or this time, or this estate, be divided betwixt the **LORD** and them? How if the **LORD** find me in another field, or upon other work, than whither he sent and appointed me? How if he find any of his talents wasted, his goods conveyed away to another master; how will he bear it? Yea, how shall I bear it? Art thou not afraid, O my soul, how this will be borne, and what a reckoning thou mayest be brought to for it? Let me fear every day, that I may prevent the fear of the reckoning-day. Such a standing impression would this notion of our being engaged in service for **GOD** produce, if kept constantly upon the heart.

This notion, mingled with all our thoughts, duties, and ways, and the holy fear it will bring forth, will not only hold us to constant service, but will put us upon the highest and best service. What is the **LORD** whom I serve? Is he not one who looks for all I have, and is he not worthy of all I have? What an honour is it to be the servant of **GOD**, and what a terror to be none of that number? He is the best master; he is worthy of the very best I have. Fear, and be ashamed, O my soul, to put him off with any thing that is not worthy of him!

The great **GOD** hath but few servants in the world; hath he taken me into the number of those few? O, what shall I render? How can I be sufficiently thankful for that grace! **GOD** hath but few servants in the world; and the fewer they are, the more serviceable have they need to be. The Devil hath many servants; he hath those that serve him in every house, in every town; there are whole countries that are wholly peopled with the servants of the Devil: and their work is, to do all the disservice they can to **GOD**; to cherish the flesh, and the lusts thereof; to fill the world with wickedness, and to trample upon all that is left of

God in it. God hath but a few servants; and since he hath made me one of them, I will do him the best service I can. Such a blessed and quickening influence, would such abiding thoughts have upon all the people of God.

On the contrary, if sinners would carry this thought upon their hearts, I am every day serving the Devil, it would be a bridle to hold them in. Such a thought would strike such a fear, as would strike them backwards. If a sinner that is going to the alehouse would seriously consider, Whither am I going, and upon whose errand,—and his heart should answer, I am going to the ale-house to serve the Devil; the Devil hath some servants at work there for him, at their drinking-work, swearing-work, scoffing-work, and I am going among them to help on the Devil's work;—if when others are serving their covetousness, pride, or envy, their hearts should tell them, The Devil hath a great work for thee to do, to damn that soul of thine, and as many others as thou canst; the Devil would have thee to hell with him, and hang up that soul of thine in chains of fire; but this he cannot do, unless thou wilt put thine own hand to the work, and now he hath brought thee to it; in the course thou art now taking thou art doing the Devil's work, to destroy thine own soul;—such thoughts would put sinners to a stand, or at least slacken their pace.

If the Devil should possess a whole country of people, as he hath sometimes possessed some particular persons, and should set them on pulling down their own houses, burning their corn and their cattle, tearing their own flesh, pulling out their own eyes, butchering their children, and cutting one another's throats,—who would not be afraid to go and dwell in that country, and to be hired to that cruel work? Why, sinners, it is worse work which the Devil hath set you upon, and which you are now doing: he hath set you on work to stab every man his own soul, to strike his darts through your livers, to kindle those fires that will burn to the bottom of hell, and to cast yourselves headlong into those eternal flames. Hadst thou such a thought as this

upon thy heart, didst thou but consider that this is what thou art doing, it would cool the heat of thy lust, and hold thee back, at least, from much of that wickedness thou art rushing upon.

And so it would be, if Christians considered what they are doing, in following holiness and righteousness,—that they are serving the LORD, and that in his saving design. O how would it provoke them on! How is it that thou art such a drone, such a sluggard in thy work? Is He whom thou servest worthy of no more than this? Pluck up thy spirits, man! Thou art upon service for the GOD of the whole earth, and upon the noblest service that thou art capable of; thou art sent forth upon the same service, for which the SON of GOD was sent into the world, to save souls, and to destroy the works of the Devil. If GOD should have employed thee but in those lower works, that CHRIST did for the bodies of men,—to open the eyes of the blind, to unloose the tongue of the dumb, to cast out devils, to heal the sick, and raise the dead,—wouldst thou have been so unwilling, and so backward at such works? Thou art upon greater works than these,—to save thine own soul, and those that see and hear thee.

GOD hath made thee one of that chosen generation, that royal priesthood, that holy nation, who are to serve him, by showing forth the virtues of him that called them; and to set forth his praises in the world. Thou art set up as the image of GOD, as the epistle of CHRIST; thou art sent forth as a factor for GOD, to negotiate for him in the earth, to bear his name, to propagate his Gospel, to enlarge his kingdom; art thou not afraid to trifle in such noble works?

Think, O my soul, what it is thou art for, and for whom thou livest! Shall I be as the ox that eateth grass, or as the swine that lieth in the mud, and tell the world, Behold your king! This is the image of your GOD! Shall the epistle of CHRIST be nothing but a blank or blots? Shall I teach men to despise, or pollute and blaspheme, that worthy name which I am entrusted to advance? Shall

any little that I do, suffice me in so great a trust? Come on, O my soul; remember thou servest the living God, and therefore let me do him the best service I can. Canst thou be too holy? Canst thou be too circumspect and too active? I may be too sluggish, and too silent, and too shamefaced; but can I be too busy, too zealous for the living God? Can I say of my best, this is too much? Can I say of any thing less than my best, this is enough? It is the LORD GOD whom thou servest; fear to be unworthy. —This is the advantage of carrying this thought upon our hearts, I serve the LORD; it will put us upon the best and highest service.

4. Another reason why we should fear, is, because of the great Treasure we carry about with us, wherever we go. Christians are travellers, and they travel with charge about them. This world is a dangerous world: the passengers through it are in danger of falling among thieves, which will spoil and rob them of their treasure. A Christian carries more riches about him than the whole world is worth. He hath the whole Gospel within him; he hath the two tables of the covenant; his heart is the ark in which they are laid up. He hath CHRIST in him; the fruits of his blood, his pardon and reconciliation; the graces and comforts of his SPIRIT, his evidences for heaven; all the records of the gracious transactions betwixt God and his soul, the pledges of divine love, the King's broad seal, and the earnest of glory; all the income of his faith, the returns of his prayers, all that he hath gotten, all the manna he hath gathered, the hidden manna, the white stone, with the new name;—he carries all his riches up and down with him, wherever he travels.

Hast thou any divine light in thine heart, any love for CHRIST, any zeal for God and his Gospel, any tokens of his love, or tenderness of his honour? Is there peace or joy, or hope within thee? All this thou art in danger of being spoiled of.

This is the design that SATAN hath upon thee; this is the errand of every temptation, every companion, every

carual relation, every change of condition, every pleasure, all thy earthly possessions; the Devil hath set them in ambush, and they lie in wait for thee, to rifle thee and spoil thee of all that ever thou art worth. Hast thou never fallen amongst these thieves, and suffered great loss by them? Has thou been robbed, and art thou not afraid thou mayest again? Will not thy loss make thee more wise and wary?

How many instances have there been of secure and unwary Christians, who, whilst they have been venturous upon temptations, and indulged themselves in a more free and easy life, or a more busy drudgery for this world, have lost all they had for the other world; who, when they come a little to themselves, begin to mourn in NAOMI's bitter song, "Call me no more NAOMI, but call me MARA;" (*Ruth* i. 20;) I went out full, but I returned empty: Whilst mine heart was tender, and mine eye jealous; whilst I kept my watch, and kept my distance from temptations; O what light, love, peace, joy, did then possess my heart! Then I had a GOD whom I could call mine; then I had a JESUS, and could lean upon my Beloved; then I could believe, love, serve, delight in, enjoy, and praise the LORD. But woe to me, how is it now? Whilst I allowed myself a little more boldness with this flesh and this world, I have lost all ere I was aware. I am fallen among thieves, and what have they left me? O my ease, my pleasures, my money, my lands, how have you served me! Whilst I have been loving, and following, and serving you, how have you rewarded me! Ah me, they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid him! Grace is not; peace is no more to me; a good conscience, where is it? I can neither believe, nor love, nor pray, nor hope, nor any thing else, but fear and lament. O, had I feared always, this fear had never come upon me!

Are there no such instances, no such cases in the world? And is there no fear that this may be your case? Do not you also travel with charge? Have you not a treasure

within you ? What ! Have you been hearing, and praying, and labouring all this while, and have you not gotten something you would be loth to lose ? And is not the world still as very a thief as ever ? Does not the Devil lie in wait for you as well as for others ? Is not his eye upon that chain on thy neck, that jewel in thy bosom, and those bracelets on thy hands,—the graces that appear upon thee ? And hath he not a mind to beguile thee of them all ? Are his temptations so weak, or art thou so strong, that thou needest not fear them ? He that is so weak as not to fear temptations, is certainly not so strong as to resist them. Look to thyself : they are all standing at the catch for thee ; thy companions are catching, thine estate is catching, thy business is catching, thy pleasures are all catching at thee, to spoil thee of all that ever thou hast.

II. I shall now show, What you should fear.

It is too long to tell you every thing that is to be feared ; but fear especially these things following. 1. Fear your Delilahs, or your beloved sins. 2. Fear your Jezebels, or your painted sins. 3. Fear your Isaacs, or any beloved creature. 4. Fear the Cross, or Affliction. 5. Fear the Curse, or Damnation.

1. Fear your Delilahs, or your beloved sins. You have reason to fear every sin,—greater sins, smaller sins, common and ordinary sins, strange sins. There is no sin so gross, but it may be thy sin ; and there is no sin so small, but it may be thy undoing ; there is no sin so great a stranger to thee, but one time or other it may give thee a visit ; thou mayest be tempted to that sin, which thou wast never tempted to in all thy life ; thou mayest be overcome of that sin, which thou never committedst all thy days before. Say not of any sin, *This I fear not* ; it may be the next that comes ; and if it come. thou hast that within thee which may bid it welcome. Fear all sin, but especially fear thy beloved sin. Fear whatever thou lovest in all the world, but especially the sin of thy love.

But what is this beloved sin, or how may I know which

it is? It is worth your inquiry, and I shall give you the following marks of it, by which you may understand, both what sin it is, and how great reason you have to fear it.

(1.) The beloved sin hath easy entrance. The Apostle calls it, "the sin that doth easily beset us." (*Heb. xii. 1.*) It lays siege to the soul, and it hath an easy siege of it; it lies not long without the walls, but the gates are quickly thrown open to it; whenever it comes to the door, it is usually let in at the first knock. Strangers may be made to wait, but this friend must be fetched in and welcomed; the Devil may save his labour in tempting to this sin, for itself is temptation enough. It is the familiar of the heart, one of its nearest acquaintance.

(2.) It hath the command of all. The beloved sin is the master-sin; it is by love that sin rules; whatever hath gotten thy love, hath therein gotten the dominion in thee. Lovest thou God? Then at his command thou art. Lovest thou sin? Then this becomes thy lord; thou wilt deny or keep back nothing it will have. This *HERODIAS* may ask what she will, and she shall have it; not half, but all: not the Baptist's head, but thine own head and heart, and soul, and life,—all must be sacrificed to it. All the good thou hast, and not only this, but all other sins, must stoop to it and serve it. For instance, if pride be the master-sin, the whole man and all that he hath must be servants to it; yea, and every other lust must either serve it, or give place to it. Covetousness must get wealth to maintain it; curiosity must provide it with ornaments; all the parts and powers of the soul, all its virtues and inward endowments, all the actions of the life, must serve and uphold it. Meekness, temperance, patience, charity, chastity, preaching, praying, fasting, all our religion must be pressed to do homage to this idol; and whatsoever would be a disgrace, whether it be good or evil, must be laid aside, or trodden under foot. If it be a disgrace to be covetous, pride will be content to be poor; if it be a disgrace to be quarrelsome, pride will be peaceable; yea, if it be a disgrace to be proud, humility must serve it for a

covering and ornament. If it be an honour to be conscientious, the proud will be a professor: and if it be a disgrace, then farewell religion;—conscience, hide thine head! Every thing must be entertained or rejected, according as it may serve or hinder it; pride must have the disposing of all. And the like may be said of any other beloved sin.

(3.) It must have no check nor control. The beloved must dwell in quiet: do what it will, none must say to it, What dost thou? Like that fondling ADONIJAH, of whom it is said, “His father had not displeased him at any time, nor said, Why hast thou done so?” (1 *Kings* i. 6.)—the darling must be dandled, but never corrected. Or if there be a necessity that some check should be given to it, then the same charge must be given as concerning that other of DAVID’s fondlings, ABSALOM, “Deal gently with the young man;” not too harsh, not too close. “Nay, my sons, it is not well that I hear of you,” said ELI to his wicked sons. And that is the hardest word that will be borne.

(4.) It is the last that is parted with. REUBEN shall go, and SIMEON shall go, and JUDAH shall go; but must BENJAMIN go too? “My son shall not go down,” said old ISRAEL. This pride, let it go, says the covetous man, and this sloth, and this pleasure; but must this mammon and my heart be parted? It shall not go. This covetousness, let it go, says the proud man, and this ease and this pleasure; but shall my honour go? If I be put to labour, I can bear it; or if I be poor, I can bear it: I can work hard, or fare hard, but I cannot be despised; though my estate be brought low, and my back be bowed down, yet my spirit will not come down. This pleasure I can spare, and this ease, and this honour, saith the peevish, but I cannot help being angry when I am provoked; any thing but this: in this thing the LORD pardon me, I cannot help it.

(5.) It is often the thing that parts CHRIST and the soul. It is the last that is parted with, and sometimes it will never be parted with. CHRIST must go, and life must go, and the soul must die, rather than this sin not be saved alive.

Doubtless there are souls in hell that have parted with much, and would have parted with all but this one thing ; and for the sake of this they perish everlastingly. Was it not the case of that young man that came to CHRIST for eternal life ? He was fair for life, only CHRIST tells him, " One thing thou lackest." Get thee loose from the love of this earth, and heaven shall be thine. O, says his heart, I have too much to lose ; abate me but this, and I will be thine ; but if this may not be, away he goes, sorry he must die, but yet choosing death, rather than the loss of his estate.

Now is not such a sin to be feared,—that will find such an easy entrance ; that has the command of all, by which your souls and consciences, all your time, and estates, and ways, are governed and disposed ; that must do what it will, without check or control ; that you can so hardly get rid of, and that will so greatly hazard for ever your part in CHRIST ? Is not such a sin to be feared ?

By what hath been said, you may know which it is. Or it may be, there may be more than one : some sinners serve many masters, and know not which is the chief. Fear all your sins, and do what you can to find out the master-sin, and take heed of it wherever you meet it. Never count thyself in safety whilst that is alive : reward it as it would serve thee : put thy finger upon the right head, and then say, " Thou must die, JONATHAN ;" thou must die, O my sin,—or my soul must die by thine hand !

2. Fear your Jezebels, or your painted sins. An enemy in a disguise is the more to be feared. The Devil is a painter, that can limn some of the foulest vices in the form of virtues. As he can put an ugly vizard upon goodness, and, with this foolish world, make light pass for darkness, holiness for hypocrisy, zeal for pride and fury ; so can he paint sin in the form of godliness. Covetousness must go for frugality, profuseness for liberality, sinful compliance for civility, sinful connivance for modesty, lukewarmness for moderation, cowardice and faint-heartedness for prudence and discretion.

Hast thou never a painted Jezebel with thee ? No vice

which thou allowest thyself in, thinking there is no harm in it? Fear this harlot, who looks more modestly than she **that** hath her whorish heart on her forehead. Who is on the **LORD's** side, who? Throw her down! Hast thou any thing within thee that is for **CHRIST** indeed? Let it down with this Jezebel. Pull off the harlot's veil, and cast her out. "Come in," yea, rather, Get thee out, "thou wife of **JEROBOAM**, why feignest thou thyself to be another?"—Is this thy frugality, to hoard up and hold back what the **LORD** calls for from thee? Is this thy good husbandry? Too good an economist to be merciful! too good an economist to be a good Christian! Get thee out, thou wife of **JEROBOAM**, get thee out, covetousness; why feignest thou thyself to be another?—Is this thy liberality, to spend thine estate upon thy loose and idle companions? Is this thy casting thy bread upon the waters, to throw it down those filthy kennels? Get thee out, prodigal, why feignest thou thyself to be another?—Is this thy civility, to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, to hold friendship with the lewd ones of the earth, to have a kiss for the precious and the vile? Get thee out, why feignest thou thyself to be another?—Art thou remiss and indifferent in the matters of God? Art thou cowardly, and faint-hearted, where his honour is concerned; and is this thy moderation or thy prudence? Get thee out, Laodicean, why feignest thou thyself to be another? Pull off the mask from the face, and see what is under. Thou knowest not what mischief thou mayest suffer, where thou suspectest no harm: fear a pretended friend more than an open enemy.

3. Fear your Isaacs, or any beloved creature. Fear not only the sins of thy love, but the sons of thy love; the latter will be temptations to the former; thou mayest receive hurt from that which hath no hurt in it. An innocent child may be an idol, and so may thine husband, or thy wife, or any friend thou hast. Fear, lest thy love to thy friend abate thy love to thy God; lest thy love to thy children should cause thee to abuse thy God and them, by

the neglect of that reproof and correction thou owest them ; take heed that thy tenderness to them, make thee not cruel to them and thyself. By nursing their untowardness, thou nourishest those thorns that will pierce through thine own soul. •

Take heed that thou have no ISAAC in all the world, not one child, not one relation, concerning which, if GOD should say to thee as to ABRAHAM, Offer up this ISAAC whom thou lovest,—or if CHRIST require of thee, as he doth of all his disciples, Forsake father or mother, forsake husband or wife, forsake son or daughter,—thine heart should answer, No, I will not offer them up ; no, I cannot forsake them. What thou canst not part with, may be the parting of GOD and thy soul.

And as any beloved friend, so any other creature or affair that thine heart is set upon, may be a snare to thee. Fear that house that thou lovest, thy pleasant habitation ; fear thy money, and thy fields, and thy flocks, thy meat and thy drink that thou lovest ; those businesses and honest employments thou takest most pleasure in. Thy good things may become thine evil things ; thy table may become thy snare ; thy savoury meat may become thy poison ; and that which is given thee for thy good, may be an occasion of falling. Thine honest labours, when thine heart is too much in them, may be more mischievous than idleness.

How many foolish souls are there, whom their love hath held prisoners to this earth, and exiles from heaven ; to whom their good things have done more mischief, than things apparently unlawful could ever do !

How is it that thy soul is so seldom above ? Thy delights are below. Whence is that, that whatsoever thou dost in religion prospers no more ; that so small increases, and so many decays, are to be found upon thee ? Thou hast not been among the drunkards, nor hast been partaker with the adulterers ; thou hast been no liar, or scoffer, or oppressor ; these things thy soul abhors. Thou hast been an idolater ; thine heart hath found thee out

some idol, some friend, or farm, or honest business, or innocent pleasure, (as thou thoughtest,) and hath so chained itself to these, that hence it is with thee as it is. **GOD** hath opened his store to thee, and filled thine hand with good things; and thou hast opened thy mouth, and so filled thine heart with them, that it is choked by them, and all spiritual good is even strangled within thee.

Friends, if what you love be not also your fear, it will be your sin and your misery; it will draw your heart from **GOD**, and so it will be your sin: and it will provoke **GOD** to snatch it away from you, and then it will be your misery. Whatever thou over-lovest, if the **LORD** mean thee good, look to be bereaved of it. He will touch thee in the apple of thine eye, he will try thee in thine **ISAAC**, and will tear off that jewel that entices thine heart from him. And by how much the more thou lovest, by so much the greater will the torment be.

GOD says to thee, Take now thy child, or thy children, (not—and offer them up to me, for a burnt-sacrifice,—but) take and bring them up for me for a holy seed: instruct them, govern, and educate them for me. Whose are all these that are in thine house? Are they not all mine, my sons and my daughters? And wherefore have I sent them thee? Is it not with this charge, Keep these souls for me, bring them up for me? It is not for bread only, or for clothes, or for trades, or for portions, that they are come into thine house; it is that they may be instructed to the kingdom of **GOD**, and bred up to eternal life.

Now how dost thou keep this charge of the **LORD**? Dost thou teach them? Dost thou govern them? Or are they not left a rude and unruly company? But what is in the fault? Is not thy love in fault? Thou art so fond a father, that thou canst not find in thine heart to impose upon them any thing that they like not. “My child is sickly, and I cannot put him so hard to it. My child is wayward, but I am fain to let him have his will more than I would, for fear I should discourage or break his spirit. I have but one or but two, and if these should miscarry, what would become of me?”

Why now thou seest what reason thou hast to fear thy love, which is such a tempter to thee to disobey thy God, and to tender the humour of thy child more than the honour of thy Maker. If there be one of thy children that thou lovest above the rest, that must be let alone, to be the rebellious child.

GOD says to thee, not Take thou thy child, but Let me take him; be content that I lay mine hand upon him, and smite him with sickness or death. No,—thou canst not bear it, but murmurest, and art impatient, and wilt not be comforted or quieted. Some parents can better bear it, that the Devil should take their children, than that GOD should take them. If the Devil takes thy child, and makes a prodigal of him, a drunkard of him, or a rioter, or if evil company carry him into the paths of the destroyer, thou canst bear it with more patience. At least, if the Devil take him, and only make him a *muck-worm*, though that make him as sure to hell as prodigality; this thou canst bear with ease.

Though we may sometimes hear parents say, “I had rather my child had been dead, than buried alive in lewdness and debauchery;” yet to see him held by the Devil under a blind mind, under a hard and impenitent heart, so he be civil, and sober, and thrifty for this world, though he be but a civil infidel, this is not so heavily taken: but let GOD take him out of the world, and then no noise is heard in the house, but such as was heard in Ramah, “lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; RACHEL weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.” (*Matt. ii. 18.*)

4. Fear the Cross or Affliction. You will say, This is strange counsel; the Scriptures give the quite contrary; “Fear not them that kill the body.” I shall therefore show, (1.) How we are not to fear the Cross. (2.) How we are to fear the Cross.

(1.) How we are not to fear the Cross. Now the Cross must not be feared, either, *First*, Out of tenderness to the flesh; or, *Secondly*, Out of faintness of the spirit.

First, The cross is not to be feared out of tenderness to

the flesh. By the flesh understand, both our bodies of flesh, and our fleshly desires.

The Cross must not be feared out of tenderness to our bodies. It is that which makes us shrink from, and shun the cross, that it puts it to so much pain and hardship. The soul suffers not by any thing that man can do unto us, but as it partakes in the sufferings of the body. Upon this account it is that we fear bodily afflictions; but thus it should not be. A Christian is a soldier, and soldiers must not fear, but endure hardships. It is not for tender persons to be soldiers; hunger and thirst, cold and weariness, are their ordinary lot; and their hardiness must be their armour against all. It is not for tender persons to be soldiers, and therefore it is not for Christians to be tender; they should be the most tender of sin of any persons in the world, but not so of sufferings.

There are several kinds of sufferings to which we may be exposed: some fall at a greater distance, when we are smitten only in our goods; others come nearer, and touch our flesh and our bones; and these are they that are hardest borne. The Devil, in tempting **JOB**, knew which was the tender part, and therefore reserved that for his last trial. "Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." (*Job* ii. 5.) And if this tender part once becomes hardy, then thou art a soldier fit to fight the Devil and his armies. Christian, be not tender of thy flesh, and then thou wilt not thence fear sufferings.

Much less is the Cross to be feared out of tenderness to our fleshly desires. Here let three things be considered:—[1.] The intention of the cross is the destruction of the flesh. [2.] It is this corrupt flesh that makes the cross to pinch. [3.] This flesh is no such friend to us, that for its sake the cross should be feared.

[1.] The intention of the cross is the destruction of the flesh. Afflictions, as ill favouredly as they look, come to us upon no ill intent: it is to save us from that which is worse. God delivers his people up to the cross, to the

thine husband, or thy wife, should say, "We are none of thine." Suppose thy house and thy country should cast thee out, and say, "Neither are we thine." Yet this one word from the LORD, "But I am thine," how would it support and abundantly satisfy thy soul!

[2.] None so well know this ordinarily, that the LORD is their God, as his suffering people. It may be thou wilt say, Ah this word, "I am thine," what a good word is here! O were I but sure it were spoken to me, what then should I fear? Let the LORD but speak thus to my soul, "I will be thy God;" and then let the world, and the Devil too, speak what they can;—"We will be thine enemies, if God be thy friend; we will curse thee, if God bless thee; we will hunt thee, if God harbour thee; we will be thy death, if he be thy life."—Do your worst! If the LORD hath said this word to me, "I will be thy God," I will not fear though ye be all Devils unto me. But, O, here is my trouble, I see the world running against me, I see troubles running against me, and I am in doubt whether God hath spoken this word to me, "I will be thine."

Dost thou doubt? Dost thou not know whether God be thine? Why, the day of adversity, that is the time when thou art most likely to know it. There are none ordinarily who so well know that the LORD is theirs, as his suffering people. For, 1. God doth often reveal himself in a storm, who hid himself from us in our sunshine. Our days of darkness are often the times of light and love. Light from above is most needed, and will be better accepted, when it is darkest below. The hatred of the world doth usually usher in the tidings of divine love. When thou art led into a wilderness to be tempted, there expect he will speak comfortably to thee. Why art thou afraid of affliction? Wouldest thou not be glad to know that the LORD is thine? Follow him into the wilderness, and that may be the vineyard where he will show thee his love.—2. The sufferings of the saints will be a proof of their sonship. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth

with you as with sons." Our sufferings for CHRIST will be the evidence of our sincerity to him. Prove that thou lovest CHRIST above all, and thou therein provest that GOD is thine; and what greater evidence that we love CHRIST above all, than this, that we can part with all things for him?—But then indeed it is necessary that we be well assured that it is for the sake of CHRIST we suffer: for bare suffering will not be your evidence for heaven; but the cross may prove your sincerity. Grace is never so well known as when it is put to the trial. Your sufferings will be your trials,—the trial of your faith, the trial of your love; that so what lay in the dark before, may now be found unto praise and glory.

What sayest thou now? Canst thou faint under such expectations? Wilt thou fear to be comforted? What greater comfort than to have it proved to thee that thou art of GOD? And when will that proof be made with the greatest evidence, but when thou art tried in the fire? It is the wind that discovers the wheat, and the fire that proves the gold.

(2.) How we should fear the Cross. To this I shall answer in these two particulars. *First*, Fear a surprisal by the Cross. *Secondly*, Fear the temptations of the Cross.

First, Fear a surprise by the Cross. Fear lest it should overtake you unawares. The coming of the LORD to visit us is never so terrible, as when it is as the coming of the Lord of that evil servant to reckon with him; "In a day that he looked not for him, in an hour that he is not aware." (*Luke* xii. 46.) "Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged,—and so that day come upon you unawares." (*Luke* xxi. 34.)

GOD sometimes summons before he smites. "Prepare to meet thy GOD, O Israel." (*Amos* iv. 12.) But sometimes he comes, as to the church in Sardis; "I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." (*Rev.* iii. 3.)

This coming of the LORD finds some, as the coming of the Bridegroom (*Matt.* xxv.) found the foolish virgins, all asleep. Others it overtakes as DAVID and his armies did the Amalekites; it finds them "eating, and drinking, and dancing, and making merry." (*1 Sam.* xxx. 16.) On others it comes as the news of SISERA's death came to his mother and her ladies, finding them full of expectations of prosperity. They were full of expectations of his return in triumph; but the next news they heard was, that he was smitten dead to the ground. O what confusion and astonishment did this bring upon them!

How very few of us can say, The evil that I am prepared for is come upon me! It found me on my watch-tower, standing upon the guard. I am ready, I am ready; ready for sickness, ready for poverty, ready for bonds and imprisonment, or any thing else that may befall me.

What sad work do afflictions make with us, when they find us unready? Then we fret, and murmur, and despond. We can neither believe, nor pray, nor hope, nor submit. We that were just now full, and at ease, and at quiet, basking ourselves in sunshine, promising ourselves that our mountain never should be moved; on a sudden we are all earthquakes and clouds, and like the troubled sea that cannot rest, but casts forth mire and dirt. Such are the fruits of our surprisals by the cross. Hath this never been thy case? Fear lest it be.

Secondly, Fear the temptation of the Cross. There is a double temptation chiefly to be feared. In our troubles, especially such as befall us for the name of CHRIST, we are in danger, [1.] Of pride. [2.] Of a fall.

[1.] Of pride. As men may be proud of their grandeur, so also of their poverty and contempt. As we may be proud of our virtues and services, so also of our sufferings. The soldier's wounds and scars are his glory and boasting. It is an honour to suffer for CHRIST: and some of us cannot bear this honour without being exalted above measure; we cannot be cast down, but we are apt to be puffed up,

Some of the heathens have sacrificed their lives for their country's good ; and yet not so much for their country as for themselves, to purchase to themselves renown. And is there no such vanity to be found amongst Christians? Fear this wickedness, which will both spoil you of the comfort of your sufferings, and lose you your reward.

[2.] Of a fall. Afflictions (such I mean as befall us for the Gospel's sake) are temptations to apostasy from CHRIST. Fear lest the cross should part CHRIST and your souls ; lest it should be with you as with his disciples of old, who accompanied him to his sufferings, and there forsook him and fled.

5. Fear the Curse, or the wrath and everlasting vengeance of GOD. " Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell." (*Luke* xii. 5.) Fear not man, for he can kill but once ; when he hath killed the body, he hath done his worst ; but GOD can kill, and kill again ; can smite the body to dust, and the soul into hell. I say unto you, Fear him. Consider here three things.

(1.) To whom this warning was given thus to fear. And that was not to the multitude of his hearers only, but especially to his disciples. " He began to say to his disciples, first of all," (ver. 1,) and " I say unto you, my friends," (ver. 4.)

(2.) What was the special reason he used to urge and press his disciples to fear GOD ; and that was, the power of his wrath,—because he can " cast into hell."

(3.) What was the special manner of that fear to which he presses them ; and that is, lest he that can do it should do it, should actually cast them into hell. And this must be so, otherwise there had been no force in the consideration of his power, to work this fear : for they might have replied, Though GOD can damn us, yet why should we fear ever the more upon that account, whilst we are sure he will not?—and so his argument from GOD's power to destroy had come to just nothing. Who would fear damnation ever the more for that GOD hath power to damn

him, if he were out of fear that he would ever do it? Therefore the sense must be, Fear God, lest he should cast you into hell.

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (*Heb. x. 13.*) There is an afflicting hand of God, and there is a revenging hand of God, and both are to be feared. Even the afflicting hand of God is terrible. “Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord.” (*Heb. xii. 5.*) Make not light of that: thou mayest find it heavy enough. God is terrible in his judgments that he executeth on the earth. He maketh the very earth to tremble, when his hand is lifted up. Those hearts are harder than the rocks that will not rend when God smites. The afflicting hand of God is to be feared: but especially it is a fearful thing to fall into the revenging hands of the living God.

“Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.” (*Heb. xii. 29.*) The LORD CHRIST is sometimes resembled to a “refining fire.” “The LORD whom ye seek shall suddenly come into his temple.—But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire,—and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” (*Mal. iii. 1, 2.*) He shall purify, He shall save his people from their sins, yet so as by fire. God hath his purgatory as well as his hell;—though not according to that popish dream, a purgatory after this life; death will put an end to this purging work: he hath his purgatory, and his purgatory hath its fire; it is hot passing under the purging work of God. But who can stand before him when he appeareth as a consuming fire? “Who can dwell with the devouring fire, with the everlasting burnings?” (*Isa. xxxiii. 14.*)

“Let us have grace” that “we may serve God with fear.” It is not for sinners only, but for saints also, to fear the wrath of God. Grace will teach them to fear. Hell is not so terrible to any as to gracious souls; those that

most prize the love of God will most fear his wrath. And the LORD looks that it should be so: God will not be a loser by his grace; he would not lose the awe of his threatenings by making us the children of promise; he would not have it forgotten that he is righteous, by those that have tasted that he is gracious.

And the people of God have need enough to be kept in fear. They are too apt to be proud, and wanton, and forward children; and have need, not only of the cross on their backs, but of the curse in their eye, to keep them in order. How foolish, and peevish, and unruly are we, notwithstanding that double recompense of reward, the glory to come, and the wrath to come, that is set before us? O what should we not be, were there no such arguments to be used with us!

Say not that it is mercenary to look on the crown as the encouragement of holiness, till it can be said, it is mercenary to be governed or quickened by love. What is it to have respect to the recompense of reward, but so to eye the love and joy of the LORD, as to feel the power thereof, oiling our wheels, and drawing our souls on after it?

Say not it is servile, and that which must not be allowed, that those that are sons should make use of the curse as a bridle to sin. This beast must be dealt with as a beast; lust must be bridled and fettered with fear, as well as charmed or constrained by love.

“Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” (*Heb.* iv. 1.) Whilst we take encouragement from the promise, the promise of entrance, let us take heed by the fear of falling short.

Is there no fear of falling short? Art thou already so established, that there is no doubt or hazard remaining of thy miscarriage? Are all the enemies of thy salvation so secured, that thou mayest now spare any piece of thine armour? Hast thou out-grown the use, or the need, of any of the counsels and caveats which the Scriptures give?

Look inward, and see what a treacherous heart thou hast lying there, undermining thine hopes. Is there never a worm still gnawing at thy root? Are thy lusts all dead, and is there no fear of their resurrection? Is there no guilt upon thine head, no guile in thine heart? Hath neither flesh, nor world, nor Devil, any power in thee? Is the army totally broken, and is there no fear of its rallying upon thee? Art thou so fully resolved for holiness, do the stream of thy soul, and the bent of thy life, run so strongly and so evenly after the LORD, that thou hast a standing, infallible, and uninterrupted evidence of thy sincerity? Is there not room for such a question, What if I should fall short? Art thou gotten beyond all possibility of miscarrying for ever? Know, that a possibility of falling into the wrath to come, were that wrath thoroughly understood, would work more fear than a certain expectation of all the torments and miseries of this life. Hast thou faith? Believe and fear. Hast thou hope? Hope and fear. Hast thou joy? Rejoice with trembling. Rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD, and tremble and fear his wrath.

There will be this double advantage (besides others) of this fear of the curse:—*First*, It will quicken our necessary fear of sin. *Secondly*, It will quench our sinful fear of the cross.

First, This fear of the curse will quicken our necessary fear of sin; yea, and of all the temptations to it. Sin is the sting of death, and *this* death is the sting of sin. How bitter would sin taste, how ghastly would it look, were this gall that lies in it, this sting it carries, discovered and heeded? Thou wouldest quickly be filled with thine own ways, didst thou but see what stands at their further end: that bed of scorpions, whither sin is dragging thee, would make every sin as a snake or adder. And of all sins it would strike the heart with the greatest fear of its beloved sins. These are they especially under which hell lies in ambush for us; these are hell's strongest ropes, by which it pulls in souls. Hath any sin cast a cord of love about

thee? That it is which is likely to be the rope to draw thee to the slaughter. Thou canst get loose from many sins at pleasure; but take heed, or that foolish heart of thine will die for its beloved!

If thou ask, "What wouldest thou have, O my beloved sin? What comest thou to me so often for? Why takest thou up thy dwelling so near mine heart?"—it will answer, "O, it is to please thee, that I am so often with thee. I know thou lovest me; I am the delight of thine heart, and the pleasure of thine eyes; thou canst not be content without me; thou lovest me, and therefore it is I come, that thou mayest have what thou lovest." But what hast thou now to say to it? Answer it thus:—"No, no, traitor, it is my life thou seekest, it is my soul thou comest to steal away and devour. I dread thy fawning face; thy smiles are darts in mine heart; I tremble at thy wooings and embraces. Get thee gone, harlot!—thy kindnesses are deadly kindnesses. What means that dagger in thine hand, whilst thou thus kissest me with the kisses of thy mouth? It is my death thou art designing; I must die if I will any longer love thee. And what death must I die? Is it a short and easy death that thou art betraying me into? No, no; it is a bitter death, and it is a lingering death, an eternal death, that thou art preparing for me. This heart hath been under-ground, in the dark cavern of pitch and brimstone; I have been in the deep, and viewed those chambers of death where thou lodgest thy lovers; I have sent down my spies,—my thoughts have been below in the belly of hell; I have beheld how they lie in that pit, roaring, and yelling, and blaspheming, raving mad with the anguish of their burning souls; I have seen the very smoke and fire that devours them, the burning teeth of that everlasting worm that gnaws their hearts, and the fury and rage of that serpent that deceived them in. O, my soul quakes, my bones tremble, terror and astonishment have taken hold of me, at the description which my thoughts have brought me up of that place of torment! And thou, even thou, art that which is most likely to carry me down and bury me there. If I die that

death it will be by thy hand ; if I run myself into that fire, it will be for thy sake. Away from me ! I dare not have any more to do with thee ; I fear thee more than ever I loved thee ; I fear where thou mayest lay me before to-morrow, if I should suffer thee to lodge but one night more with me."

Such dread of thy beloved sin, would a fear of the curse work in thee. Friends, consider, are there yet any sins that have such power over your hearts, and are your spirits so chained by them that you cannot get loose ? O, look to those chains of fire, into which, by this chain of love, your sins are dragging you. Are you afraid of the curse of God ? Are you afraid to burn ? Are you afraid to be racked, and torn, and gnawed, and ground under the millstones of eternal vengeance ? Then be afraid of sin. Let hell be your fear, and sin will be your fear ; let sin be your fear, and it will be no longer your love.

And as this fear of wrath will work a fear of sin, so will it also work the same fear of temptations to sin. Sin and temptation lead the same way, though temptation be one remove farther back ; temptation leads to sin, and sin to death. Get a fear of the land of darkness, and you will fear to be companions of such as are travelling thitherward ; fear the plague, and thou wilt be no company for them whose dwelling is in the pest-house. But how rarely are this tenderness and wariness to be found ! Yea, rather, are they not despised and decried as foolish scrupulosity ! Go, hypocrite, blot that petition out of thy prayer, " Lead us not into temptation : " never mock God with such a prayer against temptation, whilst thou deridest them that fear it. Study hell more, till thou hast more fear of sin ; study sin more, and thou wilt not slight temptation.

Secondly, The fear of the curse will much allay our sinful fear of the cross. The greater will swallow up the less. The torment of the stone will make us forget the aching of a tooth. Who will fear the barking of a dog, that hears the roaring of a lion ? CHRIST prescribes the fear of God as a cure of the fear of men.

On the other side, the favour of God casts a contempt

on the flatteries of men. It is in the night only that glow-worms shine. The more lively hopes of the glory to come, darken the glory of this present world; the respect to the recompense of reward makes us despise the pleasures of sin. What is a cottage to him that hath a crown in his eye? What are meat, and drink, and clothes, and sports, what are all the blazes of these crackling thorns, to the light of the countenance of God? Hast thou faith? Hath thy faith given thee a prospect of the inheritance of the saints in light? Sure thou hast little of it, who still blestest thyself in the earth. Get thee nearer the LORD; acquaint thyself more with him; say thou unto him, "Stand thou at my right hand," and thou wilt say to the world, "Sit thou under my footstool."

Now, as the favour of God will eclipse the world's sunshine, so the terrors of the LORD will make all the world's storms to vanish away. The darkness of the shadow will be lost in the dark of the night. Perhaps thou sayest,—
 "O what shall I do? The Devil is come down, and hath great wrath; the world is all in a flame against me; the lions roar; the bears and the wolves are abroad after the prey; I am despised, and rejected, and trodden under foot of men; I am persecuted and hunted up and down this wilderness, and become a vagabond on earth; I have lost my friends, lost mine estate, and they seek my life also to take it away; O what shall I do? What will become of me?"—Thou art in a hard case indeed; but hast thou not greater things than that to trouble thee? How is it with thy soul? Is not there a doubt, that the wrath of the Almighty may be hanging over thine head? Art thou in no danger of being rejected of God, of falling into the eternal prison, of being driven into everlasting banishment? What dost thou stand vexing and frightening thyself with the wasps? Look to the serpents and scorpions that thy soul is in danger of falling amongst. Take heed, take heed, lest the eternal God cast thee into his prison, and lay thee in his irons. Let thy soul dwell more among the terrors of the LORD, and thou wilt not mind the terrors of men. "Sanctify the LORD God in thine heart, let

him be thy fear, let him be thy dread," and then thou wilt be more able to say, "I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."

III. And lastly, I am to show, How we should improve this holy fear.

This fear will be of general use, and of great advantage for the more successful managing of the whole of religion, in all the parts and duties of it. I have a large field before me, but I shall insist only upon these three general directions:—1. Fear and search. 2. Fear and beware. 3. Fear and follow after:

1. Fear and search. It will much help us to understand our work, if we could once understand our state. To the understanding of our state a search is necessary, and no such narrow search is like to be made, as when we search with fear; therefore let the first direction be, Fear and search.

Let fear set you on searching, and let it assist you in your search; let it follow you into every corner, both of your heart and life. Fear is suspicious, and suspicion will be inquisitive; it will not take up with reports or appearances, but will inquire diligently whether matters be so or no.

Christians know that they must pass under the search of God; and their fear how they shall abide his trial, will put them upon the more narrow trial of themselves.

Besides the great trial that will be in the general judgment, which we use to have a special eye unto in all our trials of ourselves, there is a search which God makes into us even in this life: and he searcheth us, (1.) By his eye. (2.) By his hand.

(1.) By his eye. "His eyes behold, his eye-lids try, the children of men." (*Ps.* xi. 4.) "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins." (*Jer.* xvii. 10.) God searcheth not as man searcheth, by inquiring into that which before was hid from him: his searching is no more but his beholding; he seeth the heart, he beholdeth the reins; God's very sight is searching. "All things are naked and open to his eyes," (*Heb.* iv. 13,) τετραχρηλισμέναι, dissected

or anatomized. He hath at once as exact a view of the most hidden things, the very entrails of the soul, as if they had been with never so great curiosity anatomized before him.

(2.) By his hand ; that is, by his judgments and chastisements, which he sends forth “to try them that dwell upon the earth.” (*Rev.* iii. 10.) “I will search Jerusalem with candles.” (*Zeph.* i. 12.) Every arrow which God shoots is a candle to search out men’s iniquities. When God sends a sword, or famine, or pestilence upon the earth, these are the LORD’s searchers, which he hath sent forth to try the children of men.

A fearing Christian will search himself, that he may approve himself to the search of God’s eye, and that he may prevent the search of his hand. “God’s eye is upon me every day, proving my heart and my reins ; I doubt he may see what he will not like in me ; search, O my soul, what there is that may offend, and whether there be not also wanting in thee something which the LORD loveth. God’s searchers are coming abroad, and who may abide the day of their coming ? Is not poverty to be feared ? Is not sickness to be feared ? Is not sword, or famine, or fire, to be feared ? O what sharp work may these searchers make upon me ! Since it is so hard to endure, let me do what may be done to prevent this kind of trial of the LORD, by trying myself. But especially this fear will put us upon a search of ourselves, with respect to the severest trial, in the final judgment of God.

But what must we search for ? Why, what is it that thou dost fear ? Tell me that, and that will tell thee for what thou must search.

There are two things especially which thou hast to fear, [1.] Lest there should not be found in thee that good thing which may evidence thee to be approved of God. [2.] Lest there should be found evils in thee at which the LORD will be offended.

Fear this fear, and it will set you upon searching accordingly.

[1.] Fear lest there should not be, and search whether there be, truth and uprightness in thine heart towards God; whether the seed of God hath taken root in thee. The ploughers have been ploughing, and the sowers have gone forth to sow; but what seed hath there fallen upon thine heart, and what root hath it taken there?

Such a search should not be made without fear. The Apostle, exhorting to this work, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves," (2 Cor. xiii. 5,) doth in the next words frighten them to it: "Know you not your own selves, how that JESUS CHRIST is in you, except you be reprobates?" Why should we examine? What if we be not in the faith? You know what he says; then you are reprobates. You are reprobates, if you be not believers. Do you know what it is to be under a divine anathema?—to be in a state of reprobation from God? Is there not a doubt that this may be your case? O how can you but search whether it be or no? And how can you but fear, while you are making such a search? Are you not afraid to let yourselves go unsearched? Do you not tremble till you know how it is with you? And how can you set upon so great a work without a trembling heart?

Beloved, it is a lamentable thing to observe, what stupendous security there is upon the hearts of men concerning the state of their souls. There is no need of searching, with the most; they are already satisfied! It is well with my soul, says one; I shall have peace, says another; I do not doubt of mercy, through the grace of God, says a third; and so go on through a whole crowd of sinners, and you may have the same account; every one at peace, every one already satisfied! But how came you to be satisfied in so great a case? Have you ever searched whether matters be so well with you? Or else, how can you but fear that you may be mistaken?

And what if you should be mistaken? How strongly soever you are conceited of your uprightness, how impregnable soever your confidence is at present, God will

not take you upon your word : trust yourselves if you will, yet he will not trust you ; you must be tried what you are ; “ Every one of us must give an account of ourselves to **GOD.**” (*Rom. xiv. 12.*) Yet he will not take the account we give, without trying whether it be a true account ; “ We must all appear before the judgment-seat of **CHRIST,**” (*2 Cor. v. 10.*) *Φανερωθῆναι δεῖ*, we must be made manifest and laid open, (as the word imports,) that it may plainly be seen what we are. And this severe search that shall be made in the judgment, the Apostle calls, in the next verse, “ The terror of the **LORD.**” It would shake the securest hearts, to understand what a thorough search will be made of them in that day.

GOD will bring all things to light, **GOD** will lay all in the balance. “ Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting.” (*Dan. v. 27.*) What if that should be your case at last ? If **GOD**’s light should find you to be darkness, if **GOD**’s balance should find you too light ? What, if whilst you count yourselves children, **GOD** should find you bastards ; if whilst you count yourselves vines, he should find you thorns ; if while you count yourselves believers, beloved, and chosen of **GOD**, that day shall declare you to be infidels and reprobates ?

What if it should be so ? You are stark fools, and worse than mad, if you think such a question as this may not be put, “ What, if I should be mistaken ?” Is such a mistake, on which your eternal state depends, of so little consequence with you, as not to need such a question to be put about it ? Are you so little concerned how matters shall go with you in the judgment ? Are you so little concerned what your final sentence shall be ? Which of you for life, and which for death ? Who for blessedness, and who for burning ? What rocks are those hearts of yours, if they do not rend and quake for fear ! And if you do fear to think, “ What if I should be mistaken,” let that fear set you upon searching, whether you have hitherto been mistaken or no.

Beloved, whether you fear or no, give me leave to tell

you, I am afraid concerning you. 1. Some of you, I fear, there are, upon whom there hath been no good wrought, no, nor any thing done towards it; not a clod broken, not a thorn rooted out; upon whom the LORD hath been ploughing, as upon rocks, sowing as upon heaths, hammering as upon anvils, hewing as upon iron; who, with those rebels, have "brows of brass, and iron sinews;" (*Is.* xlviii. 4;) who have hitherto resisted the HOLY GHOST, and put from you the Word of Life; whom both the seed, and the showers that have fallen upon you, have left hard and barren, bringing forth nothing but briars and thorns; in whom lies, and drunkenness, and such like, are all the fruits that have been brought forth; who are far from God, and yet far from fear; whom a very little search might be enough to convince, that you are in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity. If you would but cast an eye upon God's glass, your foul faces would quickly show you what you are. O sinners, if you yourselves yet fear not, let others' fears concerning you prevail with you to cast a serious eye upon yourselves. Make a little inquiry, "Is it not thus with me? Is not my soul in this very case? If I should ask, Where are my sins?—behold, they compass me round about; they are in mine heart, and in my mouth; and my whole life is filled up with iniquity. But if I should ask, Where is my faith? Where is my repentance? Where is the knowledge, and love, and life, and fear of God?—what could I say, what answer could I give?"—Make a little inquiry thus; a very little, to a man in thy case, methinks, should be enough to convince and awake thee.—

2. Others of you, I fear, there may be, upon whom the LORD hath been at work, but the work is not yet brought through; upon whom, though the plough hath entered and made some sign, yet it hath not gone deep enough; though the thorns, some of them, are cut down, yet their root remaineth; though the seed of God hath fallen upon you, and some blades have sprung up, yet it hath taken no root; upon whom though there appear some dawning

towards the day, yet you are not come to sun-rising.—As for you, it is a mercy that there is something done, especially if there be still more doing. It is a mercy that the LORD hath made a motion of love to you, and that he is not totally rejected; that there is a treaty for peace, whereof you have so far accepted, as to yield to a cessation of arms, and a forbearance of those open acts of hostility against GOD which have been; that the drunkards are become sober; that the swearers now fear an oath; that the enemies of GOD, and of all righteousness, are now content to hear of reconciliation. This is a mercy. And it is much more so, that any of you are so far convinced of the misery of sin, and of the excellency and necessity of religion, that you are wrought to some good liking of the holy ways of GOD, and are wishing, and waiting, and making after the LORD. This is a mercy, because there is hope, that he who hath brought you hitherto, will bring you on farther and farther, till he hath brought you home. But yet there is matter of great fear too, lest presuming you have already attained, you should sit down short of saving grace, and so perish at last.

With a special respect to such as these, I shall show, *First*, How such persons may be wrought to this fear: *Secondly*, How this fear will work to a farther search.

First, To work this fear in such, let these following particulars be considered:—1. There are preparations to grace, that are not saving grace. 2. There are images of grace, that are not grace. 3. There are some properties of gracious persons, that are no certain evidences of grace. 4. No one grace, that is really so, will put us out of doubt. 5. Whatever we have, that is short of perfect love, may go back, and we may be reduced to a worse state than ever before.

1. There are preparations to grace, that are not saving grace. GOD usually takes time, and leads men on to CHRIST by degrees. There may be awakenings of sleepy souls, there may be enlightenings of dark souls, there may be shakings of hardened souls, which, though they have a ten-

dency to farther good, yet may be far short of it. There may be the pangs of travail, which may never bring to the birth.

In particular, *First*, There may be conviction of sin, and yet no grace. Conviction is not conversion. AHAB was once a convinced person, and so was JUDAS also.

Secondly, There may be a good opinion of grace, where there is no grace. The way of CHRIST may be right in your eyes, and yet your hearts not be upright in his eyes. You may be persuaded in your hearts concerning the way of godliness, that this is the right way, and an excellent way, and that the life of a Christian, led according to the rules of the Gospel, is an excellent life; "Thou knowest his will, and approve the things that are more excellent:" (*Rom. ii. 18.*) And to this good opinion men may be wrought, [1.] From the self-evidencing light of the christian doctrine. [2.] From the convincing lives of real Christians. [3.] From the self-condemnation that is to be observed in all other ways.

[1.] From the self-evidencing light of the christian doctrine. The doctrine of Christianity proves itself to be of GOD, by that divine light that shines forth in it; there is a stamp of divinity imprinted upon it. Is GOD a holy GOD? So is this doctrine a holy doctrine. Is GOD a merciful and gracious GOD? So is this doctrine a doctrine of mercy, a doctrine of grace: grace and mercy run through the whole body of it; nay, they are the very soul and life of it. Is GOD a GOD of wisdom? The doctrine of Christianity is the wisdom of GOD in a mystery. Is GOD a GOD of truth and of righteousness? Such is the doctrine of the Gospel; which not only is according to truth, and reveals the righteousness of GOD, but requires truth, and imposes righteousness upon all that will embrace it. What is more contrary to this word of truth than a lie, or than hypocrisy and guile? What is more contrary to this word of righteousness than unrighteousness? Doth the word of the Gospel allow any iniquity? Is there any guile found in it, or any toleration thereof in its professors? Doth it not command all righteousness, and con-

damn all unrighteousness? Even while it justifies the sinner, it condemns the sin. This religion is "Pure religion, and undefiled before GOD." (*James* i. 25.) "Teaching us, that denying all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world." (*Tit.* ii. 13, 14.) Now he that knows that GOD is a holy and wise GOD, a GOD of grace, of truth, and of righteousness, and does but understand the Scriptures, may, without any great difficulty, be led into a good opinion of that godliness which is there required.

[2.] From the convincing lives of real Christians. I do not say, from the lives of all professors;—some professors of Christianity there are, who are not Christians; whose ways are so contrary to their profession, as if the Devil had led them into it on purpose to disgrace the Gospel; who are scrupulous about some small matters, and yet allow themselves in apparent evils; straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel; insisting much on some circumstances, and neglecting the weightier matters of the law. Godliness is little beholden for the good opinion it hath obtained, to such as these. But the sincere and single-hearted professors, whose lives are a copy of wholesome doctrine, holding forth the Word of Life, exemplifying the holy rules laid down in Scripture, and showing forth the virtues of CHRIST before the world, who are in the world, as he was in the world; who live by faith, and walk in love, being humble, meek, peaceable, merciful, temperate, true, righteous, and holy in all manner of conversation;—these are the persons whose lives commend godliness to the world; and force their very hearts, many of them, to acknowledge, This is the way of GOD in which these men walk; it cannot be but GOD is in them of a truth; this is religion indeed; if there be any way of life, this is the way.

It is true, this way is every where spoken against, but the more like to be of GOD for that: so it was in the Apostles' days; "As for this sect, we know it is every where spoken against." (*Acts* xxviii. 22.) "But," says

the considering sinner, "Let them be called what men please,—sectaries, hypocrites,—yet 'these are not the words of him that hath a Devil.' Call them what you will, these are not the lives of schismatics or hypocrites; these men are the servants of the Most High God, and their way is the way of life."

[3.] From the self-condemnation that all other ways carry in them. If this be not the way of life, there is none: if these be not the servants of God, there are none such in the world; for where are they else to be found? Are the carnal, and the formal, and the outside worshippers, the sincere worshippers of God? This must be the good way, or which else can, with any tolerable probability, be imagined to be so? There is no other that so much as looks like the path of life. The Atheist must say, "I am not in the way to God;"—this 'Fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.' Formality must say, "I am not the way, for 'God is a SPIRIT, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.'" (*John* iv. 24.) Profaneness must say, "I am not the way to God: I am the way of death, and my steps lead down to hell." Drunkards, and swearers, and revellers, and rioters, if their consciences may but have the privilege of their tongues, will tell you, "We are all out of the way; we must take another course, or else woe to us that ever we were born; we would be loth to die in the way we live in." These do not so much as pretend to be in the way of life.

Thus far a sinner may come, by beholding the self-evidencing light that is in the true doctrine, the convincing lives of sincere Christians, and the self-condemnation that is in all other ways. Yet this good opinion is but a little ground gotten towards it; it is not godliness, to think well of it.

Thirdly, A sinner's good opinion of godliness may beget good inclinations towards it, and good wishes after it. "Happy are those that are in CHRIST, who walk not after the flesh, but after the SPIRIT; O that my soul were among them. I am in a strait between two. Fain I would be a

Christian in earnest; I see it would be best for me to be so! But, on the other side, how shall I bear the labours and sufferings of that way?

Fourthly, The good opinions and good inclinations of sinners bring forth some effectual endeavours; they may set out after CHRIST; their enlightened minds may cause them to reason thus with themselves; "If this be the good way, why should I not walk in it? Can I approve it in others? Can I pronounce them blessed who so live? Come, my soul, put in for a part; resolve what thou wilt do; stay not in these uncertainties; hang no longer betwixt heaven and hell; venture for the blessedness to come; set to praying; set to hearing; give thyself to the study and practice of that blessed course which thou knowest will have its fruit unto holiness, and its end everlasting life." And yet, after all this, little or nothing may be done.

These now are fair preparations to grace, but yet conviction is not conversion; the approving, and liking, and wishing for, and making some attempts at godliness, is not choosing and embracing it.

2. There are images of grace, which are not grace. There is a form of godliness, which is not godliness. (2 Tim. iii. 5.) An image of a man is not a man; the image of a Christian is not a Christian. The image of CHRIST is a Christian, but the image of a Christian is no Christian: as great a likeness as there is, yet there is as great a difference also as betwixt the living and dead.

There is something like faith, which is not faith; something like repentance, which is not repentance; something like the new man, which is not it, but the old man new dressed up; and so like it may be, in complexion, in language, in carriage, that it is often taken to be the same. The pangs of travail may bring forth, but when all comes to all, it may be but a dead child; there may be all the parts, the head, the eyes, the hands, and every limb, but no life; and yet when it is but newly brought forth, it may be hard to discern whether it be alive or dead;—so many counterfeits have been found, which have both been

deceivers and deceived, as is enough to make the hearts of Christians indeed to shake.

3. There are some properties of gracious persons, which are no certain evidences of grace. Nothing can evidence the truth of grace, but that which is so adequately proper to saints, that it cannot be found in any others. Assuring marks must be distinguishing marks, such as separate betwixt the precious and the vile; and nothing can distinguish the sound from the unsound, but that which the unsound cannot attain.

But some properties there are of sincere Christians, which may be found in others; which yet some divines have unwarily made use of, and proposed for people's trial of their states.

Indeed it is much to be wished, that we were more exact and cautious in this matter, than many are. Though good use may be made of probable evidences, yet should we declare which are but probable marks, and which are certainly concluding. Of those properties of Christians, which some divines have given us as marks of sincerity, I shall mention three:—Prayer; Hearing the word; and Reforming the life.

Prayer is a property of a sincere Christian: he is a praying person. "Behold, he prayeth," was said of PAUL, when he was a young convert. (*Acts ix. 11.*) But are there no praying hypocrites, as well as praying believers?

Hearing the word also is the property of Christians: they are "hearers of the Word." But there are hearers who are *not* doers.

Reforming the life is another property of a Christian. "Such were some of you," that is, drunkards, revilers, covetous, fornicators, "but ye are washed." (*1 Cor. vi. 11.*) Ye are now reformed persons. But are there no reformed hypocrites? Every reformation is not sanctification.

It is a good sight to see men that once lived like heathens, and never called upon God, set upon a course of serious prayer. It is a good sight to behold others, that not only neglected the word, but mocked at it, now become con-

stant hearers themselves. It is a good sight to behold those that were once loose livers, drunkards, swearers, become reformed persons. These things are a good sight, but they are no sure sign of sincerity. Men may pray, and hear, and be much reformed in their lives, and yet be short of **CHRIST**.

The neglect of prayer and hearing, and the going on in a course of sin, are certain signs of a wicked man: yet the performance of these duties, praying, hearing, and somewhat of reformation, are no certain signs that thou art of **GOD**.

A total reformation, a withdrawing from every evil way, a resigning ourselves to the government of **CHRIST**, and the conduct of the **SPIRIT**, and an actual care and endeavour to walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, is the best proof of our sincerity. But much reformation there may be in the life, and yet the heart not right with **GOD**.

Beloved, while we are comforted over you, and rejoice that there is so much done upon many of you as there is; that there is such visible reformation among you, both of your persons and families; yet beware how you venture your souls upon this, I doubt, but partial reformation; and, all this notwithstanding, fear lest you should, and look diligently that you do not, fall short of the grace of **GOD**.

4. There is no one even real grace, if it be alone, that will put us out of doubt concerning our state. There is no one mark by which we can give a certain judgment of ourselves, without the concurrent testimony of other marks. The graces of **GOD** in us must give testimony to each other, before any of them can give clear testimony to us. Our love must prove our faith to be sincere, our holy obedience must prove our love to be sincere, before either our faith or love will prove either themselves or us to be so. If I have the very faith of **GOD**'s elect, and yet question whether I love or no; if I feel I love, and cannot prove it is in sincerity by my obedience; neither the one nor the

other will give me confidence before God. One grace wanting, will be an objection against those that appear.

5. Whatever you have short of perfect love, it may go back, and you may return to a worse estate than ever. The unclean spirit, that is at present gone out, may return, and thy latter end may be worse than thy beginning.

Beloved, I hope and am persuaded, that there are divers among you, from whom, through the abundant grace of God, the unclean spirit is not only withdrawn, but cast out; that you are established in the grace of God. I hope and believe that there are many here in whom the HOLY SPIRIT hath gotten such footing, that the Devil shall never come in again to set up his throne, or take up his rest in you: but yet I warn you, to maintain a godly jealousy of yourselves, and to fear how it may be with you.

But is this (may some say) the work of a Minister of the Gospel, to fill poor christian hearts with fears? The people of God have need to be comforted; the word of CHRIST is the food of souls, and it is but poor feeding for CHRIST's sheep to feed them with fear. I answer,

(1.) All are not CHRIST's sheep, that are found in sheep's clothing; the Devil hath some goats in CHRIST's fold. "All are not Israel, that are of Israel." (*Rom. ix. 6.*) And whilst it is really a question, whether thou be not one of the Devil's goats, he does thee no harm, that puts thee in fear whether thou be or no. This fear is not to fright thee out of the fold, but to fright thee into a sheep. I shall do thee no harm, if I can fright thee to heaven.

The Ministers of the Gospel must be good stewards, giving to every one their portion; (*Luke xii. 42.*) comfort to whom comfort belongeth, and fear to whom fear. "On some have compassion, making a difference; others save with fear." (*Jude 22, 23.*) And as Ministers must give, so people must take every one their own portion; as Ministers must divide, so people must apply the word of God aright. Let every man take his own portion, and not be catching at that which is another's.

There is too great an aptness in the distressed, to lay

hold on those words that are spoken to the secure ; if there be ever an affrighting word in a whole sermon, “that is my portion,” saith the distressed ; “this word belongs to me.” And so the secure are too ready to lay hold on those healing and comforting words, which belong to the distressed. Both these evils must be heedfully avoided ; but whether people will apply the word of God aright or no, there is no help for it ; but Ministers must divide it aright, and give to every one their portion.

(2.) There is an awakening fear, that quickens to our duty, and this will hurt nobody ; and there is a discouraging fear, that disheartens to duty, and this will do nobody any good.

(3.) This fear I am preaching to you will lead you to sure hope. These doubtings will be of great use to put us in the way of getting above our doubts. As there is a confidence which will end in terror, so there are fears and doubtings, the fruit whereof will be quietness and assurance for ever. This will more fully appear in the next particular, wherein I am to show,

Secondly, How this fear will work towards a farther search. The fear lest our souls should be yet unsafe, will, 1. Put us hard to come to a certainty ; and to this end will, 2. Put us close upon a more narrow search ; and 3. Put in objections in order to the making all clear and plain.

1. It will put us hard to come to a certainty ; nothing short will satisfy it. The fearing Christian is in pain till his doubts be resolved, and this pain will press him to make sure. He that fears, will not make nothing of probabilities ; nor yet will take up with them instead of certainties. The confident sinner will venture hard upon conjecture ; if his heart do but speak him fair, that shall satisfy him. But fear will make all sure. And there is some hope in that, that we are bent upon making sure : he that will not rest in uncertainties, is in the way to come to a certainty.

2. Fear will put us close upon the narrowest search.

It will not take up with reports or opinions, but will search the records, whence it may get satisfaction. And there are two books of records that will be inquired after and looked into, the book of the Scriptures, and the book of conscience. In one, the book of the Scriptures, it will examine, what are the plainest and most certain marks of a Christian. Then it inquires into conscience, and compares the two books together.

The Word tells me, He that is in CHRIST is a new creature. (2 Cor. v. 17.) He that is born of GOD is a believer, (1 John v. 1,) is a lover of GOD, (1 John iv. 7.) He that loveth, doth keep the commandments of GOD, and his commandments are not grievous. (1 John v. 3.) The children of GOD are children that will not lie, are meek, merciful, holy, harmless. The disciples of CHRIST are such as deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow him.

These and the like are found in the Scriptures, to be the signs of the children of GOD.

And what sayest thou, O my conscience? Are these things found in me? Where is my faith? What love have I for GOD? What witness to my love in my obedience? What truth, mercy, meekness, humility, patience, is to be discerned in me? Come forth, O my graces, where are you? Show yourselves in the light of the sun. And what can you testify, O my ways, for me? Speak, conscience; what is the life which I have lived? Is it a life of faith, a life of love and holy obedience?

If conscience speaks in the affirmative, and gives in its answer, through the grace of GOD, I find it thus with me; then,

3. Fear will make objections, and put in farther questions. It is true, he that is a new creature is in CHRIST; he that believeth, and loveth, and obeyeth the LORD, is born of GOD; and I find that there is something in me that looks like faith and love. But may not all these be but the images of grace? Is my faith the very faith of GOD's elect? Do I love the LORD JESUS in sincerity? Do

I obey from the heart that form of doctrine that is delivered to me? And until the matter be brought to this issue, that there is found such a faith, such a love, such holy obedience, this fear (which will ever suspect the worst) will still come on, with question upon question.

By this you may see, what an advantage there is in this fear, to help us to a right understanding of our states; it will never cease searching till we be clearly satisfied.

Well, but now you will say, Will you leave us here; shall our fear still follow us? I answer, it need not; for such marks are laid down in Scripture, as may put a Christian beyond all perplexing doubts and fears. Such are, 1. A resolved choice of GOD for our portion and happiness. 2. An actual embracing of CHRIST, as he that shall bring us to GOD. 3. A giving up ourselves to the practice of a holy life.

1. A resolved choice of GOD, for our portion and happiness. But how may I know that I have thus chosen GOD? Here lies the main point to be resolved. To this I answer, you may know that you have sincerely chosen the LORD, (1.) If you have chosen him deliberately. (2.) If you have chosen him absolutely. (3.) If you carefully pursue your choice. (4.) If you measure your (present) happiness, by the communion you have with him, and the clearness of your title to him. (5.) If you be willing and resolved to forsake all things for his sake.

(1.) If you have chosen GOD deliberately; if your choice be not in a sudden fit, but the result of the deepest consideration. Sudden bargains are often as suddenly repented of. A light, unadvised choice is not likely to hold. But when we choose understandingly and deliberately; when we have thoroughly considered the great reasons for our choosing GOD, his worthiness and excellency, and our own necessity; and have also weighed the inconveniences thereof, and the objections against it, and find, that the reasons for, infinitely over-balance all that can be said against it, and hereupon determine for GOD; that is a sincere choice.

(2.) If you have chosen him absolutely, as that which you will stand to, to the last, whatever inconveniences may follow : When there are no reserves in your heart, nor place left for repentance : When your choice runs not as JACOB'S conditional vow, "If the LORD will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I return to my Father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God ;" (*Gen. xxviii. 20 ;*) but without any such *ifs*, whether he will feed me or no, let him do with me as he will for that, I am resolved, however, the LORD shall be my God :

And indeed, so was JACOB too, however the words sound. This was never intended by him as the condition of his religion ; (there is no other condition of that, but if, or since the LORD will be my God ;) JACOB was in bond to GOD before, and here he enters into a new bond, and lays a new obligation upon himself : "Every one of these mercies shall be so many new cords to bind me fast to the LORD." But whether these new cords were added or no, whether the LORD would keep, or feed, or clothe him, or no, it was never his intent but his old bond should stand, that the LORD should be his GOD.

And as there are no reserves, nor conditions, in this our choice of GOD, so is there a resolution against repenting of our choice, whatever should happen. A Christian chooses once for all ; chooses and changes not. His choice of GOD is like to GOD'S choice ; "I have sworn and will not repent," (*Ps. cx. 4,*) says he, concerning CHRIST ; where we choose GOD absolutely, we leave no place for repentance.

(3.) If you carefully pursue your choice. Thus was it with PAUL, who had taken his aim at the right mark, "the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS." (*Phil. iii. 12, 13.*) He says, "I follow after, I reach forward, I press to the mark." Some vain men persuade themselves, that they have chosen GOD, and yet seldom or ever look after, nor take any care to obtain, and make sure

of him whom they have chosen: they choose **GOD**, but never follow **GOD**, nor take the way that leads to the blessedness to come.

When the choice of our hearts doth govern the course of our lives, and doth effectually bend our course towards the obtaining of **Him** whom we have chosen; when this becomes our main scope,—This I pray for, this I wait for, this I labour for, this I live for; I have nothing else to do, but to serve and make sure of **GOD**; if I can but so live, as to please **GOD** here, and get to heaven when I die, whatever I miscarry in, it is all I look for;—this argues such a choice of **GOD**, as will certainly argue us to be of **GOD**. To choose **GOD**, and yet to live to ourselves; to choose heaven for our portion, and yet to have our conversation in the earth;—such an idle and inefficacious choice, which doth not command us after **Him** whom we have chosen, but lets us run our old course, is vanity and delusion.

(4.) If you measure your (present) happiness by the communications of **GOD** to you, and the clearness of your title to him. He that hath chosen **GOD** for his happiness, look how much he possesses and enjoys of **GOD**, and to what degree of clearness he is come concerning his evidence for heaven, to such a degree of happiness he is arrived: whilst he can love, and please, and serve the **LORD**, and maintain a confidence of his acceptance with him, so long he can rejoice: when he is estranged from **GOD**, he is a man undone.

Hence are those breathings, and thirstings, and rejoicings of the saints, which we read of in Scripture. “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O **GOD**; my soul thirsteth for **GOD**, for the living **GOD**.” (*Ps.* xlii. 1, 3.) “My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee.—My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.” (*Ps.* lxiii.)

Christians can never have good days, longer than they are walking with **GOD**, and beholding his face in

righteousness: this is their heaven on earth. The reflection of the face of God, in his holy image, that appears unto them; the irradiations of his HOLY SPIRIT, and the light of his countenance, whilst they are walking in the law of the LORD; the prospering of their souls in the grace of God; and the comforts of the HOLY GHOST;—this is the sunshine of their lives. Their countenance is fallen, their heart is sick, they reckon themselves among the dead, when God and their souls are parted. He hath no part in God, that can live comfortably without Him.

It is true, the pleasure that they take in God is more or less, according to the different degrees of their love to God; and accordingly will the sense of his absence be more or less painful. The purer and stronger the love, the greater pleasure comes in from the object of it; and the more impatience follows from its distance and estrangement from it. Therefore weaker Christians taste but little of the sweetness; but the more grown can sit down under his shadow with great delight: yet neither the one nor the other can be at ease or contented without him.

Again, there is a difference in the natural temper of Christians. Some are of lively and warm affections, and of a cheerful and serene spirit; others are of more flat, and dull, and heavy spirits; and this will make a difference in their sense of things spiritual. Yea, and the same persons at several times may differ from themselves, by reason of bodily distempers, which may have such an influence upon their spirits, that they may at such seasons have lost the sweetness of divine communion; and those very duties, wherein they were wont to have delightful converse with God, may seem wearisome.

But yet, whoever he be that can be satisfied, and at ease, and be merry, whilst he is a stranger from God, and neither finds pleasure in him, nor takes comfort in pleasing him; this man can never conclude that God is his portion. He that is least in the kingdom of God, will doubtless be able to say, "LORD, whom have I in heaven, yea, or in earth, besides thee?"

He that hath not chosen GOD for his happiness in both worlds, hath chosen him for neither. Canst thou say that thou hast chosen him for thy happiness in this world also, when thou canst count thyself happy without him? Canst thou want communion with him, and yet be at ease? Canst thou take the prosperities of this world to supply the want of GOD; the smiles of fortune, instead of smiles from heaven? Will thy candle-light serve thee instead of sunlight? Canst thou comfort thyself thus,—“GOD is none of my acquaintance, but I have good acquaintance enough in the world: I have none of the best hearts I confess; but I have a good house, and a good estate:—canst thou comfort thyself thus? Deceive not thyself; GOD is not the portion thine heart hath chosen; thou wilt never find rest in any thing else, if thou hast pitched on him as thine only happiness; and till thou hast made him *alone*, thou hast not made him *at all*, the portion of thy soul.

(5.) If you are willing and resolved to forsake all things for his sake. GOD and this world are proposed to our choice: and this is included in the very nature of choosing, that one be taken and the other left; it is not choosing, to take both; one of the two must be parted with, or neither can be said to be chosen; and so the Word tells us, “Whoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” (*Luke xiv. 33.*)

This seems to be a hard word; but is it so indeed? Is it hard to part with all our brass, and to receive it in gold? To exchange our rags for better clothing, our husks for better feeding? What is earth to heaven? Is all thou hast in the world too great a price for everlasting blessedness?

But farther consider, it is not so hard as it seems to be; for what is it to forsake all that we have? GOD would not have us throw away our estates, and make ourselves beggars; to give away our houses, and take up our habitation in dens or caves; to give away all our bread, and our clothes, and leave ourselves to hunger and nakedness. GOD would not have us fall out with all our friends, and

become strangers to our own flesh ; God would not have us studiously to offend father and mother, to despise brethren and sisters, to be undutiful or unnatural, to be surly, and rude, and uncivil to any, and thereby create ourselves enemies ; it is for the honour of Christianity that we behave ourselves sweetly and courteously towards all ; and it is the interest of Christianity, that those who fear God should be good economists, and have estates to serve him with in their generations. This is not the meaning of our forsaking all,—to cast ourselves into voluntary poverty, or studiously to make ourselves the objects and reproach of the world.

That forsaking all, which is necessary to, and will prove, our choice of the LORD, must be,

First, In Esteem and Affection ; so as no longer to account or love any thing we have, as our portion and happiness. God will not allow us two portions, one for the flesh, another for the spirit ; one for this world, another for the world to come ; God will be all in both worlds. As we may not serve two masters, (*Luke xvi. 13.*) so neither may we have two portions ; we cannot serve, and we may not love, God and Mammon. God will be all or nothing to us ; he will as soon allow us two gods as two portions ; when we make the world our happiness, we make it our god ; and then we make it our happiness when we prize, or seek, or love it, more than God, or otherwise than in subordination to him.

Secondly, In Resolution to let it go at the good pleasure of God. To forsake all is to get the heart loose from all ; to stand with a mind prepared and ready to part with all, whenever God will ;—to be able heartily to say, “ If God will have it so, I am willing to be poor, and every way as low as he pleases : now I live in credit ; but God will have it so, I am ready for contempt and disgrace : now I have friends ; but if God see good to leave me no friend in the world, I am content : now I live, and am in health, and prosper ; but whenever the LORD will, I am content to wither, and suffer, and die for his name.”

A willingness to be poor, whenever GOD will have it so, this is a forsaking of our riches; a willingness to be in disgrace, to lose our friends or our lives at the pleasure of the LORD, this is our forsaking all these. He that will lose his life or estate when GOD calls him to it, in his account he doth lose it: there be more martyrs in the world than have suffered at a stake; if thine own heart hath given thee to the flames, as a witness or sacrifice to GOD, it is accepted with him, as if thou hadst been actually offered up.

Thirdly, In Practice or Execution, so as actually to let all go, whenever GOD doth call for it. Particularly,

[1.] To suffer the loss of all, whenever we must either suffer or sin. Whoso hath chosen GOD will choose affliction rather than iniquity. ELIHU would prove JOB to be a hypocrite, by this, that he had chosen "iniquity rather than affliction;" (*Job xxxvi. 31*;) and if he could have made good the antecedent, that JOB had made such a choice, the consequent would have been strong against him.

[2.] To use all as GOD would have him. He that will not give alms, will much less give himself for a sacrifice: he that cannot spare his bread to the LORD, how will he spare his life? But he that bestows and employs all that ever he hath, according as GOD by his ordinary providence calls and appoints him, that lays up, and lays out, only according to GOD's order, hath herein done that thing which will give him great ground of confidence, that he hath a heart that will let go all whenever he is called to it.

2. The second mark is, an actual embracing of CHRIST as he that shall bring us to GOD. It is CHRIST alone that must bring us to that GOD whom we have chosen. "CHRIST also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to GOD." (*1 Pet. iii. 18*.) "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the FATHER, but by me." (*John xiv. 6*.) And every one that cometh unto him, he will certainly bring to the FATHER.

Now for the trial of our having sincerely embraced

CHRIST, I shall put it upon this one thing, our hearty consent to CHRIST. Christians are joined to CHRIST in "a marriage-union," (*Hos.* ii. 19,) and it is consent that makes the marriage. Consent to CHRIST is our will to have him, and our willing CHRIST is our taking and embracing him.

Now our unfeigned consent to CHRIST includes in it, (1.) Our approving of CHRIST. (2.) Our accepting of CHRIST. (3.) Our yielding ourselves up to CHRIST.

Only I must tell you, there is one thing that is necessarily pre-required to this consent; and that is, a distinct knowledge of CHRIST;—a knowledge of his person, who, and what manner of person he is; a knowledge of his proper place, in which he stands, and his proper work that he is to do, in order to bring us to GOD; as in general, that he is the Mediator betwixt GOD and man; in particular, that he is our Prophet and Teacher, sent to us from GOD, to show us the path of life, that he is our Priest and Sacrifice, that he is our King and Ruler;—a knowledge of the conditions that he imposes, and the laws he gives to them that expect salvation by him; as, to believe and obey the Gospel, to repent and be converted. These things must be first distinctly known: otherwise in consenting to CHRIST we do we know not what; we subscribe to a blank.

This being premised, I shall now show,

(1.) That our consent to CHRIST denotes our approving of CHRIST. Therefore we read, that PETER in his preaching CHRIST to the Jews, that he might preach them to CHRIST, endeavours first to gain their approbation of him; and that he might be approved of them, he tells them, that "He was approved of GOD." Wilt thou consent unto CHRIST? He must have thy approbation, or he can never have thy consent.

There must be an approving of his person; of his personal excellencies, and worthiness to be embraced. Men must be well satisfied, both of his sufficiency, that he is able to save to the uttermost those that come to GOD by him; and of his faithfulness, that he will do it. He that

is not satisfied that it is safe to venture upon **CHRIST**, will never be persuaded to it.

There must be an approving of the whole way of salvation ; of all that he hath done, of all that he hath suffered, of all that he requires in order hereto. And as they must be able to say, " He hath done all things well ;" so must they say also concerning what he requires, " Good is the word of the **LORD**." What doth the **LORD** require ? Will he be trusted ? will he be loved ? will he be obeyed ? will he have me for his servant ? My estate, my time, my strength, my body, my soul, to be all at his service ? " Good is the word of the **LORD** ;"—it is but right it should be so ; it is best thus to be his.

(2.) Our consent to **CHRIST** denotes our accepting him. Approving is not all ; he may be approved, and yet rejected ; there are who approve the things that are excellent, and yet will not embrace them ; there must be an accepting of **CHRIST**, as well as an approving.

CHRIST is not only declared in the Gospel to be the Saviour of sinners, that Chosen One, that Mighty One, upon whom their help is laid ; but there is an offer made of this **JESUS** unto sinners, who are all invited to look unto him, to " come unto him and be saved," (*Matt. xi. 28,*) and also assured, that whosoever come unto him, and believe in him, shall not be confounded.

In the preaching of the Gospel, the **LORD** not only gives us this record concerning his Son, " that in him is eternal life," and that " he that hath the Son hath life," (*1 John v. 11, 12,*) but withal makes this proposal to every sinner, " Wilt thou have this **JESUS** ? Shall this **SAVIOUR** be thy Saviour ? If thou wilt have him, thou shalt. Shall he be thine, and wilt thou be his ?" Does thine heart say, " I will, I accept, I henceforth take him for mine own, and will trust myself with him ; I put my life into his hands ; here my soul shall fix : upon this stone which is laid in Sion will I adventure all ?" Does thine heart say to all this, " I will ?" This is thy consent to **CHRIST** ;—provided that there be,

(3.) A giving up of the soul to **CHRIST**. The matter

that is to be consented to, is, not only that **CHRIST** be ours, but that we be his. Our consent that he should be ours, is our taking him; and our consent that we should be his, is our giving ourselves to him. This giving ourselves to **CHRIST** hath in it, the giving him, [1.] The right of us. [2.] The possession of us.

[1.] The giving him the right of us. He hath indeed a right to us already, whether we give ourselves to him or no; he hath bought us, and paid for us; we are his by purchase, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." (1 *Cor.* xvi. 19, 20.) And yet, though we are his already, he expects that we should give ourselves to him; he loves the claim by gift, above that which comes only by purchase; and therefore he requires, "My Son, give me thine heart." (*Prov.* xxiii. 26.) Thou mayest say, "It is not mine to give; what have I to give to the **LORD**? All is his already; I am his, with all that I have: The **FATHER** hath given all to the **SON**, and he hath paid dear enough to purchase the lordship of me." Well, though thou be his own already, canst thou not say, "Take me then, **LORD**, take me as thine own?" *This is more than rebellious sinners will say. Though they be his by right, yet they will rob him of his right, and hold back his own from him. They give themselves away from **CHRIST** to the Devil and to the world. They might say to these, when they demand, Give me thine heart, "It is not mine to give;" but they will not say so here, but whether it be theirs or no, they give it.

But **CHRIST** expects that thou who hast given away his right to another, to the world and thy flesh, shouldest fetch thyself back again from these, and restore thyself to him. And indeed our giving ourselves to the **LORD** is but our acknowledging his right to us, and our restoring to him his own goods. Go, carry home thine heart to him, and deliver it up; and when he says to thee, "It is not thine own," take the word from his mouth, "True, **LORD**, it is not mine own, it is thine, and here it is for thee, take it to thee." Till thou dost this, he will not save thee. He will be thy Lord and thy Judge, whether thou wilt or no; but he will not be thy Saviour without thy con-

sent : thou shalt be his vassal ; but canst never count thyself his disciple, till thou give thyself to him by thine own act and deed.

[2.] The giving him the possession and the use of us. Christians are called the possession of CHRIST, “ the purchased possession ; ” (*Eph. i. 14.*) and it is we ourselves that must put him into possession. Therefore are we required “ to yield up ourselves to him ; ” (*Rom. vi. 13.*) to yield up ourselves to the Spirit of CHRIST, that he may sanctify us, and fit us for the Master’s use ; to yield up ourselves to the authority and government of CHRIST, to be used and employed in his service, to be actually employed and used by the LORD in all that he hath for us to do.

CHRIST, thou sayest, hath the right of thee ; but who hath the possession of thee ? Thou hast given thyself to CHRIST ; but hast thou given thyself to Christianity ? Thou callest thyself his servant ; but dost thou obey him as his servant ? Art thou given to the works of CHRIST, given to praying, given to hearing, given to holiness ? He hath thy name, but who hath the use of thee ? To him thou hast devoted thyself ; but by whom art thou employed ? Thou hast parts, thou hast strength, thou hast an estate, thou hast time ; but upon whom, or upon what, are all these actually bestowed ? Wilt thou say that thou hast given thyself to CHRIST, when the Devil hath still the possession, or the world and thy flesh have still the use of thee, and of all that thou hast ?

Brethren, there may be a damnable mistake here ; and look to it, that none of you be thus mistaken to your everlasting ruin. It may be thou hast sometimes gone into thy closet, and hast said with some affection, “ LORD, I am thine ; I here give myself to thee, body and soul, and all that I have, to be thine for ever : ” and when thou hast thus done, away thou goest, rejoicing and comforted. But shortly after, the sense of this is worn off ; and thou goest as aforetime, walking as thou wert used to do. What dost thou think of such a dedication ? Hast thou sincerely

dedicated thyself to CHRIST, when thou sufferest sin and the world still to have the possession and the use of thee? Art thou sincerely given to CHRIST, when thou art not given to Christianity? Art thou given to Christianity, who art still given to thy will, given to thine appetite, given to pleasure, and ease, and idleness? Trust not to any closet-transactions, how solemn or affectionate soever, that have not so much power as to bring thee in, and deliver thee up, and actually engage thee in the service of Him, to whom thou hast thus passed thyself over. But more of this in the next mark.

3. The third mark is, A giving up ourselves to the practice of a holy life.

That a holy life is necessary to prove our choice of God, and our closing with CHRIST, is evident from what hath been said in the two former marks: it remains that I add something for farther trial, whether the life which we live be indeed a holy life.

I have spoken to this elsewhere; and shall now only add, that he who lives a holy life hath such a standing care to please God in all things, that he takes care, (1.) Not to allow himself in any known sin. (2.) Not to allow himself in the neglect of any known duty.

(1.) He that lives a holy life, does not allow himself in any known sin. Now there may be a double allowance of sin: 1. Positive, when we have such a desire after any sin, that our hearts, not being able to bear restraint, give themselves a toleration for it: 2. Interpretative, when we live in any known sin, and connive at ourselves in it; and though we do not resolve to continue this liberty for it, yet neither do we fully resolve against it. Non-resolution against sin is the door left open to it,—when we do not hate or resist it, when we pray not, watch not, strive not against it. It may be, we wish that we could overcome every iniquity, and that God would restrain us by his grace, so it be without putting us to the trouble of laying any painful restraint upon ourselves; yet when any particular sins come, they find the door left open to them:

now even this must be interpreted an allowance of them. If thou wilt not resist, thou dost thereby invite the tempter and his temptations.

Men's allowing themselves in any sin, is an argument that they are in a league with sin; and he that is in a league with any sin, his heart is not right with God. Our engaging ourselves to the Lord, doth necessarily include our breaking with sin; and our walking in friendship with God, is our living in defiance of sin. Hast thou friendship with sin? Where is then thy friendship with God? Dost thou say thou hast not friendship with sin, nor art in league with it? How is it then that it hath such free access to thee? Consider it well; didst thou maintain in thine heart an enmity against sin, thou wouldest take more heed how thou gavest it entertainment. Wilt thou open thy bosom to a viper? Wouldest thou spread forth thine arms to a serpent? Sure thou art of kin to these venomous beasts, or thou wouldest never allow them such freedom with thee. The case is plain, thou art in such a league with sin, as will conclude thee out of covenant with God.

(2.) He that lives a holy life, does not allow himself in the neglect of any known duty. By duties, I mean, not only such special acts of worship as prayer, hearing, &c., but all acts of obedience to the will of God; both those more general duties of working out our salvation, and of walking as becometh the Gospel, and every particular duty comprehended under these; those which have a more immediate respect to God, our living in the faith, fear, and love of the Lord; those which have an immediate respect to ourselves, our living soberly, temperately, and in patience; and those which respect others, doing good to all men, admonishing, reproofing, and comforting, and showing mercy, as we have opportunity. As we are Christians, we are indebted to others, to our families, to our neighbours, to our friends, and to our enemies. I instance in all these, in special in second-table duties, both because there can be no proof made of the uprightness of our conversations,

without looking into particulars, and because there are many who pretend to great heights in the matters of the first table, who in second-table duties are sadly remiss and negligent. Even these latter are so essential to true godliness, that whatever proofs we seem to have of our sincerity, our neglects of these, especially our allowed neglects, will call all into question.

Those that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS, must live in all good conscience towards GOD, and towards men also. GOD will have his people to stand complete in his whole will; that they may herein both approve themselves in his sight, and also show forth his virtues before men, so that the world may see that the spirit of Christianity is not a fanatic or feeble thing, but hath a power in it to make a visible and universal change in the manners of those that are possessed with it; that Christians may appear to be the mercy, and the blessings, and the beauty of the world; that countries may see, that families may see, that it is a mercy that there are some godly ones among them; that the unbelieving wife may see that it is a mercy to have a believing husband, that grace hath made him better-natured, more loving, more gentle, more tender of her good; that the unbelieving husband may see what a blessing it is to have a believing wife, that grace hath made her both a better woman and a better wife, more meek, more patient, more careful to please her husband; that the unbelieving families or persons may find that it is a comfort and advantage to them to have so good a master, or to live by so good a neighbour, who pities them, prays for them, and even preaches to them by his holy life and good example.

All these particulars, and every other thing required in the word of GOD, I understand by duties.

Now this is a man of a holy life;—he who, having chosen GOD, and embraced CHRIST, doth set his heart in all things to walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, without allowing himself in the neglect of any thing that he knows, *pro hic et nunc*, to be his duty; whose

prayer it is, "Hide not thy commandments from me;" whose study it is to know the will of God, and whose endeavour it is to walk in all the commandments of God blameless. This is according to the plain intent and meaning of his covenant with God, and this is his faithfulness in the covenant. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." "Then shall I not be ashamed," that is, then shall I be upright in the way, and have boldness both before God and men; "when I shall have respect," that is, when it is in mine heart to do thy whole will, without giving myself leave to turn aside, either to the right hand or the left.

He that lives in the neglect of the acts of worship, that prays not, and hears not; he that neglects the general duties, that sets not himself to seek the kingdom of God, to work out his own salvation, to walk as becometh the Gospel, but takes up with a careless, worldly life;—the very neglect of, or not engaging in, these great and necessary duties, proves him an unholy man.

Yea, and those that do something in those great and general duties, yet if they allow themselves in the neglect of any particular duties, in the neglect of righteousness, in the neglect of mercy, in the neglect of their families, and the duties they owe to them, in the neglect of neighbours or strangers, and the duties they owe to them, and can wink at, and dispense with themselves therein,—such men can never prove that their religion is not vain.

Art thou a holy man, who art an unrighteous and unmerciful man? Art thou a good Christian, who art no good husband? Art thou a good woman, who art an evil wife? Art thou a good man, who art a bad neighbour? Art thou a holy man, whom halting after the LORD must serve instead of walking with God? Art thou a follower of CHRIST, who wilt have him abate thee some of his demands, abate thee truth, abate thee mercy, abate thee self-denial; or, if he will not abate it to thee, thou wilt abate it from him? Is this to be undefiled, or entire, in the way of the LORD?

But now he who gives himself to prayer, hearing, and praising the LORD, who makes it the scope and business of his life to please God, and make sure for eternity, studying and endeavouring to approve himself in every thing to him who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, and to keep himself unspotted from the world ; this is a holy man : this is religion indeed.

Now, Brethren, to gather up all that hath been said, (for I would not have you try by one, but by all three marks laid down,) and so to bring this trial to an issue : That man who hath deliberately and absolutely chosen the LORD for his portion, resolving to stand to his choice, and counts it the only happiness of his life to serve and enjoy that GOD whom he hath chosen,* and for his sake is willing to suffer the loss of all things ; who so heartily approves of CHRIST and his Gospel, that he accepts, and adventures his soul and his hopes upon him alone ; who hath so dedicated himself, and given up both the right and the possession of himself to Him, that he accounts himself no longer his own, but is a servant and follower of CHRIST in holiness, never allowing himself in any known sin, nor in the neglect of any known duty ; though his weakness be great, and his failings be many, this man is beyond all question a holy man.

Dost thou yet fear, whether thou be the man ? Let that fear set thee upon searching once and once again ; let it follow thee into thine heart, and through all thy ways ; let it lay thee in the balance, and compare thee with this portraiture which is now set before thee ; and if this will not quiet thee, I know no more to say to thee, but that thou diligently set thyself, by increasing in the grace of GOD, and out-growing thy weaknesses and failings, to out-grow thy fears and thy doubts.*

* The judicious Reader, who has learned to follow the Scriptures "whithersoever they go," will probably be of opinion that, however correct were the views of the admirable Author of this Treatise on that branch of a Christian's evidence, as to the safety of his *spiritual* state, which arises from the "*witness of his own spirit*," he has by no

And when this is thy case, then, "Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee:" if **GOD** have ever a child, if there be ever an heir of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the world, thou art one. Thou hast chosen the **LORD**, and that is a sure sign that he hath chosen thee: thou art come unto **CHRIST**, and therefore he will in no wise cast thee out: thou orderest thy conversation aright, and therefore to thee will he show the salvation of **GOD**: thou shalt see the good of his chosen, and rejoice with the joy of his people, and glory with his inheritance.

And now, methinks, there should be a party-coloured face upon this mixed company. Some of you should have the joy of the **LORD** in your countenances, and his praises in your lips.—"What, hath the **ALMIGHTY** indeed taken me for his own? Hath he given me a heart to accept of his Son, and thereby witnessed that I am accepted of him? Is this his very image which is to be seen upon mine heart and life; and may I say with boldness, 'I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine?' 'Bless the **LORD**, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy Name.'"

Others, methinks, should be sighing and shaking for fear. "These are the blessed of the **LORD**; but what am I? If none be the **LORD**'s, but those that have thus chosen Him for theirs; if none be the redeemed ones of **CHRIST**, but those that are his followers in holiness, whose am I? Have I chosen the **LORD**? Am I a follower of **CHRIST**? Woe is me, it is too evident that I have chosen earth and vanity, and am a follower after lies. Ah, wretch that I am! are all my hopes, is all my confidence, come to this?"

Sinner, how is it that thy soul is not yet in sackcloth and ashes; that trembling and astonishment have not taken

means sufficiently taken into the account the *direct evidence* of adoption into the family of **GOD**, which arises from the "*witness of the DIVINE SPIRIT*," in the hearts of Believers.—What the word of **GOD** has joined together, ought not thus to be put asunder.—**EDITOR.**

hold of thee? Art thou yet at ease? Is it nothing to thee to see thyself without CHRIST, and without GOD in the world? Or canst thou not yet see that this is thy case? Surely thou hast lost either thine eyes or thine heart, if thy fears are not yet fallen upon thee.

As for you, O Beloved, who bear these marks, "Rejoice in the LORD alway, and again I say, Rejoice;" and study to confirm and establish your hearts in the joy of the LORD, by walking worthy of that grace wherein you stand.

And thus I have dispatched the first branch of the first Direction. Search what good there is in you, or whether there be the grace of GOD in your hearts.

2. Search what evils there are found in you. You that have made proof of the grace of GOD in you, this part of the direction is intended to humble you under, and make you more watchful against, those evils which yet remain.

But it is chiefly intended to those, who, having but slightly searched themselves, have a confidence that they are the children of GOD.

In order to your making a further discovery of yourselves, let me advise you to search yet deeper. You hope there is the good seed sown, but what tares are there to be found in you? Search if there be no rank weeds, such as are not to be found in the garden of the LORD: If any such be, is your hand upon them to pluck them up, or your foot upon them to tread them down? Deal faithfully, and pass through all your fields; mark your ways, and see what you can find.

Or, if your life be clear, and you find not much above ground, dig down to the roots; descend into your hearts, and when you go down into those deeps, go down trembling, to think what you may find there; though you have washed your face, and cleansed your hands, yet fear what you may find below. Tremble as you go down in search after the evils of your hearts. If there be no oaths nor lies, no murders or adulteries in your lives, there may be whole nests of them in your hearts. See if there be no images of jealousy set up there, before which all within

you fall down and worship ; if there be not another god within, besides Him that hath gotten the name without. Search narrowly, from room to room, from corner to corner. It may be you may find such evils as may astonish you.

If the LORD should lead you through your hearts, as once he led the Prophet, (*Ezek. viii. 5,*) and first showed him the image of jealousy, and then, by a hole through a wall, and a door, led him further, where he saw every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel pourtrayed upon the wall ; and leading him yet further, he saw more and more, and greater abominations than these ; if you should thus go in search through your hearts, GOD knows what abominations you might find, which yet you have not discovered nor suspected. It may be, you find the world sitting upon the throne within you ; and if there be not the form of every creeping thing, yet all the beasts of the field, your horses, and your oxen, and your sheep, may be pourtrayed upon your hearts ; these temples of the LORD may be made stables, and stalls, and folds, and barns, where your cattle and your corn may be lodged and laid up ; nay, possibly you may find them dunghills, full of toads and adders, lies and adulteries, and unclean lusts. Or if you find nothing else, see if that image of jealousy, *Self*, be not found behind the curtain, sitting upon the throne of God, with a crown of pride upon its head, and all within you, even your very religion, doing homage to it.

Friends, you little think what an inside you may have, whatever your outside be. Dig through the wall, look through the hole, and enter by the door, and search with trembling, lest, where you hope to find CHRIST and the Spirit of Grace, you should find the unclean spirit with his abominations.

There have been many who have been taken for sincere converts, yea, and eminent Christians, in whom the Devil hath seemed to be slain at the first shot ; the Old Man hath seemed to be knocked down at the first blow ; and all on a

sudden there hath appeared a spring-tide of holy joys and heavenly affections, and their souls have been, as it were, caught up into the third heaven : and yet, after a while, those lusts which had been laid asleep for the time, have risen and gotten head again ; and that filthy fountain, which was thought to have been quite drained and dammed up, hath broken its bay, and cast out as great a flood of iniquities as ever.

O fear, lest it should be thus with thee ; lest, whatever there be at the top, there be that lying at the bottom which may undo thee for ever ; lest sin only be laid asleep, but not slain ; lest, though the enemy be beaten out of the field, he be but only beaten into his hold, where he still fortifies himself. And be sure, though he should have lost his outworks, yet whilst he makes good the stronghold,—though the channels be swept and cleansed, yet if the sink be choked up with filth,—though thou hast quite another face, and seemest quite another man, though every one that sees thee rejoices in the change made upon thee, yet is there that within which will break down all thy hopes, and make thy friends ashamed of the joys they had over thee. Fear lest this should be thy case, and get thee down into thine heart, and search yet again, whether it be or no.

Brethren, I would not check the least buds of the spring ; I would not nip the first blossomings towards true grace ; I would cherish the least of the creatures of God : O that every soul among you were come so far as the little ones among you ! God forbid that any of you should be frightened back, by your being put in fear that you are not yet come home. But, however, he that is confident the work is done, that he hath the life of God within him, let him search if there be not wickednesses within him, which he never thought of, and which may give him just ground to fear, and in fear to put it again to the question, whether his estate be so good and so sure as he concluded it.

Direction 2. Fear and beware. That is a special use of fear, to make to beware. Fear sin, and beware of it ; fear

the wrath of God, and beware that it fall not on thee. Particularly, Fear and hide. Fear and flee.

First, Fear and hide. “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.” (*Prov.* xxii. 3.) If you ask, what, or when, or how shall we hide? I answer,

1. Get your sins hid. There is a covering of *sin*, which proves a curse, by not confessing it, or, which is worse, by denying it: there is also a covering of sin, by justifying ourselves in it: these are evil coverings; he that thus covereth his sin shall not prosper. But there is a blessed covering of sin: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered:” forgiveness of sin is the hiding it out of sight, and that is the blessedness.

Beloved, get your sins thus hidden; see that they do not lie open to the revenger; confess them, repent of them, and get you to *CHRIST* for a pardon. Do not deny or extenuate them; it is sad covering sin with sin; that will be as the dipping the wool in the furnace a second time,—the dye will be the deeper. Get the blood of the covenant for a covering. Carry your ulcers open before the *LORD*, for his covering. Say to him, “*LORD*, it is a vain thing for me to deny it, or to excuse what I have done: I have done foolishly, I have done wickedly, and mine iniquity is marked before thee. I am an unclean thing, all wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. A covering, *LORD*, a covering to hide this unclean thing out of sight! A garment, *LORD*, a garment rolled in blood, to hide the shame of my nakedness!”

2. Get your souls hid; hid with *CHRIST* in God. “I flee unto thee to hide me.” (*Psa.* clixiii. 9.) *CHRIST* will be no hiding-place for your sins, unless your souls also take sanctuary in him. Get thee into *CHRIST*; if thou be found in him, thy sin shall not be found. Hide thee in the blood and bowels of *CHRIST* a Saviour, from the wrath of *CHRIST* a Judge. Great is the wrath of that day; there will be no enduring, and there can be no escaping that wrath, but by himself. Woe be to those that shall then be found out of *CHRIST*, in whatever else they be found.

“The Kings of the earth, and the great men, the rich men and the captains, and the mighty men, shall hide themselves in dens, and the rocks of the mountains, and shall say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the rocks, Cover us, and hide us from him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the LAMB; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?” (*Rev.* vi. 15—17.)

O sinners, you that have ventured to stand out from CHRIST hitherto, look before you to that great day! You that neglect the mercy, think how you can possibly escape the wrath of the LAMB. Trust not to the secrecy of dens, to the mercy of mountains, to the might of rocks; these will be as deaf to your cry, as you are to the cry of the LORD. Now you have a Rock before you, which will then be a refuge; put yourselves into the clefts of this Rock, and the indignation shall pass over you; stay out at your utmost peril.

Sinner, how canst thou think, without a trembling heart, of being found out of CHRIST, in that great day of his wrath? O fear, fear and beware, fear and hide; hide thyself in CHRIST, and then thy great fear will be over. “There is no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST.” (*Rom.* viii. 1.)

Dedicate and give yourselves to him, as his right and property; and be sure he will hide his own. Speak unto him this hour, “Here I am, LORD; I here make over myself unto thee for ever; take me as thine own, for thine I am resolved to be; take me for thine own, and take care of me as thine own; I am thine, save me.”—Give him the present possession of you; rise up this day, ye servants of the LORD, and go and serve him. Say, “What wilt thou have me to do, LORD? How wilt thou have me to live? Speak, LORD, I will henceforth know no other voice but thine; this world shall be no longer heard, this flesh shall be no longer heard, against the voice of CHRIST. Depart, Usurpers! I am neither mine own nor yours. What have I any longer to do with you? I am CHRIST’S,

and him only will I serve; and through the help of the **LORD** I will go from this place, bound in the spirit, and resolved in mine heart, to be governed, guided, and employed by him alone. This is the full and settled purpose of my heart, and **O** that this my resolution may be attended with an effectual power, that may make a present actual change upon my whole course of life! Well, I will go in the strength of the **LORD**, and let me find the presence and the power of the **ALMIGHTY** with me! **O** that I might not go out of this house, nor be seen in the streets, but the tongues of those that see me might say, Where hath this man, or this woman, been this day? What hath been done to them? Whence is this strange change? ‘Is not this the man that was born blind? Is not this the cripple that sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple?’ said they once. Is not this the man that lived in blindness, and in ignorance of **God**? Is not this he, that was such a lame, halting, trifling walker? How do we see him to have his eyes open, and living in the grace and power of **God**? What a change is here? How comes this to pass? Surely this man hath been with **JESUS**; surely he is become the **LORD**’s, and the **SPIRIT** of the living **God** is in him.”

What say you, friends? Come and give yourselves to the **LORD**, and then fear not to commit yourselves to his custody; trust him for your pardon, trust him for protection, leave the care of your souls upon him for ever. Faithful is he that hath called you, and he will take care of you. Now that you have a sure title to him, and are hid in his blood, this blood of the **LAMB** shall be to you as the blood of the Paschal Lamb, sprinkled on the lintels and door-posts of Israel, (*Exod. xii.*)—your certain security that the indignation shall pass over you, and the destroyer shall not hurt you for ever.

Secondly, Fear and flee:—Sinner, flee away from thy sins, and live. What day thou hidest thee in **CHRIST**, thou must leave thy sins behind thee; or, if thou carriest them to **CHRIST** with thee, (which comes all to one),

it must be only to be crucified. Particularly, 1. Flee out of thy state of sin. 2. Flee from the practice of sin.

1. Flee out of thy state of sin. Now thou art a mere bond-slave to the Devil and thy lusts. Dost thou not feel the chains on thy neck, and the fetters on thy feet? Art thou not made to serve under thine enemies? Thou art not left at liberty to act as a Christian, according to the Gospel; no, nor as a man, according to thine own reason; but art made a mere brute, to serve the pleasure of the Devil and thy lusts. Art thou content to live and die such a slave? Behold, the whole world is for liberty! What groanings are there under oppression; what outcries against impositions, and invasions upon rights and privileges; and what impatience of vassalage and servitude! And canst thou be so patient of all the impositions of lust, and of thy vassalage under the Devil? Arise, thou slave!—shake off thy fetters, and get thee up out of thine house of bondage.

It is not barely a cessation from the acts of sin, that I am now pressing you to; but get you free from your state of sin; get you up out of prison; cease not only from doing the work, but continue not under the dominion of the Devil; be no longer the practiser, no, nor the prisoner of sin.

CHRIST came not to make your prison more clean or more easy, to cast out some of your filth, or to get you an abatement of some of your work, but to “bring forth the prisoners out of prison.” (*Isa. xlii. 7.*) CHRIST calls not to the prisoners to take their rest, or to do their Master’s work by half, no, nor barely to let it all alone; but he “says to the prisoners, Go forth.” (*Isa. xlix. 9.*)

Sinners are not only employed by sin and the Devil, but they are sold under sin. They are prisoners, not only by constraint, but by consent also; they have made a league with sin, and are its covenant-servants; they are not only prisoners to Satan, but to their own hearts; the heart of man is become so very a devil, that it is its own gaoler; the Devil cannot commit a sinner into safer custody, than by making his own heart his keeper.

Art thou not afraid, sinner, to stay any longer in such a state? Surely thou dost not know where thou art, or thou couldest not but fear. When **CHRIST** intends to fetch sinners out, he first makes them see where they are. “He openeth the blind eyes, and bringeth forth the prisoners from the prison.” (*Isa. xlii. 7.*) He opens their eyes, not barely that they may see their way out, but that they may see what a prison it is they are in, what a vile prison, what a strong prison, what irons there are upon them, and what a dismal dungeon there is in the bottom of it, into which they are dropping, and unto which they are reserved in these chains and fetters. There is little hope of persuading sinners out, till, upon the sight of their misery, they are afraid to continue longer there.

(1.) Flee, as **LOT** out of Sodom,—though you must leave all behind you, all your substance, all your kindred and acquaintance. The fire and the brimstone are coming; get you gone, and leave all behind you.

(2.) Flee, as **Israel** out of Egypt,—whatever difficulties be in the way. The mountains, the Red Sea, the wilderness, could not keep Israel to the brick-kilns. God will make a way through the sea, through the most astonishing difficulties, if you will venture to follow him out. Say not that it is hard, say not that it is impossible to escape; the mountains shall be made a plain, the sea shall become dry land, the wilderness shall become a fruitful land, to the followers of the **LORD**.

(3.) Flee as men out of a house on fire, or a sinking ship,—in haste. Say not it will be time enough to-morrow: the house burns, the beam is falling, the ship is sinking;—away, away, ere it be too late! It is no time to stand delaying, it is no time to stand deliberating, “Shall I, shall I?” To-day if you will hear his voice! It is high time to awaken out of sleep. Rise up, every man and woman, shake off your fetters, slay your keeper, get this old heart slain, and get you a new heart: when that is once done, then you have broken prison, and your souls are escaped.

2. Flee the practice of sin. Say not I am now in **CHRIST**, and my sin shall never separate me from him. If **CHRIST** do not separate thee from thy sins, thy going on in them will separate thee from **CHRIST**. "Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil." (*Isa. i. 16.*) An evil life argues an evil state; thou hast no part in **CHRIST**, who art still going on in thy wickedness; the practice of sin doth both evidence and uphold the power of sin; what clearer evidence that sin is lord still, than when its laws are obeyed? Who can think that the root is dead, whilst the branches bear and flourish? How is a tree known but by its fruits?

"Let every man that nameth the name of **CHRIST** depart from iniquity." Art thou in **CHRIST**, who art not turned from thy sins? Do not say, I hope I may be turned from them hereafter; and so indulge thyself in sin, till **CHRIST** come and set thee free: but whether thou be in **CHRIST**, or yet short of him, put away iniquity from thee. Let there be a present forbearance of the acts of sin, and that will be a means to destroy its habits; as it is with some plants,—by cutting them off above ground, you may kill the roots. Do not only lament for sin, but fight against it; and the best fighting is by fleeing. When the soldiers of this world once flee, the fight is lost; but **CHRIST**'s soldiers never fight well but when they flee; when you flee from sin, you have won the field. When the Devil flees, he is overcome; when you flee, you have overcome.

Flee from all sin, but especially your beloved sins. Say, "I dare not touch you for my life; therefore come, my soul, put on thine armour, stand upon thy guard, and resist them. And especially call up fear to thine help, and set that for thy centinel against them."

Fear will quickly espy, and will give the alarm to the soul. "Rise, **SAMSON**, the Philistines are upon thee:" Rise, soul, the Devil is at thy back, sin lies at the door. Fear will espy, and will not slight the danger. The flesh counts sin a friend: or, if it be apprehended as an enemy, presumption will tell you that the mischief may not be

great ; that it is but repenting afterwards, and that will make it up ; that whatever wound it makes upon thy heart, it may soon be healed ; that the best men may be drawn aside, and yet do well enough. But fear will hold sin in constant suspicion, and will ever suspect the worst. Look to thyself; he is at hand that betrays thee; sin is watching for entrance, and if it once get in, God knows what mischief it may do thee ere thou get clear of it. Behold the Devil leading on the van, and death and hell bringing up the rear !

Oh, how is it, that there should be yet any pleading for, or excusing sin in the world ! Such fools there are every where found, who are only afraid of their friends; who are watching and fighting against their remedy ; who fall foul with a faithful reprove, and are so far from taking heed of sin, that they can hardly take it well to be bid to take heed of it. Let any one come and say to them, "Friend, dost thou well to be angry : Dost thou well to be thus heady and wilful in thy way ?" And it may be, instead of, "I thank you," this shall be all, "What is that to you ? Look to yourself." Shame upon this folly and madness ! Fear sin as you ought, and you will never fly in the face of a faithful reprove.

To conclude this Direction : if you will but so fear as to flee sin, you will at once escape all that can hurt you. If you flee from the sword, the famine may meet you ; if you flee from the famine, the pestilence may devour you ; if you flee from the wrath of man, the wrath of God may fall on you ; but only flee sin, and you are out of danger for ever.

Direction 3. Fear and follow after. This direction will concern both unbelievers and believers.

First: As to unbelievers, my word to them shall be this: Follow after true and saving grace, in fear of falling short of it ;—"looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God." (*Heb.* xii. 15.) This direction hath been in part anticipated : our seeking to get into CHRIST, and to get out of a state of sin, is the same in effect as to seek after grace. I shall add only two or three words.

Let your aim be at sincerity, and be sure you take not up with any thing that is short of it. Buy the truth. Buy truth or sincerity; get an upright heart, whatever it cost you. It may cost you much ere you can get it. It must be bought, though not by a price; a price you have not to give; all that you have is not of such value as to be a price for grace. But though you have nothing to buy it with as a price, yet you have something to part with as a condition, without which you cannot obtain: all that you have must go for it. (*Luke* xiv. 33.)

If thine estate must go for it, let it go; better be poor than wicked: if thou must lose thy friends, bid farewell to them all; better be an abject than a sinner: if thy reputation must go, let it go; better be a reproach than a reprobate: if thy sloth and beloved ease must go, set to thy work; better labour than eternally perish. Stick at no terms; whatever the LORD imposes, submit to it. "Let me have grace, LORD; and let it cost me whatever thou pleasest. Take from me what thou wilt, impose on me what thou wilt; only help me to bear and perform, and I am content, so that I may be partaker of that grace which accompanies salvation.

Secondly: As to Believers, who have already obtained grace, my word to them is, Follow on towards perfection, in fear of falling back from, or walking unworthy of, that grace wherein you stand. Hast thou obtained grace? Thine heart will be ready to say to thee, Fear not, thou art now out of danger, thou art passed from death to life, and shalt not come into condemnation. But yet take heed, for, 1. If thou be so secure from condemnation as thou thinkest, yet thy fear is one of those necessary means by which thou must be preserved from it. As the Apostle saith concerning faith, (*1 Pet.* i. 5,) so may we say concerning fear, "We are kept by the mighty power of God "through" *fear* "unto salvation." Consider that Scripture, "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." (*Jer.* xxxii. 40.) 2. If thou art secured from wrath, art thou secured from sin also? Is there no fear that sin may hurt thee, though

thou shouldest not die for it? Is there nothing to be feared but hell? Is there no fear but that of a slave? If thou be a child of God, is there no fear of disingenuity and unworthiness? If thou be his servant, is there no fear of ill husbandry? If thou be his disciple, is there no fear of non-proficiency? He hath nothing of CHRIST, that thinks nothing is to be feared but wrath and damnation.

Fear sin; fear to be unworthy, unthankful, unfruitful; fear sinful decays and negligences; and in that fear follow on towards perfection. Particularly,

(1.) Follow on in the work of Mortification, in fear lest, whatsoever wound sin hath received, it should recover and get head again. Hast thou gotten it a little under? Make it sure, though thou hast gotten over Jordan, and hast set thy foot on the banks of Canaan, yet the Canaanite is still in the land. Thou wilt never have peace, thou wilt never prosper in the grace of God, but according as thou prosperest in thy war against sin.

“But how shall I do to get my sins mortified?”

Let me first ask thee, art thou so sensible of the evil of them, that thou darest not let them live? Art thou so heartily afraid of them, that nothing less than their death will give thee quiet? Art thou more afraid of thy living lusts, than of the labour and the smart that their death will cost thee? Who would bear the cutting off a limb, that is not sensible his life is concerned in it? This mortifying work is one of the most painful works of a Christian; it is not so difficult to tell you how you should do it, as to make you willing to do it. Art thou in such a fear of thy disease, that this swallows up thy fear of the remedy? Art thou for the death of sin, how painful soever it may be to thee? If so, then take these directions:

[1.] Lay the axe to the root of sin. The tree must come down, when it is cut up at the root. There are sometimes hopeful assaults made against sin, which yet prosper not, because the blow goes not to the root: the branches may be lopped, the acts of sin may be cut off, but soon after all these sprout forth and grow again; for the root was not

touched. The adulterous, the lying and oppressing heart, the root of all, remained untouched. Let that corruption of nature, which is the root of actual sin, be first and most effectually attacked. .

The root of sin is to be destroyed, 1. By the word of **CHRIST**. "The word of **GOD** is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword." (*Heb. iv. 12.*) It reaches to the inwards, and pierces the entrails. Friends, do not open the ear only, but open the breast to the word; set the point of this sword to the very heart of your sins; and count not that it hath done its work, till the soul of them, the inward pravity of your natures, and your inward lusts, have received their mortal wound. 2. By the blood or death of **CHRIST**. "Our old man is crucified with him." (*Rom. vi. 6.*) His death must do it; it is **CHRIST** crucified, that must crucify sin. Friends, would you be healed of your plagues? Go to **CHRIST** for a cure. Put forth the hand of faith, and touch: touch, not the hem of his garment, but his side and his heart, his hands and his feet; touch this **JESUS** as a crucified **JESUS**: **CHRIST** can heal you with a touch; but he will not touch your diseased soul, unless your faith first touch him. Go to **CHRIST**, sinner! Say within thyself, If I can but touch him, I shall be made whole. Look to the Brazen Serpent, and both thou shalt be healed, and the fiery serpent slain. Believe that there is such virtue in **CHRIST** as will do the cure, and lay hold on him for it. Bring thy unclean fountain to that fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness; and thou shalt certainly find that this blood of **CHRIST** shall cleanse thee from all sin.

[2.] Put a knife to the throat of sin. My meaning is, Cut it short of provision. The Old Man is given to appetite, and you know what the counsel is in that case, "Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." (*Prov. xxij. 2.*) Look how many lusts there are; so many sorts of feedings there are to keep them in heart. Pride must have ornaments, or honour, applause, respect, and observances; and for want of other feeding, it will feed

upon thoughts, upon our own reflections,—any vain conceit of some worth or excellency we find in us. Covetousness must have money, houses and lands, the hopes of getting, and the content of possessing them. Sensuality must have pleasure and mirth, wine and strong drink, dainties and varieties: and whilst the flesh may have its lust, it grows headstrong and imperious; there is no way to keep it tame, but by keeping it short of what it craves. It may be thou complainest sometimes of thy corruption, or of the unruliness of thy spirit, and prayest against it: but thou canst not find in thine heart to make thy lust fast; it must have its provision still allowed it. It may be even when thou art praying against thy pride, thou lettest it feed upon thy very prayer,—thy eloquence, or affectionate enlargement, or any thing thou apprehendest to be praiseworthy. It may be thou prayest against thy covetousness or sensuality; but as soon as thou art off thy knees, away thou goest to indulge it. This is but mocking God, and deluding thyself. If thou wouldest prosper against this enemy, whilst thou stormest it by seeking God, starve it by denying thyself.

[3.] Put a bridle on its jaws. My meaning is, Restrain it from its actings. If thou canst not prevent its conception, strangle it in the birth; if the fire be kindled within, yet give it no vent; if thou canst not so easily rule thy spirit, yet bridle thy tongue: the fire of passion doth not waste by spending, but rather increases; and restraining the acts of sin will weaken its habits. I have heard some persons say, “When we have anger in our hearts, out it must; and then we are friends;” and so they take it for their virtue rather than their sin, that they cast out all their mire and dirt in a storm, because then a calm follows. Thou fool, hast thou conquered thine unruly spirit, by suffering thyself to be thus conquered by it? What dost thou think of him that conquers his lust by going to a harlot? When thou hast eased thy stomach by thy bedlam language, then there is a calm; but thou neither considerest the sin of thine angry words, nor that the fire will kindle the sooner,

for that it finds so easy a vent. Dam up the furnace, and that is the best way to quench the coals.

[4.] Set thy foot on the neck of sin. Have any of thy lusts fallen before thee? Tread them under thee, that they rise not up again: do not slight them as conquered enemies;—those which are now under thy foot, if thou look not well to them, may be lords over thee again. Hath the **LORD** humbled thy proud heart, thy unruly spirit, and seemed to turn a lion into a lamb? Whilst thou sayest, “I hope I shall never be proud or peevish again,” yet still fear lest thou shouldest. Whilst sin hath any life in it, thou art still in danger. As we use to say of dying men, that whilst there is life there is hope; so may it be said of these dying beasts, while there is life there is fear. Let that fear be as the foot upon their necks, to prevent their rising and return upon thee.

(2.) Follow on towards perfection by seeking after Maturity and Fruitfulness. Christians, do you not wish it were better with you? Can you bear your own barrenness? When shall we hear the voice of joy, and praise, and thanksgivings to the **LORD**, for blessing our fields with increase? When shall we be able to say, “See, O **LORD**, thy Blood hath not been shed in vain! Thy **SPIRIT** hath not been poured out upon me in vain! Behold, the winter is past, and the spring comes on; the flowers appear, the fig-tree putteth forth; behold the fruits of that blessed Blood and **SPIRIT** in reviving this dead and barren heart. My soul, make thy boast of **GOD**; something of his fruits I have brought forth; yet not I, but the grace of **GOD** which was with me, and his grace hath not been bestowed on me in vain.”

Come on, thou withering soul; cry out with the Spouse, “Awake, thou north wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden;”—let the **SPIRIT** of the **LORD** breathe upon me; “that my spices may flow forth,” and my fruits may appear: and then thou mayest go on,—Now “let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”

I cannot enumerate the particular fruits that you should

bring forth : they are all the fruits of righteousness : I shall only lay before you several things, which “if they be in you and abound, will make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.” Follow after, [1.] Power. [2.] Activity. [3.] Severity. [4.] Simplicity. [5.] Pleasure.

[1.] Power. Grace, in the very being of it, includes power. “The kingdom,” or grace “of GOD, is not in word but in power.” (1 Cor. iv. 20.) Natural men have natural power, but there is nothing of a spiritual power in them. Wishes they may have, after that which is really and spiritually good. “O that I could forsake this world, and crucify this flesh, and follow God, and walk worthy of the Gospel in all things.” Thus they may wish and desire, but they cannot come to it; they cannot bring forth into performance. The least child of God hath more of the power of God in him, than the very best of natural men : all the virtues of a natural man fall as much short (as to his vital power) of the least of saints, as a dead man does of a living child.—But yet what weakly souls are many amongst the living souls! How ordinary is this complaint, “To will is present with me, but how to perform I find not.” O how many ineffectual offers do we make at a holy life! We wish for more care, more diligence, more usefulness; but still we fall short : we are reaching towards, but cannot reach to it. But art thou not afraid to continue thus? What if death should overtake thee? How wouldest thou die, when thy sin is so much alive? Yea, how canst thou live in any peace, whilst thou livest to so little purpose? Therefore my brethren, let me exhort you, “Be ye strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might.” Put forth the power that you have received, and trust on God for more. Put forth that power which you have; and that is the way to increase your strength. Do not make yourselves to be weaker than you are; say not, it is for want of power, that it is no better with you, when it is for want of care and industry; more certainly might be done, if we were better

stewards of what we have. Let there not be a pretence of weakness to excuse our laziness ; do what thou canst,—for thou canst do more than thou dost ; and if indeed thy strength be but small, thou knowest whither to go for more. Let it not suffice you, that you are men of understanding and good desires. Get a spirit of power, as well as of love and of a sound mind.

[2.] Activity. An inactive spirit is next to impotence. Away with thy lifeless temper ! Put away sloth, thou sluggard : wilt thou still be a drone ? This drone hath a sting ; thine own soul will feel it ; sooner or later, thy sloth will sting thee to the heart.

Christians, let it appear that the SPIRIT of the living God is in you, by your sprightliness and vivacity. Be bent for holy action ; be prepared and ready for every good work. Christians are created unto good works : we are new-made for this very end and purpose ; we are adopted and prepared for an active and useful life,—for these good works which God hath ordained that we should walk in them.

Hast thou grace indeed ? Blow off the ashes from that living coal, that it may burn and shine. Fire is the most active of all the elements ; it will not be enclosed, but will find a vent for its flames : surely thou hast little of that divine fire in thy heart, who canst so easily keep it within.

Christians, be impatient with these your slothful hearts ; let there be no sleep in your eyes, till your sleepy souls be awakened. Be ashamed that you, who talk what God hath done for you, should have no more to say of what you have done for him. Set all the wheels in motion, and thereby fit them for more easy motion ; let them stand no longer still : fear, lest your rust should eat out all your strength. Be henceforth for an active life : now awaken, and begin to live in good earnest.

[3.] Severity, or strict and painful holding ourselves to our rule. Christians must be men of action : but they must not act wildly or loosely ; their actions must be

punctual and strict to their rule. CHRIST's commands, some of them, are hard sayings; but whatever they be, they must be submitted to.

Christians must be rigid. To be rigid in the way of a party is an evil. A rigid Presbyterian, a rigid Independent or Anabaptist, wrong their brethren. But it is a duty and an excellency to be a rigid Christian; provided that our rigour be more to ourselves and to our own flesh, than to all the world besides.

Now to bring you to this Severity, let me exhort you to these two things :—First, Fear to be offended at the severities of religion. Secondly, Fear to baulk any thing of the severities of religion.

First, Fear to be offended at the severities of religion. The fear of christian strictness is that which keeps back many a soul from CHRIST. They reason thus :—“A Christian! Who that understands what it is to be a Christian, will ever be able to bear it? It is too hard service for me to yield myself to. To put myself under such a law, as ties me up so short from what mine heart desires, and holds me so close to things so contrary to me, how can I endure it? The forsaking my friends and companions, the abandoning my pleasures, the bridling mine appetite and passions, the laying a law upon my senses, the watching every word of my mouth, and every thought of mine heart, the holding myself on by line and by rule, in a way of constant and painful duty, without any allowance of the least turning aside, to the right hand or the left, no, though it were to the saving of my life,—who can with patience think of it?” How many souls have there been in the world, whom such thoughts have kept back from CHRIST, and held under the power of the Devil!

But though thou dost not say that this yoke is not to be borne, nor therefore throw it away; yet possibly thou mayest say it is hard to be borne, and think much of it, as if less might suffice. Thou wilt yield to it in the general; but too often, when thou art put harder than ordinary to it, thy flesh

throws and murmurs. Hath it never been thus with thee? Fear lest it should, and still remember, "Blessed is he that shall not be offended in me;"—not so only as not to renounce me, but not so much as to complain or drive heavily under me. "Good is the word of the LORD,"—that is a word becoming the heart and tongue of a disciple.

Secondly, Fear to baulk any of the severities of religion. It is one thing to say, "Good is the word of the LORD," and another thing to submit cheerfully to it, when it comes to the pinch.—By severity, I do not mean unreasonable rigour to ourselves, the unnecessarily afflicting or macerating our bodies, by scourgings, or penances, or going barefoot, as it is used in the church of Rome; but by severity, I mean strictness and exactness to our rule, whatever pain or prejudice it may cost us; our holding ourselves closely to every duty;—especially to the harder duties of self-denial and mortification, the taming our flesh, the beating down our bodies, and bringing them in subjection, by temperance and necessary abstinence, and the ungrateful duties of admonishing, reproving, withdrawing from offenders, and whatever else our LORD hath imposed upon us.

Particularly, there is Severity in imposing upon ourselves; when we are not partial in the law, taking only CHRIST's easier words, and leaving out the harder, but charge our whole duty upon ourselves; and when we do not deal too gently with ourselves, but charge it home, saying, "See to it, O my soul, that thou keep the charge of the LORD; it must be done, dare not, for thy life, to favour thyself, or spare thy flesh, by neglecting thy duty."

There is, also, Severity in reckoning; when we make every day a judgment-day, and reckon with ourselves as God will reckon with us. "God will bring every work to judgment." "Of every idle word men must give an account." Greater sins, smaller faults, commissions, and omissions, the matters of fact, and the circumstances of

them, must be reckoned up. Nothing must slip our reckonings, but what hath slipped our memories; and we must keep that register carefully.

Again, there is Severity in judging ourselves for our sins; when we will not wink at our faults, nor excuse them, but rebuke,—gathering up all the circumstances that may give our sins their due aggravations, and passing our censures accordingly.

Doth thy soul say,—“It is but reason that CHRIST should have all; it is but reason that CHRIST alone should be served, and served in every thing, and to the utmost that he requires: It is best for me, that I be wholly his: the very severities of CHRIST will be better to me, than the liberties of the flesh:”—doth not thy reason and thy conscience speak thus; and yet must the repinings of the flesh carry it?

If it be better to be a disciple of CHRIST than a stranger; if it be better to be a close disciple, than to halt; if it be the strictness of Christianity, out of which its sweetness grows; (the more exact conformity, the more sweet communion with CHRIST;) if there be meat in all his work;—then why do we so wrong ourselves, by following him by halves, feeding only on the husk and shell of Christianity, and leaving the kernel to those that will be so wise as to take pains for it?

O these poor and low spirits, that have no ambition for the excellencies of religion, and cannot bear its difficulties! What a pitiful maimed thing is the religion of many! How little is there in it! What easy, lazy, sleepy disciples are they! How unequal are their spirits, how uneven their going, how slow their motions heavenwards, and how often do they step aside, to save themselves from labour or trouble! Never a little hotter service is in sight, but their flesh calls them off. When is it that that voice is heard within thee, “Pity thyself, spare thyself,” but it prevails? Such a word as this, “It is not for my credit,” or “It is not safe for me,” what a mighty charm is it, to still and countermand the loudest calls of CHRIST and conscience!

But consider, whose voice was it that said to CHRIST,

when he spake of his sufferings, "Be it far from thee, LORD, this shall not be unto thee;" (*Matt. xvi. 22*);—Pity thyself, master, and let it not be thus unto thee;—whose voice was this? CHRIST tells us in the next words, "Get thee behind me, Satan:" it was the Devil that spake thus, by PETER's mouth; and it is the same Devil that, by the mouth of thy flesh, speaks the like to thee. Why, man, art thou afraid to hearken to CHRIST, and not afraid to hearken to the Devil?

Beloved, we are few of us so much Christians, as to be able to endure hardness; and therefore it is we are so easily called off. However, as little as we have attained, let us press on after it. Inure yourselves to hardness, and that is the way to endure it. Be severe a while, and you will be the better able to bear severity; fear in good earnest, how you ever again baulk a duty, and after a while you will find that the hardest duty is not to be feared.

[4.] Simplicity. The Scribes and Pharisees were severe; severe in their fasts, disfiguring their faces, looking with sad and dejected countenances; severe in the observation of the rites, customs, and traditions of their fathers, yea, and of the letter of the law of GOD; there were strict sects of them: but they had not simplicity.

This notes heartiness in our work. Nothing is plain and honest but that which is hearty: "Doing the will of GOD from the heart." "My son, give me thy heart." (*Prov. xxiii. 26*.) What is it to give GOD the heart? This is one thing comprehended in it, to give him the heart for a servant, or to serve him with the heart. He that gives GOD the heart, gives him the best he hath, and gives him all he hath; the heart will command the tongue, the hands, the time, the estate; which way the heart goes, all goes. Serving the LORD with the heart, is serving him in good earnest; we but mock GOD, where the heart is not; it is only serving him in spirit, that is serving him in truth.

Friends, be in good earnest in what you do; let all your religion come deep; let your prayers and your praises, and all the acts of exercising yourselves to godliness, be the

streamings forth of your hearts to the LORD. Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the LORD. Serve the LORD,—as you have been used to serve your flesh,—in good earnest. What you have done for your estates, or for your safety, you have done it heartily; and shall that only which we do for GOD be done without a heart? What is GOD, what are our souls and the concernments of them, that they should be thus put off? Is this heartless service all that GOD is worthy of? Will he accept it at our hands, or is it no matter whether he accept it or no? Is this spiritless service answerable to the worth of our souls, and the weight of eternity? Will you venture all upon shadows and lies? Are we but in jest, when we talk of GOD, or CHRIST, or a world to come? How can you say you believe that there is a GOD, or that there is a heaven and a hell, in one of which your immortal souls must dwell for ever? How can you believe such things, and not feel all the powers of your souls engaged about them? Consider, the GOD in whom you believe is a spirit, and will be served in spirit and in truth; GOD is a great GOD, and infinitely worthy of the best you have; your souls are precious; eternal life and eternal death are serious things, and which of these two will be your lot, is a serious question; and surely these serious things call for your most serious attendance upon them. Provoke not the jealous GOD: fool not away your souls, by trusting to lies. Worship GOD in the spirit; lift up your souls in your prayers; chasten your souls in your fastings. And as your souls must be in your lips, in your eyes, in your ears, while you are solemnly worshipping GOD, so let your hearts be in your hands, too,—in all that you have to do. Let your heart have a hand in all the actions of your lives. “Whatever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;” (*Eccles. ix. 10*;) that is, do it with all your heart;—the heart is the might of the man. GOD is the strength of the heart, and the heart is the strength of the man.

Whatever thou hast to do for thine own soul, do the most and the best thou canst. Be as hearty in laying up

treasure in heaven, as ever thou hast been in laying up treasure on earth. Whatever service thou hast to do for **GOD** in thy generation, by doing good to others, do it with all thine heart. In instructing, admonishing, counselling, reproving; in working righteousness; in showing mercy; in promoting and encouraging any good work, or preventing evil; in propagating serious religion; in pulling poor sinners as brands out of the burning; in compelling the wandering sheep into the fold of the **LORD**; or whatever else you have before you;—do it heartily as unto the **LORD**.

[5.] Follow after Pleasure, the pleasure of religion. This will spring up to you out of the former branches. Get such a spirit of power and holy activity, and grow up to that exactness and simplicity which have been described, that you may drink of their pleasures.

If you ask, what the pleasures of religion are? I shall mention but these four:—The pleasure of sincerity; the pleasure of success; the pleasure of ease; and the pleasure of love.

The pleasure of Sincerity. Sincerity hath such sweetness in it, as no man knows, but he that hath it. “A stranger shall not intermeddle with this joy.” They that know themselves to be upright can rejoice with that joy mentioned by the Apostle: “This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.” (2 Cor. i. 12.) Would you live a pleasant life? Get an upright heart. Would you have all within you to be sweetness? Beware of the leaven of hypocrisy. Would you prove yourselves no hypocrites? Then be improving daily; let sincerity be growing up towards perfection, and then it will be known what it is. **NICODEMUS** will in a while appear to be **NATHANAEL**, “an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.” Let it be thus with thee; and then thou mayest take up the **PSALMIST**’s words, “Thou hast put gladness in mine heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine increased.” (Ps. iv. 7.)

The pleasure of Success. “When the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.” Disappointment is distress. To ask and not to have, to sow and not to reap, to work and not to have to eat,—I need not tell you how uncomfortable this is. But when we have good success, when we see our souls prospering, this will strew our ways with rosebuds, and make pleasant all our paths. One of the great joys of the world is the joy of harvest; and the joy of the saints is expressed by that: “They joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest.” (*Isa. ix. 3.*) The harvest is the success of men’s labours; and that is their joy, to see that they have not laboured in vain. Christian, thou hast been at thy work; but what fruit hast thou found? Hast thou prospered? Hast thou sped well? Dost thou see the travail of thy soul? Is thy sin weakened? Is the world conquered? Is grace quickened in thee? And is it not a pleasure to find it so, and that thou art not so vain, nor so earthly, nor so proud, as thou hast been? Doth it not gladden thee at the heart to find that the **LORD** hath been with thee, and blessed thee, and helped thee, in what thou hast set thine heart unto? And how lookest thou now on thy remaining works? Wilt thou any more go so heavily as thou wast wont to do? Wilt thou any more cry out, “Hard service; a weary life?” Surely thou canst not: what thou findest coming in, will make thy very labour and thy sweat to be sweetness to thee.

The pleasure of Ease. Ease hath a pleasure in it; not only ease or rest from our work, but ease in our work, when we can carry it on with ease. By how much the harder our work is in itself, by so much the greater pleasure will it be, when we can go easily through it. **CHRIST** tells us, that his yoke is easy, and his burden light. **CHRIST’S** yoke is a heavy yoke to sinners, but he makes it easy to his saints. A yoke may be made easy in two ways. The *first* way of doing this is, by making the neck stronger. That is an easy yoke to a man, which a child is not able to move. A labouring man that is weak and sickly, will find his ordinary work too hard for him: when

he recovers his strength, he can go through it with ease. Weak Christians will find Christianity hard service ; as they grow stronger, they will find it easier day by day.— The *second* way is, by accustoming the neck to the yoke. The yoke, at first putting on, wrings, and galls, and wearies ; those that are unaccustomed to it are impatient of the yoke ; it is use that makes it easy. The first hour is ordinarily with a Christian the burden and heat of the day : his morning is hotter than his noon. The tediousness of religion meets us at the threshold ; our hardest task is to begin well ; nature will make the strongest opposition against grace at the very birth ; and the travail of the birth hath more pain in it than all the after care of bringing up the child. One of the hardest works of a Christian is self-denial. To lay down our own wills, to curb our appetites, to go cross to our own dispositions, interests, and humours ; this goes near at first, and will hardly be borne. But after we have used ourselves a while to it, and by degrees inured our wills to submission to CHRIST, a cheerful and contented subjection will, in time, become habitual to us : the more self-denial we have exercised, the less will there be afterwards needed. Now, Brethren, what I would persuade you to is this : Make your religion pleasant, by making it easy ; make your religion easy, not by *halving* your work, or remitting your care, but by increasing your strength and your diligence ; get your hearts strengthened and habituated to religion ; this will make it easy, and ease will make it pleasant. O what fools are loitering, trifling Christians, who think to make their life easy by idleness ! What is the reason that thou haltest thus after the LORD, and art so slothful in thy way ? Why dost thou not set thine heart and thy shoulders to the work, and give thyself to it wholly, and in good earnest. Thou sayest, “ O, I cannot endure labour ; I must have a little ease ; it is too tedious and painful to me, to hold to such close and constant service.” But dost thou think to make thy work easy by trifling at it ? Foolish soul, thou takest the ready way to create thee the more difficulty. Once the work must be done, or thou art

undone; and there is no such way to do it easily, as by doing it diligently: A trifler has the hardest life of all that profess themselves Christians; for doubtless CHRIST's yoke will sit easiest upon those necks, upon which it sits the closest.

The pleasure of Love. He that hath not felt pleasure in love, hath not felt what it is to love. This is one of the great pleasures of heaven, to love and to be beloved; to receive the overflowings of Divine Love, and to feel our hearts flowing forth in returns of love to God. Look how much you have of love, so much you have of heaven, of the joy that is above. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God;" and he that dwelleth in God dwelleth in joy: to love God, and to delight in God, are much the same: love is the bud, and delight is the blossom that grows out of it. Love hath a pleasure in it, and the love of God will put a pleasure into all religion. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! It is good for me to draw near to God. I delight to do thy will, O my God. Sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant." It is a pleasant thing for him that loves, to please and praise the Lord. Fear often brings us upon service. We pray, and read, and hear, and search our hearts, and look to our ways, because we dare do no other: we strive, and wrestle, and watch against sin, because we are afraid what would become of us if we should not. But it is love that sweetens, and thereby strikes the great and most kindly strokes in religion. Fear brings us to religion, as to our physic: the sick man hath no love to physic, but yet he will take it rather than die. Love brings us to it, as to our food; it is our meat and drink to do the will of God. Duties are the meat of holy souls, and they come unto them with as great desire, and are conversant in them with as great delight, as those with which hungry men come to, and sit at, their meals. "I sat down under his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." (*Cant.* ii. 3.)—When thou lovest, thy soul will enlarge, and reach forth with desire even after the highest pitch of godliness; and thou

wilt go freely and cheerfully on in all the exercises of it. Thou wilt not then say, "May not less duty serve;" because thou canst not say, "May not less pleasure serve." Every one would have as much pleasure as he can, and therefore wouldest thou have as much holiness as thou canst. The more holy, the more pleasure.—If thou lovest, thou wilt not be for short duties, short prayers, and short sermons; thou wilt not be so soon weary of thy work. When are men weary of pleasure? When do they use to say, "I have had pleasant hours enough, and sun-shiny days enough; O that my good days were over! O that my days of darkness would come, and the years draw nigh, wherein I might say, I have no pleasure in them!" Every one is willing to live in delights as much and as long as he can. When once, therefore, we can say, "The LORD is my delight," the next word will be, "Let me dwell in the presence of GOD for ever."

Let our souls take wing, and mount up towards this blessed state. O how short do most of us fall! How is it with us in our secret converse with GOD? Are we glad when our retiring hours draw near? When we enter into our closets to meet with our Beloved, do we solace ourselves with love? Are praying and praising our pleasure? Is communing with GOD, and with our own hearts, a delight? Do we say, "It is good for me to be here?" And how is it with us in our ordinary course? What is the joy of our life? Is it this, that our life is a walking with GOD? Have we no good days, but our holy days? Are we never well, but when we can see and serve the LORD; and never amiss when we are so doing? Do we not only judge, but feel, that intimacy and familiarity in heaven are our only heaven on earth? LORD, how seldom, LORD, how little, is it thus with us!

But may we not obtain? Is not such a blessed state worth our putting in for it? Are you willing to keep yourselves always at this distance from your delight? Is it enough that you have some hopes hereafter? Are you content that your souls should never taste of joy here? Shall they

still dwell in exile, while they dwell on earth? Shall they never put off the garments of their widowhood, till they put off their clothing of flesh? Are you content to take up yet longer with this dark and disconsolate state? Is the drudgery of religion,—this striving against the stream,—is *this* religion enough for you? Would you not taste the milk and honey, the marrow and fatness? Would you not ride on with free spirits and full sails, triumphing over difficulties, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God? Would you that these rough ways were become a plain, and these dark shades were all sun-shine? Would you feed in the green pastures, and be led by the still waters, and drink of that river that makes glad the city of God? Then press on; dwell no longer on the shore or surface of religion, but hoist all your sails, and launch forth into the deep; get you into the heart and inside of Christianity, where the LORD will show you his love. Be not satisfied with some few glances, or little touches; but get yourselves swallowed up of the love of God in CHRIST JESUS our LORD. This will be to you the wine that will make glad your hearts, and the oil that will make your wheels run. Then shall you run the way of God's commandments, when the pleasure of love shall enlarge your hearts.

END OF VOL. XVIII.