

For the Christian's
CHRISTIAN'S
GREAT INTEREST:

IN TWO PARTS.

- I. The trial of a saving interest in *Christ*.
- II. The way how to attain it.

By WILLIAM GUTHRIE,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT NEW-KIL-
MARNOCK, SCOTLAND.

—ALSO—
THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

2 Pet. i. 10. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves; how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Song vi. 3. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

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T H E
L I F E O F T H E
A U T H O R,
B Y T H E

REVEREND MR. ROBERT TRAIL.

MR. William Guthrie was the eldest son of a country gentleman in the shire of Angus in Scotland, of a good family, and of a competent estate. After he had passed his course of philosophy at the university of St. Andrews, he went to the new college there, where theology and the Hebrew are taught by several professors. And it was then no rare thing for young gentlemen that had no design of engaging themselves in any of the three learned professions of law, physic, or divinity, to spend some time at that college. Then and there it pleased the Lord, who had separated him from his mother's womb, to call him by his grace, by the ministry of excellent Mr. Samuel Rutherford, and this young gentleman became one of the first fruits of his ministry at St. Andrews. His conversion was begun with great terrors of God on his soul, and was compleated with that joy and peace in believing, that did accompany him through his life. Upon this blessed change wrought in him, he did immediately resolve to obey the call of God, to

serve him in the ministry of the gospel, which was given him with the Lord's calling him effectually to grace and glory. And he did for this end so dispose of his outward estate (of which he was born heir) as not to be entangled with the affairs of this life. After some time spent in study, he was called to preach, and quickly after was settled in a congregation in the west of Scotland, and did shine in that place, till a few months before his death, that he was driven away by persecution, in 1665. In this place, he labored with great diligence, and with no less success, as himself owned to the Lord's praise, when he said, That there was hardly any under his charge, but were brought to make a fair profession of godliness, and had the worship of God in their families; and it was well known, that many of them were sincere, and not a few of them eminent christians. The love he had to his people made him stiffly refuse all calls and invitations to Glasgow, or Edinburgh, or Stirling, where his own cousin, grave Mr. James Guthrie, was minister (afterwards Christ's faithful martyr, whom I saw die in and for the Lord, at Edinburgh, June 1st, 1661) and pleaded much in a general assembly, that he might have his ministry in that city, which was malignant and profane at that time. But all to no purpose. In this place, though an obscure one, but by his ministry, he spent all his few days. I have heard several judicious ministers and christians observe this of him, that whereas many wor-

thy ministers have outlived their zeal, the vigour of their gifts, and their acceptance with the godly, this blessed man rather increased in all these to the last.

His stature was tall and slender, his aspect grave. His natural temper was chearful, witty and facetious, yet tempered with gravity, becoming a minister of Christ. His gifts were great, strong natural parts, a clear head, and a sound heart. His voice was of the best sort; loud, and yet managed with charming cadencies and elevations. His oratory singular, and by it he was master of the passions of his hearers. His action in preaching was more than ordinary; yet was it all decent and taking in him. I have oft thought him in this, the likest to the famous Mr. John Rogers of Dedham in Essex, by the character I had of him by many; and especially from his kinsman, Mr. William Jenkyn, who died Christ's prisoner in Newgate 1684.

In preaching, praying, dealing with distressed consciences, and in pleading for the cause of God in the assemblies of ministers, he was eminent, and generally so esteemed in his day, which I do well remember.

I have heard many passages of God's presence with him, and of his blessing of his labours, which I forbear to mention; both because it is unfit to give a long preface to a short book; and because I am not without hope, that some

will think it fit to make this great man better known.

The main humbling thing, that attended him (next to the apostasy in the land, and cruel persecution of the church of Christ in it) was a crazy body, afflicted much with the stone, and at last with an ulcer in his kidneys, which brought him to his grave in 1665, when he had lived little above forty two years.

This was the man that the rulers in Scotland could not then bear. But though the love and esteem, that most of the neighbouring nobility and gentry bare to him, did prevail, for a year or two, to preserve him in his place, after many of his brethren were cast out; yet at length, a part of the king's guards was sent to turn him out, and to put a stranger in his place. Unto which violence, he gave way; and went on a visit to his friends, where he was quickly seized with a fit of his distemper, and died in 1665, in Angus. I have oft seen him, conversed with him, and have heard him preach: and if my youth then did make me an unfit judge of his real great worth; yet his name was so famous, his ministry so followed, especially in his last two or three years, by many ejected ministers, and so many desolate congregations (and both were multiplied in fatal 1662) that I do but declare what was then the common sense of thousands in Scotland, that Mr. Guthrie was every way an eminent gospel minister. I had also a special advantage for knowing the spirit of this great man: my own

honored father and he kept for many years a constant weekly correspondence by letters; many of which from Mr. Guthrie to my father, I did peruse, and several of them I have still by me, writ by his own hand.

This little book having past so many impressions, both in Scotland and England, within the last ninety years (for it is near that time, since it first was printed) and being commended by the acceptance of the saints, needed nothing more, especially from so obscure a hand, to recommend it. But having known the author, I would willingly acquaint the world with somewhat of his character, after one hint about his book. It is to this author we owe the first motion of personal covenanting with God. We have heard more, far more, of making national covenants for reformation; and of church covenants for mutual gospel fellowship, than we have seen of the keeping of them. But Mr. Guthrie first wrote of personal covenanting, as far as ever I can learn: and that not till he had consulted many both ministers and christians. He having opened the door, several have followed, but *non possibus æquis*; and by the length and artificial method in their schemes of such covenants, have put the practisers thereof in no small danger of running the matter into a dry formality, the bane of all holy things. But it is plain that this author designed nothing in his short form of words but to close the act of saving faith in

Christ, in such expressions as suit the experience of every believer.

This was the great man, the author of this small book; and it is all that he ever published. Some small scraps of some of his sermons I have seen in print, published many years after his death, by some honest, but injudicious hand, that declare little of the true spirit of the author. This much I have said at a slender desire of the reprinter of the book, as judging it both my duty and my honor, to declare what I have seen and heard of this excellent person. And if any think strange, that I, who am none of the oldest of men, can so freely give a character of a person, who hath been near forty years dead; I can tell them, that besides the commonness of this same judgment of him with thousands in the west of Scotland to this day (of whom many will censure this account as very lame and defective) I have one record by me in writing for several years, some singular things concerning him, which I forbear to publish.

R O. T R A I L.

LONDON; JAN. 30, 1704-5.

R E A D E R.

Christian Reader,

WHILE the generality of men, especially in these days, by their eager pursuit after low and base interests, have proclaimed as upon the house-tops, how much they have forgotten to make choice of that better part, which, if chosen, should never be taken from them; I have made an essay, such as it is, in the following treatise, to take thee off from this unprofitable, though painful, pursuit, by proposing the chiefest of interests, even the christian's great interest, to be constantly pondered and constantly pursued by thee. Thou mayst think it strange to see any thing in print from my pen (as indeed it is a surprise to myself) but necessity hath made me, for this once, offer so much violence to my own inclination, in regard that some, without my knowledge, have lately published some imperfect notes of a few of my sermons, most confusedly cast together, prefixing withal this vain title, as displeasing to myself as the publishing of the thing, a clear attractive warming beam, &c. Upon this occasion was I prevailed with to publish this little piece, wherein I have purposely used a most homely and plain stile, lest otherwise (though when I have stretched myself to the utmost, I am below the judicious and more understanding; I should be above the reach of

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the rude and ignorant, whose advantage I have mainly, if not only, consulted: I have likewise studied brevity in every thing, so far as I have conceived it to be consistent with plainness and perspicuity; knowing that the persons to whom I address myself herein have neither much money to spend upon books, nor much time to spare upon reading. If thou be a rigid critic, I know thou mayst meet with several things to carp at; yet assure thyself I had no design to offend thee, neither will thy simple approbation satisfy me; it is thy edification I intend, together with the incitements of some others more expert and experienced in this excellent subject, to handle the same at greater length, which I have more briefly hinted at, who am,

Thy servant,

in the work of the gospel,

WILLIAM GUTHRIE.

T H E

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THE
CHRISTIAN'S
GREAT INTEREST.

THE
INTRODUCTION.

SINCE there be so many people living under the ordinances, pretending, without ground, to a special interest in Christ, and to his favor and salvation, as is clear, Mat. vii. 22, 23. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Mat. xxv. 11, 12. "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us: but he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not." Luke xiii. 24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." And since many who have good ground of claim to Christ are not established in the confidence of his favor, but

remain in the dark, without comfort, hesitating concerning the reality of godliness in themselves, and speaking little to the commendation of religion to others, especially in the time of their straits; I shall speak a little to two things of greatest concernment; the one is, how a person shall know if he hath a true and special interest in Christ? and whether he doth lay just claim to God's favor and salvation? The other is, In case a person fall short in the fore-said trial, what course he shall take for making sure God's friendship and salvation to himself?

P A R T I.

THE TRIAL OF A SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST.

HOW SHALL A MAN KNOW IF HE HATH A TRUE AND SPECIAL INTEREST IN CHRIST? AND WHETHER HE HATH OR MAY LAY CLAIM JUSTLY TO GOD'S FAVOR AND SALVATION.

C H A P. I.

A man's interest in Christ may be known: it is a matter of the highest importance; and is to be determined by scripture.

BEFORE we speak directly to the question, we shall consider some things, to make way for the answer.

First, That a man's interest in Christ, or his gracious state, may be known, and that with more certainty than people do conjecture; yea, and the knowledge of it may be more easily attained unto than many do imagine: for not only hath the Lord commanded men to know their interest in him, as a thing attainable, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in faith, &c." 2 Pet. i. 10 "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure, &c." but many of the saints have attained unto the clear persuasion of their interest in Christ,

and in God as their own God. How often do they call him their God and their portion? and how persuaded is Paul, "that nothing can separate him from the love of God?" Rom. viii. 38, 39. Therefore the knowledge of a man's gracious state is attainable.

And this knowledge of it, which may be attained, is no fancy and bare conceit, but it is most sure: "Doubtless thou art our father," saith the prophet, in name of the church, Isa. lxiii. 16. It is clear thus; 1. That can be no fancy, but a very sure knowledge, which doth yield to a rational man comfort in most real straits; but so doth this; 1 Sam. xxx. 6. when the people spake of stoning David, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Psal. iii. 6. he saith there, he will not be afraid of ten thousands that rise against him. Compare these words with verse 3. of that psalm, "But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." Psal. xxvii. 1, 3. "The Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." 2. That is a sure knowledge of a thing which maketh a wise merchant sell all he hath, that he may keep it sure; that maketh a man forego children, lands, life, and suffer the spoiling of all joyfully: but so doth this, Mat. xiii. 44. Mark x. 28, 29. Heb. x. 34. Rom. v. 3. Acts

v. 41. 3. That must be a sure and certain knowledge, and no fancy, whereupon a man voluntarily and freely doth adventure his soul, when he is stepping into eternity, with this word in his mouth, This is all my desire: but such a knowledge is this, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

And again, not only may a godly man come to the sure knowledge of his gracious state, but it is more easily attainable than many do apprehend. For supposing, what shall be afterwards proved, that a man may know the gracious work of God's spirit in himself; if he will but argue rationally from thence, he shall be forced to conclude his interest in Christ, unless he deny clear scripture truths. I shall only make use of one here, because we are to speak more directly to this afterwards. A godly man may argue thus; whosoever receive Christ are justly reputed the children of God, John i. 12. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God;" but I have received Christ all the ways which the word there can import; for I please the device of salvation by Christ, I agree to the terms, I welcome the offer of Christ in all his offices, as a king to rule over me, a priest to offer and intercede for me, a prophet to teach me; I lay out my heart for him and towards him, resting on him as I am able; what else can be meant by the word receiving? therefore may I say and conclude plainly and warrantably, I am justly to reckon myself God's child, according

to the foresaid scripture, which cannot fail.

The second thing to be considered is, That a man be savingly in covenant with God is a matter of highest importance, it is his life, Deut. xxxii. 47. and yet very few have or seek after a saving interest in the covenant, and many foolishly think they have such a thing without any solid ground, Mat. vii. 14. few find or walk in the narrow way. This should alarm people to be serious about the matter, since it is of so great consequence to be in Christ; and since there be but few that may lay just claim to him: and yet many do foolishly fancy an interest in him, who are deceived by a false confidence, as the foolish virgins do, Mat. xxv.

The third thing to be considered is, men must resolve to be determined by scripture in this matter of their interest in Christ. The spirit speaking in the scripture is judge of all controversies, Isa. viii. 20. "To the law and to the testimony: If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them:" and of this also, whether a man be savingly in covenant with God or not? therefore do not mock God, whilst you seem to search after such a thing. If we prove from scripture, which is the uncontroverted rule, that you are gracious, and have stricken covenant savingly with God; then resolve to grant as much, and to agree in it. And if the contrary appear, let there be a determination of the controversy, else you do but mock the Lord, and

so your bands shall be made strong, Isa. xlviii. 22. for a jot of his word cannot fail, Mat. v. 18. Therefore seek eye-salve from Christ to judge of things, according as the word of God shall discover them to be.

CHAP. II.

Reasons why so few come to the clear knowledge of their interest in Christ.

THE fourth thing to be considered is, although the matter of a man's interest in Christ be of so great importance, and the way to attain to the knowledge of it so plainly held forth in the scriptures; yet there be but few who reach the distinct knowledge of it. And that this may not discourage any person from attempting it, I shall hint some few reasons why so few come to the clear knowledge of it; which will also prepare the way for what is to be spoken afterwards.

The first thing which doth hinder many from the knowledge of their interest in Christ, is their ignorance of some special principles of religion: as, 1. That it was free love in God's bosom, and nothing in man, that moved him to send a saviour to perfect the work of redemption, John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son." Men are still seeking some ground for that business in themselves, which leads away from suitable and

high apprehensions of the first spring and rise of God's covenant favor to his people, which hath no reason, cause or motive in us ; and so they cannot come to the knowledge of their interest.

II. They are ignorant how that love doth effectually discover itself to a man's heart, so as he hath ground to lay claim to it, viz. that ordinarily it doth first discover his broken state in himself, because of sin and corruption, defiling the whole man, and any thing in him that might be called a righteousness : all these things are loss and dung, Philip. iii. 6, 7, 8. Secondly, it discovereth Christ as the full and satisfying treasure above all things : the man finds a treasure, for which, with joy, he selleth all, &c. Mat. xiii. 44, 46. Thirdly, it determineth the heart, and causeth it to approach unto a living God in the ordinances, Psal. lxxv. 4. " Blessed is the man whom thou chusest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts ;" and causeth the heart to wait upon him, and him alone, Psal. lxxii. 5. " My soul, wait thou only upon God." Thus having dropped in the seed of God in the heart, and formed Christ there, Gal. iv. 19. the heart is changed and made new in the foresaid work, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. and God's law is so stamped upon the heart in that change, Jer. xxxi. 33. that the whole yoke of Christ is commended to the man without exception, Rom. vii. 12, 16. the law is acknowledged good, holy, just and spiritual. Upon all which, from that new

principle of life, there flow out acts of a new life. Gal. v. 6. " faith worketh by love," Rom. vi. 18, 22. and the man becometh a servant of righteousness and unto God ; which doth especially appear in the spirituality of worship, John iv. 24. Rom. vii. 6. men then " serve God in spirit and truth ; and in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the latter ;" and tenderness in all manner of conversation : the man then " exerciseth himself how to keep a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man, Acts. xxiv. 16. Now, this way doth the love of God discover itself unto man, and acteth on him, so as he hath ground of laying some good claim to it ; so as he may justly think that the love which sent a saviour, had respect to such a man as hath found these things made out unto him. Surely ignorance in this doth hinder many from the knowledge of their interest in Christ ; for if a man know not how God worketh with a person, so as he may justly lay claim to his love, which was from eternity, he will wander in the dark, and not come to the knowledge of an interest in him.

III. Many are also ignorant of this, that God alone is the hope of his people : He is called " the hope of Israel," Jer. xiv. 8. Although inherent qualifications are evidences of it, yet the staying of the heart upon him as a full blessing and satisfying portion, is faith, 1 Pet. i. 21. " the faith and hope must be in God," and the only proper condition which

giveth right to the saving blessings of the covenant, Rom. iv. 5. "To him that worketh not, but believeth—faith is counted for righteousness." Indeed if any person take liberty here, and turn grace into wantonness, there is, without doubt, in so far a delusion; since there is mercy with him, upon condition that it conciliate fear to him, Psal. cxxx, iv. Yea, hardly can any man, who hath found the fore-said expressions of God's love made out upon him, make a cloke of the covenant for sinful liberty, without some measure of a spiritual conflict; in this respect, "he that is born of God doth not sin," and "he who doth so sin, hath not seen God," 1 John iii. 6, 9. I say, God is the hope of his people, and not their own holiness. If they intend honesty, and long seriously to be like unto him, many failings should not weaken their hope and confidence, for it is in him who changeth not, Mal. iii. 6. "And if any man sinneth, he hath an advocate," 1 John ii. 1. Now, when men place their hope in any other thing beside the Lord, it is no wonder they be kept in a staggering condition according to the changes of the thing which they make the ground of their hope, since they give not to God the glory due to his name, and which he will not give to another: compare Psal. ix. 10. "They who know thy name, will put their trust in thee," with Isa. xlii. 8. "My glory will I not give to another: I am the Lord, that is my name."

IV. Many are ignorant of the different ways

and degrees of God's working with his people, and this doth much darken their knowledge and reflex acts of their interest in him. This ignorance doth run mainly on three heads. 1. They are ignorant of the different degrees and ways of that law-work, which ordinarily dealeth with men, and of the different ways how the Lord bringeth home people at first to Christ. They consider not that the jailor is not kept an hour in bondage, Acts xvi. Paul is kept in suspense three days, Acts ix. Zaccheus not one moment, Luke xix. They are ignorant of, at least they do not consider, how different the degrees of sanctification are in the saints, and the honorable appearings thereof before men in some, and the sad blemishings thereof in others. Some are very blameless and more free of gross outbreakings, adorning their profession much, as Job, Job i. and Zacheriah, Luke i. These are said to be "perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil; righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless." Others were subject to very gross and sad evils, as Solomon, Asa, &c. 3. They are ignorant of the different communications of God's face, and expressions of his presence: some do walk much in the light of God's countenance, and are much in sensible fellowship with him, as David was; others are "all their days kept in bondage through fear of death," Heb. ii. 15. Surely the ignorance of the different ways of God's working

and dealing with his people, doth very much darken the knowledge of their interest in him, whilst they usually stint the Lord to one way of working, which he doth not keep, as we have shewed in the former examples.

The second thing which doth darken men about their interest in Christ, is, there is one thing or other, wherein their heart, in some respect, doth condemn them, as dealing deceitfully and guilefully with God : it is not to be expected, that these can come to clearness about their interest, whose heart doth condemn them for keeping up some known transgression against the Lord, which they will not let go, neither are using the means which they know to be appointed by God for delivering them from it : neither can these come to clearness, who know some positive duty commanded them in their stations, which they deceitfully shift and shun, not closing cheerfully with it, or not willing to be led into it ; these are also, in some respect, condemned of their own heart, as the former sort ; and in that case, it is difficult to come to a distinct knowledge of their state.

1 John ii. 21. " If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." It is supposed there, that a self-condemning heart maketh void a man's confidence proportionally before God.

I do not deny but that men may, on good grounds, plead an interest in Christ, in the case of prevailing iniquity. Psal. lxxv. 3. " Iniquities prevail against me ; as for our trans-

gressions, thou shalt purge them away." Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25. " I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members : O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh, the law of sin." But it is hard to be attained, if at all attainable, when the heart is dealing deceitfully, and entertaining known guile in a particular : therefore let people clear themselves of the particular which they know too well. It is the thing which doth meet them, marring their confidence and access in all their approaches unto God ; see Judges x. 10—13. The idolatries of the people are cast up to them by the Lord, and their suit rejected thereupon. That which draweth away the heart first in the morning, and last at night, like " an oven heated at night, and it burneth as a flaming fire in the morning," spoken of the wicked, Hos. vii. 6. and taketh up their thoughts often on their bed ; as it is said of some, Psal. xxxvi. 4. he deviseth mischief upon his bed, &c." that which doth lead away the heart in time of religious duty ordinarily, and the remembrance of which hath power to enliven and quicken the spirits, more than the remembrance of God, so as their heart is after the heart of some detestable thing, Ezek. xi. 21. that which withstand-

eth men when they would grip the promise, as God casteth up men's sins to them who are meddling with his covenant, Psal. l. 16, 17. "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth, &c?" That is the thing that doth mar the knowledge of a gracious state; let it go, and it will be more easy to reach the knowledge of an interest in Christ.

The third thing which hindereth the knowledge of an interest in Christ, is a spirit of sloth, and careless negligence in many. They complain that they know not whether they be in Christ or not: but, as few take pains to be in him, so few take pains to try if they be in him. It is a work and business which cannot be done sleeping, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, &c. The several words used there, viz. Examine, prove, know, say that there is a labor in it: diligence must be used to make our calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. It is a business above flesh and blood; the "holy anointing which teacheth all things," 1 John ii. 20, 27. "must make us know the things freely given us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12. Shall the Lord impart a business of so great concernment, and not so much "as be enquired after to do it not men?" Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Be ashamed, you who spend so much time in reading of romances, and adorning your persons, in hawking and hunting, in consulting the law about your outward

state in the world, and it may be in worse things than these; be ashamed that you spend so little time in the search of this, whether you be an heir of glory or not? whether you be in the way that leadeth to heaven, or that way which will land you in darkness for ever? You who judge this below you, and unworthy of your pains, any part or minute of your time; it is like, in God's account, you have judged yourselves "unworthy of everlasting life," so as you shall have no lot with God's people in this matter.

The fourth thing that doth darken the knowledge of an interest in Christ, is men do not condescend upon what would satisfy them: they complain that God will not shew unto them what he is about to do with them; but cannot yet say, they know what would satisfy about his purpose. This is a sad thing. Shall we think those are serious who have never, as yet, pitched on what would satisfy them, nor are making earnest enquiry after what should satisfy? If the Lord had left us in the dark in that matter, we were less excusable: but since the grounds of satisfaction and the true marks of an interest in Christ, are so clear and frequent in scripture, and so many things written, that our joy may be full, 1 John i. 14. and that those who believe may know that they have eternal life, 1 John v. 13. and since he that believeth hath a witness of it in himself, 1 John v. 10. none can pretend excuse here: we may not here insist to shew what may and

should satisfy about our interest, since we are to speak directly to it afterwards.

The fifth thing that helpeth much to keep men in the dark about their interest in Christ, is, they pitch upon some mutable grounds, which are not so opposite proofs of the truth of an interest in Christ, as of the comfortable state of triumphing soul sailing before the wind; and marks, which I grant are precious in themselves, and do make out an interest clearly where they are, yet they are such as without which an interest in Christ may be, and be known also in a good measure: we shall touch a few of them.

I. Some think that all who have a true interest in him are above the prevailing power of every sin; but this is contrary to that of Psal. lxxv. 3. "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away;" where we find that holy man laying just claim to pardon, in the case of prevailing iniquity: and that of Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25, where "Paul thanketh God through Christ, as freed from the condemnation of the law, even whilst a law in his members leadeth captive unto sin."

II. Some think that all true saints have constantly access unto God in prayer, and sensible returns of prayer at all times; but this is contrary to the many sad exercises of his people, complaining often that they are not heard nor regarded of God, Psal. xlii. 1. "how long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? how

long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Psal. xxii. 1, 2, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent."

III. Some think that all who have any true interest in him, have God witnessing the same unto them by a high operation of that witnessing spirit of his spoken of, Rom. viii. 16. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God;" whereof afterwards; and so they still suspect their own interest in Christ, because of the want of this. But they do not remember that they must first believe and give credit to that record which God hath given of his Son, that there is life enough in him for men, 1 John v. 10, 11. and then look for the seal and witness of the spirit, Eph. i. 13. "In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, &c." As long as people hold fast these principles and the like, they can hardly come to the knowledge of their gracious state, which God hath warranted his people to prove and clear up to themselves, otherways than by these foresaid things.

C H A P. III.

Some mistakes concerning an interest in Christ removed.

THE fifth thing to be considered is, the removal of some mistakes whereinto people may readily run themselves, when we are about to prove their interest in Christ:

As, I. It is a mistake to think, that every one who is in Christ doth know that he is in him; for many are truly gracious, and have a good title to eternal life, who do not know so much, until it be made out afterwards, 1 John v. 13. "These things are written to believers, that they may know they have a true title to eternal life;" that is, that they may know they are believers, and so it is supposed they knew it not before.

II. It is a mistake to think, that all who come to the knowledge of their interest in Christ do attain an equal certainty about the same. One may say, "He is persuaded nothing present, or to come, can separate him from the love of God," Rom. viii. 38. Another cometh but this length, "I believe, help my unbelief," Mark. ix. 24.

III. It is a mistake to think, that every one who attaineth a strong persuasion of his interest doth always hold there; for he who to-day may say of the Lord, he is his refuge, Psal. xci. 22. and his portion, Psal. cxix. 57. will at another time say, he is cut off, Psal. xxxi. 22. and will ask if the truth of God's promise doth fail for evermore? Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9.

IV. It is also a mistake to think, that every one who doth attain a good knowledge of their gracious state, can formally answer all objections made to the contrary; but yet they may hold fast the conclusion, and say, "I know whom I have believed," 2 Tim. i. 12. There be few grounds of the christian religion, whereof many people are so persuaded, as that they are able to maintain them formally against all arguments brought to the contrary; and yet they may and will hold the conclusion steadfastly and justly: so it is in this case in hand.

V. It is no less a mistake to imagine, that the vain, groundless confidence, which many profane ignorant atheists do maintain, is this knowledge of an interest in Christ which we plead for. Many do falsely avow him to be their father, John viii. 41. and many look for heaven, who will be beguiled with those foolish virgins, Math. xxv. 12. yet we must not think because of this, that all knowledge of an interest is a delusion and fancy, although these fools be deceived; for whilst thousands are deluded, some can say on good and solid grounds, "we know that we are of God, and that the whole world lyeth in wickedness," 1 John v. 19.

C H A P. IV.

The ways by which the Lord draweth some to Christ, without a sensible preparatory law-work.

HAVING considered these things, it now followeth that we give some marks, by

which a man may know if he be savingly in covenant with God, and hath a special interest in Christ, so as he may warrantably lay claim to God's favor and salvation. We shall only pitch upon two great and principal marks, not willing to trouble people with many.

But before we fall upon these, we will speak of a preparatory work of the law, whereof the Lord doth ordinarily make use, to prepare his own way in men's souls. This may have its own weight, as a mark, with some persons. It is called, the work of the law, or, the work of humiliation. It hath some proportion to that spirit of bondage, Rom. viii. 15. and doth now under the New Testament, answer unto it, and usually leadeth on to the spirit of adoption.

Only here let it be remembered, 1. That we are not to speak of this preparatory work of the law, as a negative mark of a true interest in Christ, as if none might lay claim to God's favor, who hath not had this preparatory work in the several steps of it, as we are to speak of it; for, as we shall hear, the Lord doth not always keep that path with men. 2. The great reason why we speak of it, is, because the Lord dealeth with many, whom he doth effectually call, by some such preparatory work: and to those, who have been so dealt with, it may prove strengthening, and will confirm them in laying the more weight on the marks which follow. 3. It may help to encourage others, who are under such bondage of spirit, as a good prognostic of a gracious work to fol-

low: for, as we shall circumstantiate it, it will be rarely found to miscarry, and fail of a gracious issue. 4. Where God useth such a preparatory work, he doth not keep one way or measure in it, as we shall hear.

For the more distinct handling of this preparatory work, we shall shortly hint the most ordinary ways by which the Lord leadeth people in unto the covenant savingly, and draweth them unto Christ.

First, There are some called from the womb, as John the baptist was, Luke i. xli. 44. or in their very young years, before they can be deeply engaged actively in Satan's ways, as Timothy, 2 Tim. iii. 15. It cannot be supposed that those have such a preparatory work as we are to speak of. And because some persons may pretend to this way of effectual calling, we offer these marks of it, whereby those who have been so called may be confirmed.

I. Such use from their childhood to be kept free of ordinary pollutions, wherewith children usually are defiled; as swearing, lying, mocking of religion and religious persons, &c. Those whom God calleth effectually, he sanctifieth them from the time of that effectual calling: sin cannot have dominion over them as over others, "because they are under grace," Rom. vi. 14.

II. Religion is, as it were, natural to them; I mean, they need not be much pressed to religious duties, even when they are but children; they run willingly that way, because there is

an inward principle of love constraining them, 2 Cor. v. 14. so as they yield themselves servants of righteousness, without outward constraint; Rom. vi. 16.

III. Although such know not when they were first acquainted with God, yet they have afterwards such exercises of spirit befalling, as the saints in scripture, of whose first conversion we hear not, do speak of. They are shut out from God, upon some occasion now and then, and are admitted to come nearer again to their apprehension: their heart is also further broken up by the ordinances, as is said of Lydia, Acts xvi. 14. And ordinarily they do remember, when some special bit of religion and duty, or when some sin, of which they were not taking notice before, was discovered to them. They who can apply these things to themselves, have much to say for their effectual calling from their youth.

Secondly, Some are brought in to Christ in a sovereign gospel-way, when the Lord, by some few words of love swallowing up any law-work, quickly taketh a person prisoner at the first, as he did Zaccheus, Luke xix. and others, who, upon a word spoken by Christ, did leave all and follow him; and we hear no noise of a law-work dealing with them before they close with Christ Jesus.

And because some may pretend to this way of calling, we shall touch some things most remarkable in that transaction with Zaccheus, for their clearing and confirmation. 1. He had

some desire to see Christ, and such a desire, as made him wave that which some would have judged prudence and discretion, whilst he climb-eth up upon a tree that he might see him. 2. Christ spake to his heart, and that word took such hold upon him, that presently with joy he did accept of Christ's offer, and closeth with Christ as Lord, whilst few of any note were following him. 3. Upon this his heart doth open to the poor, although, it seems, he was a covetous man before. 4. He hath a due impression of his former ways, evidencing his respect to Moses his law; and this he doth signify before all the company then present, not caring to shame himself in such things as probably were notour to the world. 5. Upon all these things, Christ confirmeth and ratifieth the bargain by his word; recommending to him that unity of interest, which behoved to be between him and the saints, and the thoughts of his own lost condition, if Christ had not come and sought him, and found him: all which are clear, Luke xix. 3—10.

We grant the Lord calleth some so; and if any can lay claim to the special things we have now hinted, they have a good confirmation of God's dealing with them, from that scripture; neither are they to vex themselves because of the want of a distinct preparatory law-work, if their heart hath yielded unto Christ; for a law-work is not desirable, except for this end. Therefore Christ doth offer himself directly in the scripture, and people are invited to come to

him: and although many will not come to him who is the cautioner, until the spirit of bondage distress them for their debt; yet if any, upon the knowledge of their lost estate, would flee and yield to Christ, none might warrantably press a law-work upon them.

As for others, whom Christ persuaded by a word to follow him; whatsoever he did, or howsoever he spake to them at his first meeting with them, we must rationally suppose, that then he discovered so much of their own necessity, and his own fulness and excellency to them, as made them quit all, and run after him: and if he do so to any, we crave no more, since there is room enough there for the physician.

So that from all this, as some may be confirmed and strengthened, with whom God hath so dealt; so there is no ground nor occasion for deluded souls to flatter themselves in their condition, who remain ignorant and senseless of their own miseries and Christ's all-sufficiency, and hold fast deceit.

Thirdly, there are some brought in to Christ in a way yet more declarative of his free grace; and this is, when he effectually calleth men at the hour of death. We find somewhat recorded of this way in that pregnant example of the thief on the cross, Luke xxiii. 39—43. Although this seems not very pertinent for the purpose in hand; yet we shall speak a little of it, that on the one hand men may be sparing to judge and pass sentence upon either themselves or others, before the last gasp; and we shall so

circumstantiate it, that on the other hand none may dare to delay so great a business to the last hour of their life.

We find these things remarkable in that business between Christ and the thief. 1. The man falleth at odds with his former companion. 2. He dareth not speak a wrong word of God, whose hand is on him, but justifieth him in all that is befallen him. 3. He now seeth Jesus Christ persecuted by the world, without a cause, and most injuriously. 4. He discovereth Christ to be a Lord and a king, whilst his enemies seem to have him at under. 5. He believeth a being of glory after death so really, that he preferreth a portion of it to the present safety of his bodily life, while he knew Christ was able to grant to him at that time, and he might have chosen that with the other thief. 6. Although he was much abased in himself, and so humbled, that he pleaded but that Christ would remember him; yet he was nobly daring to throw himself upon the covenant, on life and death; and he had so much faith of Christ's all-sufficiency, that he judged a simple remembrance from Christ would satisfyingly do his business. 7. He acquiesced sweetly in the word which Christ spake to him, for the ground of his comfort. All which are very clear in the case of that poor dying man, and do prove a very real work of God upon his heart.

As this example may encourage some to wait for good from God, who cannot as yet lay

clear claim to any gracious work of his spirit; so we obtest all, as they love their souls, not to delay their souls business, hoping for such a cast of Christ's hand in the end, as too many do; this being a rare miracle of mercy, with the glory whereof Christ did honorably triumph over the ignominy of his cross; a parallel of which we shall hardly find in all the scripture beside. Yea, as there be but few at all saved, Mat. xx. 16. "Many be called, but few chosen;" and most few saved this way; so the Lord hath peremptorily threatened to laugh at the calamity, and not to hear the cry of such as mocked formerly at his reproof, and would not hear when he called to them, Prov. i. 24, 25, 26. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." Which scripture, although it doth not shut mercy's door upon any, who at the hour of death do sincerely judge themselves, and flee to Christ, as this penitent thief did; yet it is certain, it implieth that very few, who sit the offer until then, are honored with repentance as he was: and so their cry, as not being sincere, and of the right stamp, shall not be heard.

C H A P. V.

The work of the law by which the Lord prepares his way into men's souls; which is either more violent and sudden, or more calm and gradual.

THE fourth and most ordinary way by which many are brought into Christ, is, by a clear and discernible work of the law, and humiliation; which we ordinarily call the spirit of bondage, as was hinted before. We do not mean that every one, whose conscience is wakened with sin and fear of wrath, doth really close with Christ; the contrary doth appear in Cain, Saul, Judas, &c. But there is a conviction of sin, a wakening of conscience, and work of humiliation, which, as we shall circumstantiate it, doth rarely miscarry, or fail of a gracious issue; but ordinarily doth resolve into the spirit of adoption, and a gracious work of God's spirit. And because the Lord dealeth with many sinners this way, and we find that many are much puzzled about the giving judgment of this law-work, we shall speak of it particularly.

This work is either more violent and sudden or it is more calm and gradual, through a greater length of time, and so as the steps of it are very discernible. It is more violent in some, as in the jailor, Paul, and some other converts in the book of the Acts of the apostles, on whom Christ did break in at an instant, and fell on

them as with fire and sword, and led them captive terribly. And because some great legal shakings are deceitful, and turn to nothing, if not worse; we shall point at some things remarkable in these converts spoken of before, which did prove the work of the law on them to have had a gracious issue and result. I. Some word of truth or dispensation putteth the person to a dreadful stand, with a great stir in the soul. Some are pricked in heart, Acts ii. 37. Some fall on trembling, Acts xvi. 29. And this is such a stir, that the person is brought to his end: "What wilt thou have me to do?" saith Paul, Acts ix. 6. "What must I do to be saved?" saith the jailor, Acts xvi. 30. II. The person is content to have salvation and God's friendship on any terms, as the question does import, "What shall I do?" As if he had said, what would I not do? what would I not forego? what would I not undergo? III. The person accepteth the condition offered by Christ and his servants, as is clear in the forecited scriptures. IV. The person presently becometh of one interest with the saints, joining himself with that persecuted society, putting respect on those whom he had formerly persecuted, joining and continuing with them in the profession of Christ on all hazards. Those with whom the Lord hath so dealt, have much to say for a gracious work of God's spirit in them; and it is like, many of them can date their work from such a particular time and word, or dispensation, and can give some account of what past between

God and them, and of a sensible change following in them from that time forward; as Paul giveth an account of the work and way of God with him afterwards, Acts xxii.

Again, the Lord sometimes carrieth on this work more calmly, softly and gradually, protracting it so, as the several steps of men's exercise under it are very discernable. It would draw a great length to enlarge every step of it; we shall touch the most observable things in it:

I. The Lord layeth siege to men, who, it may be, have often refused to yield to him, offering himself in the ordinances; and by some word preached, read, or borne in on the mind, or by some providence leading in unto the word, he doth assault the house kept peaceable by the strong man, the devil; and thus Christ, who is the stronger man, cometh upon him, Luke xi. 22. and, by the spirit of truth, doth fasten the word on the man, in which God's curse is denounceth against such and such sins, whereof the man knoweth himself guilty. The spirit convinceth the man, and bindeth it upon him, that he is the same person against whom the word of God doth speak, because he is guilty of such sins; and from some sins the man is led on to see more, until ordinarily he come to see the sins of his youth, sins of omission, &c. Yea, he is led on, until he see himself guilty almost of the breach of the whole law; he seeth "innumerable evils compassing him," as David speaketh in a fit of exercise, Psal. xl.

22. A man sometimes will see ugly sights of sin in this case, and is sharp sighted to reckon a sinfulness to every sin almost. Thus "the spirit convinceth of sin," John xvi. 8.

II. The Lord shaketh a special strong hold in the garison, a refuge of lies, to which the man betaketh himself when his sins are thus discovered to him. The poor man pretendeth to faith in Christ, whereby he thinks his burden is taken off him, as the Pharisees said, John viii. 41. "We have one Father even God;" they pretend to a special relation to God as a common Lord. The spirit of God beats the man from this by the truth of the scripture, proving that he hath no true faith, and so no interest in Christ, nor any true saving grace; shewing clear differences between true grace and the counterfeit fancies which the man hath in him; and between him and the truly godly, as Christ laboureth to do to those in John viii. 42, 44. "If God were your Father, ye would love me. Ye are of the devil, for ye do the lusts of such a father." So, fear surpriseth the hypocrite in heart, Isa. xxxiii. 14. especially when the Lord discovereth to him conditions in many of these promises, wherein he trusted most, not easily attainable; he now seeth grace and faith another thing than once he judged them to be. We may, in some respect, apply that word here, "the spirit convinceth him of sin, because he hath not believed on the Son:" he is particularly convinced of unbelief, John xvi. 9. He seeth now a huge distance between

himself and the godly, who he thought before outstripped him only in some unnecessary, proud, hateful preciseness; he now seeth himself de-huded, and in the broad way with the perishing multitude; and so, in this sight of his misery, coucheth down under his own burden, which before this time, he thought Christ did bear for him: he now beginneth to scar at the promises, because of that and such other words, "what hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth, &c." Psal. l. 16.

III. The man becometh careful about his salvation, and beginneth to take it to heart, as the one thing necessary; he is brought to this with the jailor, Acts xvi. 30. "What shall I do to be saved?" his salvation becometh the leading thing with him: it was least in his thoughts before; but now it prevaieth, and other things are much disregarded by him. Since his soul is ready to perish, "What shall it profit him to gain the world, if he lose his soul?" Mat. xvi. 26. Some here are much puzzled with the thoughts of an irrevocable decree to their prejudice, and with the fears of uncertain death, which may attack them before they get matters put to a point; and some are vexed with apprehensions, that they are guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is unpardonable, and so are driven a dangerous length, satan still casting up to them many sad examples of people, who have dolefully put an end to their own exercise: but they are in hand of one, who "knoweth how to the

succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 18.

IV. When a man is thus in hazard of miscarrying, the Lord useth a work of preventing mercy towards him, quietly and underhand supporting him; and this is by bearing in upon his mind the possibility of his salvation, leading the man to the remembrance of pregnant proofs of God's free and rich grace, pardoning gross transgressions, such as Manasseh, who was a bloody idolatrous man, and had correspondence with the devil, and yet obtained mercy, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13. and other scriptures bearing offers of grace and favor indifferently to all who will yield to Christ, whatsoever they have been formerly; so as the man is brought again to this, "What shall I do to be saved?" which doth suppose, that he apprehendeth a possibility of being saved, else he would not propound the question. He applieth that or the like word to himself, "It may be, ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger," Zeph. ii. 3. He findeth nothing excluding him from mercy now, if he have a heart for the thing. Although here, it may be, the man doth not perceive, that it is the Lord who upholdeth, yet afterwards he can tell, that "when his foot was slipping, God's mercy held him up;" as Psal. xciv. 17, 18. the psalmist speaketh in another case. And he will afterwards say, when he was as a beast, and a fool in many respects, God held him by the hand, Psal. lxxiii. 22, 23.

V. After this discovery of a possibility to be

saved, there is a work of desire quickened in the soul; which is clear in the same expression, "What shall I do to be saved?" but sometimes this desire is airted amiss, whilst it goeth out thus, "What shall I do that I may work the works of God?" John vi. 28. In which case the man, formerly perplexed with fear and care about his salvation, would be at some work of his own to extricate himself; and here he suddenly resolveth to do all that is commanded, and to forego every evil way (yet much miskenning Christ Jesus) and so beginneth to take some courage to himself again, "establishing his own righteousness, but not submitting unto the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. Whereupon the Lord maketh a new assault on him, intending the discovery of his absolutely broken state in himself, that so room may be made for the cautioner; as Joshua did to the people, when he found them so bold in their undertakings, Josh. xxiv. 18, 19. "you cannot serve the Lord," saith he, "for he is a holy God, a jealous God," &c. In this new assault the Lord, 1. Bends up against the man the spirituality of the law; the commandment cometh with a new charge in the spiritual meaning of it, Rom. vii. 9. "The law came," saith Paul, viz. in the spiritual meaning of it; Paul had never seen such a sight of the law before. 2. God most holily doth loose the restraining bonds, which he had laid upon the man's corruption, and suffereth it not only to boil and swell within, but to threaten to break out in

all the outward members. Thus sin groweth bold, and kicketh at the law, becometh exceeding sinful, Rom. vii. 8, 9. "But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence: for without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Was then that which is good, made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." 3. The Lord doth discover to the man, more now than ever before, the uncleanness of his righteousness, and what spots are in his best things. These things kill the man, and he dieth in his own conceit, Rom. vii. 9. and despaireth of relief in himself, if it come not from another airth.

VI. After many and ups downs here, ordinarily the man resolveth some retirement; he desireth to be alone, he cannot keep company as before. Like those in a besieged city, who when they see they cannot hold out, and would be glad of any good condition from the besieging enemy, they go to a council, that they may resolve somewhat; so the man here retireth that he may speak with himself. This is like that "communing with our own heart," Psal. iv. 4. Thus God "leadeth to the wilderness, that he may speak to the heart," Hos. ii. 14. When the person is retired, the thoughts of heart, which were scattered in for-

mer steps of the exercise, do more observably throng in here. We shall reduce them into this method. 1. The man thinks of his unhappy folly in bearing arms against God; and here there be large thoughts of former ways, with a blushing countenance and self-loathing. Ezek. xxxvi. 31. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight," &c. like that of Psal. li. 3. His sin is ever before him. 2. Then he remembereth how fair opportunities of yielding to God he hath basely lost; his spirit is like to faint, when he remembereth that; as is said in another case, Psal. xlii. 4, 5, 6. "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted in me?—O my God, my soul is cast down within me."—3. He now thinks of many Christians whom he mocked and despised in his heart, persuading himself now that they are happy, as having chosen the better part; he thinks of the condition of those who wait on Christ as the queen of Sheba did of Solomon's servants; "Happy are thy servants," saith she, "who stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom," 1 Kings x. 8. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, &c. Psal. lxxxiv. 4. He wisheth to be one of the meanest who have any relation to God; as the prodigal son doth speak, he would be as "one of the Father's hired servants," Luke xv. 17, 19. 4. Then he calleth to mind the good report

that is gone abroad of God, according to that testimony, Jonah iv. 2. The prophet knew that God was "a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness," &c. The ~~...~~ and large promises and offers of grace come in here; and the glorious practices which have past upon sinners of all sorts, according to the same of God in scripture. 5. He thinks with himself, why hath God spared me so long! and why have I got such a sight of my sin? and why hath he kept me from breaking prison at my own hand, in choosing some unhappy outgate? why hath he made this strange change on me? It may be it is in his heart to do me good; O that it may be so!—Although all these thoughts be not in the preparatory work of every one, yet they are with many, and very promising where they are.

VII. Upon all these thoughts and meditations the man, more seriously than ever before, resolveth to pray, and to make some essay with God upon life and death; he concludeth, "it can be no worse with him; for if he sit still, he perisheth;" as the lepers speak, 2 Kings vii. 3, 4. He considereth, with the pinched prodigal son, that there is bread enough in his father's house and to spare, whilst he perisheth for want: so he goeth to God, for he knoweth not what else to make of his condition, as the prodigal son doth Luke xv. 17, 18. And it may be, here he resolveth what to speak; but readily things do vary when he is sifted before God as the prodigal son forgot some of

his premeditated prayers, Luke xv. 18, 19, 21. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came unto his father and said unto him, father I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

And now, when he cometh before God, more observably than ever before, I. He be-
ginneeth with "the publican afar off," Luke xviii. 13. with many thorough confessions and self condemnings, whereof he is very liberal, as Luke xv. 21. "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy," &c. II. Now begin his thoughts about the hearing of his prayer, which he was not wont to question much; he now knows what those expressions of the saints about the hearing of their prayers do import. III. It is observable in this address, that there are many broken sentences, like that of Psal. vi. 3. "But thou, O Lord, how long?" supplied with sighs and "groanings which cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26. and greedy looking upward, thereby speaking more than can be well express'd by words. IV. There be ordinarily some interruptions, and, as it were, diversions; the man speaking sometimes to the enemy, sometimes to his own heart, sometimes to the multitude in the world, as David doth in other cases, Psal.

ix. 6. "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end." Psal. xlii. 5. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." Psal. iv. 2. "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?" V. It is observable here, that sometimes the man will halt and be silent, to hear some indistinct whispering of a joyful sound glancing on the mind, or some news in some broken words of scripture, which, it may be, the man scarcely knoweth to be scripture, or whether it is come from God or Satan to delude him; yet this he hath resolved, only to "hear what God the Lord will speak," as, upon another occasion, Psal. lxxxv. 8. VI. More distinct promises come into the man's mind, whereupon he essayeth to lay hold, but is beaten off with objections, as in another case the psalmist is, Psal. xxii. 3, 6. But thou art holy. But I am a worm." Now it is about the dawning of the day with the man, and faith will stir as soon as the Lord imparteth "the joyful sound," Psal. lxxxix. 15. This is the substance of the covenant, which may be shortly summed up in these words, "Christ Jesus is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

We can speak no further of the man's exercise, as a preparatory work; for what followeth is more than preparatory: yet that the exercise may appear complete and full, we shall add here, that, after all these things, the Lord,

it may be, after many answers of divers sorts, mightily conveyeth the sound of his covenant into the heart, and determineth the heart to close with it; and God now draweth so to Christ, John vi. 44. and so shapeth out the heart for him, that the conception cannot miscarry; for now the heart is so in breadth and length for him, as that less cannot satisfy, and more is not desired, like that of Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? or whom have I desired on earth beside thee?" The soul now resolveth to die, if he command so, yet at his door, and facing to him-wards.

We have drawn this preparatory work to some length, not tying any man to such a work so circumstantiated: only, we say, the Lord dealeth so with some: and where he so convinceth of sin, corruption, and self-emptiness, and maketh a man take salvation to heart, as the one thing necessary; and setteth him on work in the use of the means which God hath appointed for relief; I say, such a work rarely shall be found to fail of a good issue and gracious result.

C H A P. VI.

The difference betwixt that preparatory law-work which hath a gracious issue, and the convictions of hypocrites.

Object. **H**YPOCRITES and reprobates have great stirrings of consci-

ence, and deep convictions about sin, setting them on work sometimes; and I do suspect any preparatory work of the law I ever had to be but such as they have.

Ans. It will be hard to give sure essential differences between the preparatory work in those in whom afterwards Christ is formed and those legal stirrings which are sometimes in reprobates. If there were not some gracious result of these convictions and wakenings of conscience in the Lord's people, and other marks of which we shall speak afterwards, it were hard to adventure upon any difference that is clear in these legal stirrings. Yet, for answer to the objection, I shall offer some things, which rarely will be found in the stirrings of reprobates, and which are ordinarily found in that law-work which hath a gracious issue.

I. The convictions of hypocrites and reprobates are usually confined to some few very gross transgressions. Saul grants no more but the persecuting of David, 1 Sam. xxvi. 21. Judas grants only the "betraying of innocent blood," Mat. xxvii. 4. But usually those convictions, by which the Lord prepareth his own way in the soul, although they may begin at one or more gross particular transgressions, yet they sist not; but the man is led on to see many breaches of the law and "innumerable evils compassing him," as David speaketh in the sight of his sin, Psal. xl. 12. And withal, that universal conviction, if I may call it so,

is not general, as usually we hear senseless men saying, that in all things they sin: but it is particular and condescending, as Paul afterwards spake of himself; he not only is the chief of sinners," but particularly; he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, 1 Tim. i. 13.

II. The convictions which hypocrites have do seldom reach their corruption, and that body of death, which breeds an averseness from what is good, and strongly inclineth to what is evil. Ordinarily where we find hypocrites speaking of themselves in scripture, they speak loftily and with some self-conceit, both as to their freedom from corruption; John ix. 34. the pharisees say to the poor man, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" as if they themselves were not as corrupt by nature as he; they speak of great sins, as Hazzel did, 2 Kings viii. 13. "Am I a dog, that I should do this great thing?" and also in their undertakings of duty, as that scribe spake, Mat. viii. 19. "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." See how the people do speak, Jer. xlii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. They undertake to do all that God will command them: so that they still go about, in any case "to establish their own righteousness, not submitting unto the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. But I may say, that convictions and exercise about corruption, and that body of death inclining to evil, and disabling for good, is not the least part of the work where the Lord

is preparing his own way. They use to judge themselves very wretched because of a body of sin, and are at their wits end how to be delivered, as Paul speaketh when he is under the exercise of it afterwards, Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

III. It will ordinarily be found, that the convictions which are in hypocrites, either are not so serious, as that some other business will not put them out of head before any satisfaction be gotten, as in Cain, who went and built a city, and we hear no more of his convictions, Gen. 4. Felix went away until a more convenient time, and we hear no more of his trembling, Acts xxiv. 25. Or, if that work become very serious, then it runneth to the other extremity, and despair of relief, leaving no room for any outgate. So we find Judas very serious in his convictions, yet he grew desperate, and "hanged himself," Mat. xxvii. 4, 5. But where the Lord prepareth his own way, the work is both so serious, as the person cannot be put off it, until he find some satisfaction; and yet under that very seriousness he lyeth open for relief: both which are clear in the jailer's words, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. This serious enquiry after relief is a very observable thing in the preparatory work which leadeth on to Christ: yet we desire none to lay too much weight on these things, since God hath allowed clear differences between the precious and the vile.

Object. I will fear I have not had so through a sight of my sin and misery, as the Lord giveth to many whom he effectually calleth, especially to great transgressors, such as I am.

Answer. It is true, the Lord discovereth to some great sights of their sin and misery, and they are thereby put under great legal terrors: but as all are not brought in by that sensible preparatory law-work, as we shewed before: so even those who are dealt with after that way are very differently and variously exercised, in regard of the degrees of terror, and of the continuance of that work. The jailer hath a violent work of very short continuance; Paul hath a work continuing three days; some persons are "in bondage through fear of death all their days," Heb. ii. 15. So that we must not limit the Lord to one way of working here. The main thing we are to look unto in these legal wakenings and convictions of sin and misery, is, if the Lord reach those ends in us for which usually these stirrings and convictions are sent into the soul; and if those ends be reached, it is well, we are not to vex ourselves about any preparatory work further. Now, those ends which God driveth ordinarily with sinners, by these legal terrors and wakenings of conscience, are four.

First, The Lord discovers sights of men's sin and misery to them, to chase them out of themselves, and to put them out of conceit of their own righteousness. Men naturally have great thoughts of themselves, and do incline

much to the covenant of works: the Lord therefore doth discover to them so much of their sin and corruption, even in their best things, that they are made to lothe themselves, and to despair of relief in themselves; and so they are forced to flee out of themselves, and from the covenant of works, to seek refuge else where, Heb. vi. 18. They become dead to themselves and the law, as to the point of justification, Rom. vii. 4. Then "have they no more confidence in the flesh," Philip. iii. 3. This is supposed in the offers of Christ, "coming to seek and save that which is lost," Luke xix. 10. and "to be a physieian to those that are sick," Mat. ix. 12.

The second great end is, to commend Christ Jesus to men's hearts above all things, that so they may fall in love with him, and betake themselves to that treasure and jewel which only enricheth, Mat. xiii. 44, 46. and, by so doing, may serve the Lord's design in the contrivement of the gospel, which was the manifestation of his free grace through Christ Jesus in the salvation of men. The sight of a man's own misery and damnable estate by nature is a ready way to make him prize Christ highly, who alone can set such a wretch at liberty: yea, it not only leadeth a man to an high esteem of Christ, but also of all things that relate to that way of salvation, as grace, the new covenant, faith, &c. and maketh him carefully to gather and treasure up his michtams or golden scriptures, for the confirmation of his interest in these things.

The third great end is, to deter and scar people from sin, and to make them cast out with it, and consent to put their neck under all his yoke. God kindleth some sparks of hell in men's bosoms by the discovery of their sin, as a ready mean to make them henceforth stand in awe, knowing how bitter a thing it is to depart from the Lord, Jer. ii. 19. So we find rest offered to the weary, upon condition they will take on Christ's yoke, Mat. xi. 29. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and low in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And God offereth to own men, as their God and father, upon condition they will allow no peaceable abode to Belial, 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 17, 18. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

The fourth great end is, to work up men to a patient and thankful submission to all the master's pleasure. This is a singular piece of work, Ezek. xvi. 63. "Then shalt thou remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord." The sight of

a man's own vileness and deservings maketh him silent, and to lay his hand on his mouth, whatsoever God doth unto him, Psal. xxxix. 9. "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Ezra, ix. 13. "God hath punished us less than our iniquities." Micah vii. 9. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned." The man careth not what God doth to him, or how he deal with him, if he save him from the deserved wrath to come. Also any mercy is a large mercy to him, who hath seen such a sight of himself; he is "less than the least of mercies," Gen. xxxii. 10. Any crumb falling from the master's table is welcome, Mat. xv. 27. He thinks it rich mercy that he is not consumed, Lam. iii. 22. This is the thing that marvelously maketh God's poor crossed people so silent under, and satisfied with their lot; nay, they think he deserveth hell who openeth his mouth at any thing God doth to him, since he hath pardoned his transgressions.

So then, for satisfying the objection, I say, if the Lord hath driven thee out of thyself, and commended Christ to thy heart above all things, and made thee resolve, on his strength, to wage war with every known transgression; and thou art, in some measure, as a weaned child, acquiescing in what he doth unto thee, desiring to lay thy hand on thy mouth thankfully; then thy convictions of sin and misery, and whatsoever thou dost plead as a preparatory work, is sufficient, and thou art to debate no

more about it. Only be advised to study new discoveries of the sense of thy lost condition every day, because of thy old and new sins; and also to see fresh help in Christ, who is a priest for ever to make intercession; and to have the work of sanctification and patience with thankfulness renewed and quickened often: for somewhat of that work, which abaseth thee, exalteth Christ, and conformeth to his will, must convey thee throughout all thy life-time in this world.

C H A P. VII.

Of F A I T H.

WE come now to speak of some more clear and sure marks, by which men may take up their gracious state and interest in Christ. The first thing whereby men may know it, is, their closing with Christ in the gospel, wherein he is held forth. This is believing, or faith, which is the condition of the covenant, Rom. iv. 16. "It is of faith," &c. Acts xvi. 31. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Now although, in propriety of speech, it is hard to prove an interest by faith, it being our very interest in him; yet the heart's closing with Christ Jesus is so discernable in itself, that we may well place it amongst the marks of a gracious state; and if a man can make out this,

that he believeth on and in Christ Jesus, he thereby doth prove a very true interest in him.

Many do fear at this, as a mark, upon one of these three grounds ordinarily.

I. Some conceive faith to be a difficult mysterious thing, hardly attainable. To these I say, do not mistake, faith is not so difficult as many apprehend it to be: I grant true faith in the meanest degree is the gift of God, and above the power of flesh and blood; for God must "draw men to Christ," John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him." Philip. i. 29. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, to believe on him." Yet it were a reflection upon Christ, and all he hath done, to say it were a matter of insuperable difficulty; as is clear, Rom. x. 6. 11. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above: or, who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation; for the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on

him shall not be ashamed." It were according to that scripture, as much upon the matter as to say, Christ came not from heaven, is not risen from the dead, or ascended victorious to heaven. I say, he hath made the way to heaven most easy; and faith, which is the condition required on our part, more easy than men do imagine. For the better understanding of this, consider, That justifying faith is not to believe that I am elected, or to believe that God loveth me, or that Christ died for me, or the like; these things are indeed very difficult, and almost impossible, at the first hand to be won at by those who are serious; whilst natural atheists, and deluded hypocrites, find no difficulty in asserting all those things: I say, true justifying faith is not any of the foresaid things. Neither is it simply the believing of any sentence that is written, or that can be thought upon. I grant, he that believeth on Christ Jesus, believeth what God hath said about man's sinful miserable condition by nature, and he believeth that to be true, that "there is life in the Son," who was slain, "and is risen again from the dead," &c. But none of these, nor the believing of many such truths, do speak our justifying faith, or that believing on the Son of God, spoken of in scripture; for then it were simply an act of the understanding: but true justifying faith, which we now seek after, as a good mark of an interest in Christ, is chiefly and principally

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an act or work of the heart and will; having presupposed sundry things about truth in the understanding, "with the heart it is believed unto righteousness," Rom. x. 10. And although it seem, verse 9, of that chapter, that a man is saved upon condition that he believe this truth, God raised Christ from the dead; yet we must understand another thing there, and verse 10. than the believing the truth of that proposition: for, beside that all devils have that faith whereby they believe, that God raised Christ from the dead; so the scripture hath clearly resolved justifying faith into a receiving of Christ, John i. 12. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;" the receiving of Christ is there explained to be the "believing on his name." It is still called a "staying on the Lord," Isa. xxvi. 3. a "trusting in God," often mentioned in the psalms, and the word is a leaning on him. It is a "believing on Christ," John vi. 29. "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent," and often so express in the New Testament. When God maketh men believe savingly, he is said to draw them unto Christ; and when the Lord inviteth them to believe, he calleth them to come to him, John vi. 37, 44. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me, draw him. The king-

dom of heaven is like a man finding a jewel, wherewith he falleth in love, "Mat. xiii. 44, 45, 46. Now, I say, this acting of the heart on Christ Jesus is not so difficult a thing as is conceived. Shall that be judged a mysterious difficult thing, which doth consist much in desire? If men have but an appetite, they have it; for they are "blessed that hunger after righteousness," Mat. v. 6. "If you will, you are welcome, Rev. xxii. 17. It is a matter of such intricacy and insuperable difficulty, greedily to look to that exalted Saviour? Isa. xlv. 22. "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;" and to receive a thing that is offered, held forth, and declared to be mine, if I will but accept and take it, and in a manner "open my mouth," and give way to it? Psal. xli. 10. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Such a thing is faith, if not less. Oh, if I could persuade people what is justifying faith, which impropriateth Christ to me! We often scar people from their just rest and quiet, by making them apprehend faith to be some deep mysterious thing, and by moving unnecessary doubts about it, wherby it is needlessly darkened.

II. Some make no use of this mark, as judging it a high presumptuous crime to pretend to so excellent a thing, as is the very condition of the new covenant. To these I say, you need not startle so much at it, as if it were high pride to pretend to it: for whatsoever true faith be, men must resolve to have it, or

nothing at all ; all other marks are in vain without it ; a thousand things besides will not do the business : unless a man believe, he abideth in the state of condemnation, John iii. 18. 36. "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

III. Others do not meddle with this noble mark of faith, because they judge it a work of the greatest difficulty, to find out faith where it is. To these I say, it is not so difficult to find it out, since "he that believeth hath the witness in himself," 1 John v. 10. It is a thing which by some serious search may be known. Not only may we do much to find it out, by the preparatory work going before it in many, as the apprehending and believing of a man's lost estate, and that he cannot do his own business, and that there is a satisfying fullness in Christ, very desirable if he could overtake it ; a serious minding of this, with a heart laid open for relief : as also by the ordinary companions and concomitants of it, viz. The liking of Christ's dominion, his kingly and prophetic office, and desire to resign myself wholly up to him, to be at his disposing ; as also by the native consequences of it, viz. The assailing of the word, the assailing of my own conscience according to the work, a heart-purifying work, a working by love, &c. I say, not only may we know faith by these things,

but it is discernable by itself and of its own nature. Although I deny not, but there must be some help of God's spirit, "by which we know what is freely given unto us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12. as also, that God hath allowed many evidences and marks, as precious helps, whereby men may clear up faith more fully to themselves, 1 Jo. v. 13. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life : " yet I still say, that faith, or believing, which is some acting of the heart upon Christ in the gospel, and the transacting with him there, is discernable of itself, and by itself, to a judicious understanding person, with an ordinary influence of the spirit ; unless the Lord, for reason known to himself, do overcloud a man's reflex light, by which he should take up and perceive what is in him.

This justifying faith, which we assert to be so discernable, is, in the Lord's deep wisdom and gracious condescendency, variously expressed in scripture, according to the different actings of it upon God, and outgoings after him ; so as every one who hath it, may find and take it up in his own mould. It sometimes acteth by a desire of union with him in Christ : This is that looking to him in Isa. xlv. 22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." This seems to be a weak act of faith, and far below other actions of it at other times, perhaps in that same person. Men will look to

that they dare not approach, to their apprehension, which they dare not touch or embrace; they may look to one to whom they dare not speak: yet God hath made a promise to faith in that acting, as the forecited scripture doth shew: and this he hath done mercifully and wisely; for this is the only discernible way of the acting of faith of some persons sometimes. Such are the actings or outgoings of faith expressed in scripture by "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," Mat. v. 6. and that expressed by willing, Rev. xxii. 17. "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Again, this faith goeth out sometimes in the act of recumbency, or leaning on the Lord, the soul taking up Christ then as a resting-stone, and God hath so held him out, although he be a "stumbling-stone" to others, Rom. ix. 33. This acting of it is hinted in the expressions of "trusting and staying" on God, so often mentioned in scripture; and precious promises are made to this acting of faith, as Isa. xxvi. 3, 4. "God will keep them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on him: because such do trust in him. Trust in the Lord; for with him is everlasting strength." So Psal. cxxv. 1. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which abideth for ever." I say, the Lord hath made promises to this way of faith's acting, as knowing it will often go out after him in this way with many persons; and this way of its acting will be most discernible to them.

It goeth out after God sometimes by an act of waiting; when the soul hath somewhat depending before God, and hath not got out his mind satisfying about that thing, then faith doth wait; and so it hath the promise, Isa. xlix. 23. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me." Sometimes it acteth in a wilful way upon the Lord when the soul apprehendeth God thrusting it away, and threatening its ruin; so, Job. xiii. 15. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The faith of that poor woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. 22, 28. so highly commended by Christ, did go out in this way of wilful acting over difficulties; and the Lord speaketh much good of it, and to it, because some will be put to it, to exercise faith that way sometimes, and so they have that for their encouragement. It were tedious to instance all the several ways of the acting of faith upon, and its exercise about, and outgoing after Christ. I may say, according to the various conditions and pressures of the soul of man, the Lord hath variously held out himself and his fulness in Christ, under divers notions, as might most fitly meet the distress or condition of man. And accordingly faith, which God hath appointed to traffick and travel between Christ and man, as the instrument of conveyance of his fulness unto man, and of maintaining union and communion with him, acteth variously and differently upon God in Christ; for faith is the very shaping out of man's heart according to God's device of salvation by Christ Jesus, in whom

it pleased the Father that fulness should dwell ; so that, let Christ turn what way he will, faith pointeth that way. Now he turneth all ways in which he can be useful to poor man ; and therefore faith acteth accordingly on him for drawing out of that fulness, according to a man's case and condition. As for example, the soul is naked, destitute of a covering to keep it from the storm of God's wrath : Christ is fine raiment, Rev. iii. 17, 18. then accordingly faith's work here is to "put on the Lord Jesus." Gal. iii. 27. The soul is hungry and thirsty after somewhat that may everlastingly satisfy : Christ Jesus is "milk, wine, water, the bread of life, and the true manna," Isa. lv. 1, 2. John vi. 48,—51. He is "the feast of fat things, and of wine refined," Isa. xxv. 6. then the work and exercise of faith is, to "go, buy, eat and drink abundantly," Isa. lv. 1. John vi. 53,—57. The soul is pursued for guilt, more or less, and is not law-biding : Christ Jesus is the city of refuge, and the high priest there, during whose lifetime, that is for ever, the poor man who wins thither is safe ; then the work and exercise of faith is "to flee thither for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us," Heb. vi. 18. In a word, whatsoever way he may benefit poor man, so he speaketh of himself. And as he holdeth out himself in the scripture, so faith doth point towards him : if he be a bridegroom, faith will go out in a marriage relation ; if he be a father, faith pleadeth the man to be a child ; if he be a shepherd, faith

pleads the man to be one of his sheep ; if he be a Lord, faith calleth him so, which none can do but by the spirit of Jesus, 1 Cor. xii. 9. If he be dead, and risen again for our justification, faith believeth God hath riseth him on that account, Rom. x. 9. Wherever he be, there would faith be ; and whatsoever he is, faith would be somewhat proportionally : for by faith the heart is shapen out in breadth and length for him ; yea, when the fame and report of him goeth abroad in his truth, although faith seeth not much, yet it "believeth on his name," upon the very fame he hath sent abroad of himself, John i. 12.

But here, for avoiding of mistakes, consider, I. That although justifying faith acteth so variously, yet every believer, who hath a good title to Christ Jesus, hath not all these various actings and exercises of faith : for his condition craveth them not ; and also the master is pleased not to lead out the faith of some persons, at sometimes, in some of these ways, for reasons known to himself, even when their necessity (to their apprehension) calleth for such acting of faith. Surely, every one dare not say, "Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him." Many would not have gone up with the woman of Canaan I spake of, Mat. xv. but would have been discouraged, and have quit the pursuit. It is on this account that Christ doth highly commend the faith of some beyond the faith of others ; Mat. viii. 10. of the centurion ; Mat. xv. 28. of the woman of Canaan.

Many good people are much disquieted about their faith, because it goeth not out in all those ways we find recorded in scripture; but there is hardly any man will be found, whose faith hath acted all these ways.

II. Many of these actings of faith are much intended and remitted. They are sometimes strong and vigorous, and discernible; and sometimes they fail, and misbelief doth prevail, so as it were an uncertain thing to judge of a man's state by these. We find the saints very different from themselves in regard of the actings of faith sometimes, as we shewed before.

III. Each one of these actings of faith speaketh good to the person in whom it is, and hath promises annexed unto it, as we have said. Yet,

IV. Although these actings of faith have promises annexed unto them, they are not, for that, the condition of the new covenant; for then every one behoved to have each one of them, which is not true, as we said before. A promise is made to him who overcometh; but perseverance is not the condition of the new covenant, but doth suppose it. There are promises made to the exercise of all graces, in scripture; but only faith is the condition of the covenant. I say then, these promises are made to these actings of faith, not as such, but as they do suppose justifying faith, which is the condition of the covenant. All these are actings of faith, but not as it is justifying. Therefore,

V. There is somewhat common to all gracious persons, which may be supposed by all the foresaid actings of faith, wherein the nature and essence of justifying faith standeth. And this is the heart's satisfaction about God's device of salvation by Christ; when man pleaseth God's invention of satisfaction to justice, through Christ Jesus, in whom all fulness doth dwell now by the Father's pleasure; when the soul and heart of man acquiesceth in that, then it believeth unto salvation. As at first the Lord made man suitable to the covenant of works, by creating him perfect, and so putting him in a capacity to perform his will in that covenant; so under the new covenant, when God giveth the new heart to man, he setteth the idea and stamp of all his device in the new covenant upon the man, so as there is a consonancy to God's will there: thus he beareth the image of the second Adam, Christ Jesus, on him. This is a great part of the new heart, and is most opposed to works; since now the man absolutely falleth off works, "becoming dead to the law," as to the point of justification, "by the body of Christ," Rom. vii. 4. Man perceiving that God hath devised a way of satisfying divine justice, and recovering lost man by the incarnation of Christ, he thinks this so good and sure a way, that he absolutely giveth up with the law, as I said before, and closeth with this device: and this is believing or faith, very opposite to works, and all resting thereupon. This cannot fail to be in all

gracious persons, in whom many of the actings of faith are not to be found. This doth clearly suppose known distress in a man, without all relief in himself; this supposeth known fulness in Christ, as the alone sufficient relief; this imports a sort of impropriation: for the heart, pleasing that device, in so far swayeth towards it. This is a thing clearly supposed in all the actings of faith, spoken of before. He that greedily hungrerh, hath this; and he that leaereth, hath this; and he that puts on Christ, hath this, &c. This is to esteem "Christ the wisdom and power of God" to salvation; so is he said to be to all that believe, 1 Cor. i. 24. They esteem that device wise and sure, becoming God; and that is to believe. On this account, Christ, who is the rejected stone to many, is precious to them who believe; a fit stone to recover, fortify and beautify the tottering building and fabric of lost man. "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious; ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore it is contained in the scriptures, Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed the same is made the head of the corner: and a stone of stumbling

and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed," 1 Pet. ii. 4—8. "The kingdom of God is like a man finding a treasure, for which with joy he selleth all," Mat. xiii. 44. These words hold out the very way of believing, viz. Salvation is discovered in the gospel to be by Christ; the heart valueth that invention as satisfying. This is to believe on the Son of God lifted up; which is compared with the looking to the brazen serpent, John iii. 14. It was man's approbation of that device which made it effectual for his healing; so is it here, "he that so believeth, setteth to his seal that God is true," John iii. 33. True, wherein? in that record he hath borne, that God hath provided life for men, and placed it all in Christ, 1 Jo. v. 10, 11. "He that believeth not, maketh God a liar." Wherein? in his saying that Christ is a safe and sure way to Heaven. This is the pleasing and acquiescing in that device; and it is consonant to all I know spoken of justifying faith in scripture. This the believing on Christ and on his name, the receiving of him and resting on him for salvation, in our catechism; the believing that Jesus is the Christ, that is, the anointed one, whom the Father hath sealed, and set apart, and qualified for the work of reconciling man unto God; and "he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God," 1 John v. 1. This is to believe with
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the heart that God hath raised Christ from the dead," Rom. x. 9. The man believeth Christ died, and is raised on the account of satisfaction for man's transgression. Devils may believe that: nay, but the man I speak of, believeth it with his heart (which no natural man doth, until a new heart be given unto him) that is, he cordially pleaseth, is satisfied with, and acquiesceth in this noble invention. And this faith layeth out itself now and then in its actings, outgoings and exercise, according to all the covenant-relations under which Christ is held forth in the scripture.

Now, I say, this faith is discernible, not only in these actings many times: a man may know if his heart doth hunger after Christ, and flee for refuge to him, when pursued; and if he doth commit himself unto God, &c. but also in its very nature; as it is justifying, it is discernible and may be known. A man may clearly know, from known distress in himself, upon the report and fame of Christ's fulness, his heart doth please God's device in the new covenant; if it goeth out after Christ in that invention, and pleaseth him as Lord of the life of men, terminating and resting there, and no where else, acquiescing in that contrivement with desire and complacency. This is a discernible thing: therefore I obtest men impartially to examine themselves; and if they find that their heart has closed so with that device of salvation, and is gone out after him as precious, that thereupon they conclude a sure and

true interest in Christ Jesus, and a good claim and title to the crown, since "he that believeth shall never perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16,—36.

C H A P. VIII.

The difference between the faith of hypocrites and true saving justifying faith.

Object. **H**YPOCRITES and reprobrates have a sort of faith, and are said to believe, John ii. 23, 24. "Many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did: but Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." Acts viii. 13. "Then Simon the sorcerer, himself believed also;" and cannot choose but go out after Christ, and that device of salvation, when they hear of it; and they profess they do so, yet are deluded, and so may I be.

Answer. To say nothing of that thought of your heart, (whereby you wonder that any man should not please the device of salvation by Christ, and lead out towards him) as a very promising thing, and speaking out justifying faith to be in your bosom; and, to say nothing in contradiction to that which you think, that a natural man, whilst such, and before he get a new heart, can please that device, and believe with his heart, and affectionately, that which perfectly overthroweth the covenant of works,

and abaseth man in the point of self-righteousness already attained, or that can be won at by him, which is inconsistent with many scriptural truths; I offer these differences between the faith of all hypocrites or reprobates, and that true saving justifying faith whereof we have spoken.

I. They never close with Christ Jesus in that device, and him alone, as a sufficient covering of the eyes, as is said of Abraham to Sarah, Gen. xx. 16. They still hold fast somewhat of their own, at least to help to procure God's favor and salvation: their heart doth still speak, as that young man's speech, Luke xviii. 18, 21. doth insinuate, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" beside that, they do still retain their former lovers, and will not break their covenants with hell and death, imagining they may have Christ with these things equally sharing in their heart; contrary to that, "a man cannot serve two masters," Mat. vi. 24. Either Christ must be judged absolute Lord, and worthy to be so, or nothing at all. And so it is clear, their heart is not shapen out for that device of salvation by Christ, whom God hath alone made Lord here, in whom all fulness shall dwell. But where justifying faith is, the soul of a man and his heart doth close with Christ, and him alone, "having no confidence in the flesh," Philip. iii. 3. Psal. lxxii. 5. "he trusteth only in God." Also the man here giveth up with other lovers, as they compete with Christ; he resolves "not to be for ano-

ther," Hos. iii. 3. He calls him Lord, "which a man can only do by the spirit of Christ," 1 Cor. xii. 3.

II. As hypocrites and reprobates do never close with Christ alone; so they do never close with full Christ, as he is anointed to be a king, to rule over a man in all things; a priest, to procure pardon, and to make peace for man upon all occasions; a prophet, to be wisdom, and a teacher and counsellor in all cases to man: so they do not receive Christ, especially in the first and third office. But where true justifying faith is, a man closeth with whole Christ in all his offices, judging all his "will good, holy, just and spiritual," Rom. vii. 12, 14. and "right concerning all things," Psal. cxix. 128. "making mention of his righteousness only," Psal. lxxi. 16.

The man also giveth up himself to be taught of him, Mat. xi. 29. "Learn of me." So that "Christ is made" to the true believer, with his own consent, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. And although he hath not all these things formally in exercise, when his heart goeth out after Christ, yet, upon search and trial, it will be found with him, as I have said.

III. Hypocrites and reprobates do never close with Christ, and all the inconveniences that may follow him; they stick at that with the scribe, Mat. viii. 19, 20. But where true justifying faith is, a man doth close with him

on all hazards ; he resolveth to forego all, rather than to forego Christ: We have left all, and have followed thee," Mark x. 28. "He reckoneth all to be loss and dung for the excellency of Christ Jesus, as his Lord, and to be found in him," Philip. iii. 8.

We might give other differances also ; as, that true faith is operative, "purifying the heart," Acts xv. 9. "working by love," Gal. v. 6. whilst "hypocrites do only cleanse the outside of the platter," Mat. xxiii. 25. and "do to be seen of men," Mat. vi. 5. "not seeking the honor that is of God only, and so cannot believe," John v. 44. We might also shew, that true faith is never alone in a man, but attended with other saving graces. But because these things will coincide with what followeth ; and here we are shewing that a man may take up his gracious state by his faith, and the acting thereof on Christ ; we pass these things.

C H A P. IX.

OF THE NEW CREATURE.

TH E second great mark of a gracious state, and true saving interest in Jesus Christ, is the new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." This new creation, or renovation of that man, is very sensible change: although not in those

who are effectually called from the womb, or in their younger years ; because those have had this new creature from that time in them, so as this change in after periods of time is not discernible ; yet in those who have been regenerated and brought into Christ after they were come to greater age, and so have more palpably been under the "power of darkness," before they were "translated into the kingdom of Christ," Col. i. 13. But in all who do warrantably pretend to Christ, this new creature must be ; although some do not know experimentally the contraries of every part of it, so as others do ; because they have not been equally, in regard of practice, under the power of darkness. This new creature is called "the new man," Col. iii. 10. which doth hold out the extent of it. It is not simply a new tongue, or new hand, but "a new man." There is a principle of new life and motion put in the man, which is the new heart ; which new principle of life sendeth forth acts of life, or of "conformity to the image of him who created it," Col. iii. 10. so as the party is renewed in some measure every way. This renovation of the man who is in Christ, may be reduced into these two great heads.

First, There is a renovation of the man's person, soul and body, in some measure.

I. His understanding is renewed, so as he judgeth "Christ preached" in the gospel, "to be the wisdom and power of God," and he strong device becoming God, 1 Cor. i. 24.

24. He knoweth the things of God really and solidly, not to be "yea and nay," and uncertain fancies; but all to be "yea and amen," solid certain, substantial things, having a desirable accomplishment in Christ, and resolving much in him, 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned: but he that is spiritual judgeth all things," 2 Cor. i. 18, 19, 20. "As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea: for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." Natural men educated under gospel-ordinances, although they have some notional knowledge of God, Christ, the promises, the motions of the holy spirit, &c. so as they may confer, preach and dispute of these things; yet they look on them as common received maxims of christianity, from which to recede were a singularity and disgrace; but not as real, solid, substantial truths, so as to adventure their souls and everlasting being on them. The understanding is renewed also, to take up somewhat of God in the creatures, as bearing sparks of his glorious attributes, Psal. xix. 1. They see "the heavens declaring his glory and power?" and somewhat of God and providence in dis-

penations that fall out: "His wondrous works declare that his name is near" Psal. lxxv. 1. The understanding also taketh up the conditions and cases of the soul, otherwise than it was wont to do; as we find the saints usually speaking in scripture, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, 'Thou art my Lord,'" Psal. xvi. 2. "My soul said, thy face will I seek," Psal. xxvii. 8. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Psal. xlii. 5. Psal. xliii. 5. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul," Psal. cxvi. 7.

II. The heart and affections are renewed. The heart is made a new heart, a heart of flesh, capable of impressions, having a copy of his law stamped on it, and the fear of God put into it, whereby the man's duty becometh in a manner native and kindly to the man, Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. It was before a heart of stone, void of the fear of God. The affections are renewed now: the love is renewed in some good measure; it goeth out after God. "I will love the Lord," Psal. xviii. 1. after his law, "O how love I thy law!" Psal. cxix. 97. after those who have God's image in them, John xiii. 35. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if have love one to another." 1 John iii. 14. "We know that we have passed from death unto life: because we love the brethren." This love to God's people is upon a pure account, as they are the children of God, and do keep his statutes, 1 Peter i. 22. It is "with a pure heart fervently;"

and therefore it goeth towards all such, whom the man knoweth or apprehendeth to be such. Psal. cxix. 63. "I am a companion of all that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," in all cases and conditions, even when there is nothing to beautify or commend, but the image of God. And this love is so served many times, 1 Peter i. 22. that it putteth itself out in all relations, so as a man seeketh a godly wife, a godly master, a godly servant, a godly counsellor, if he have to choose upon, Psal. cxix. 6. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me." And "it is not quenched by many waters." Cant. viii. 7. Many imperfections and infirmities, difference in opinion, wrongs received, will not altogether quench love. Also it is communicative of good according to its measure, and as the case of the poor godly required. Psal. xvi. 2. "Thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints, &c." 1 John iii. 17, 18, 19. "But whoso hath the world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." The man's hatred is also renewed, and is now bended against sin, Psal. cxix. 113. "I have vain thoughts;" against God's enemies, as such.

Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22. "Do not I hate them that hate thee?" &c. The joy or delight is renewed, for it runneth towards God, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?" towards his law and will, Psal. i. 2. "His delight is in the law of the Lord;" and towards the godly and their fellowship, Psal. xvi. iii. "To the saints in whom is all my delight." The sorrow is turned against sin which hath wronged Christ, Zech. xii. 10. "Look- ing to him whom they have pierced, they mourn." 2 Cor. vii. 11. The sorrow is godly there, and against what encroached upon God's honor; they are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of that is their burden, Zech. iii. 18. There is some renovation in all the affections, as in every other part of the soul pointing now towards God.

III. The very outward members of the man are renewed, as the scripture speaks, the tongue, the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, &c. so that "those members which once were improved as weapons of unrighteousness unto sin, are now improved as weapons of righteousness unto holiness," Rom. vi. 19.

Secondly, A man who is in Christ is renewed in some measure in all his ways: "behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. The man becometh new, I. In the way of his interest. He was upon any good before, though but apparent, and at best but external, Psal. iv. 6. "Many say, who will shew us any good?"

but now his interest and business is, how to "be found in Christ in that day," Philip. iii. 9. or how to be forthcoming to him, and "walk before him in the light of the living," Psal. lvi. 13. which he would choose among all the mercies that fill this earth, Psal. cxix. 64. "The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy, teach me thy statutes." The interest of Christ also becometh the man's interest, as appeareth in the song of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. and in the song of Mary, Luke i. It is strange to see people newly converted, and having reached but the beginnings of knowledge, concern and interest themselves in the public matters of Christ's kingdom, so desirous to have him riding prosperously, and subduing the people under him.

II. The man that is in Christ is renewed in the way of his worship. He was wont to "serve God in the oldness of the letter," i. e. for the fashion, answering the letter of the command in the outside of duty, which one in whom the old man hath absolute dominion can do: but now he worshippeth God "in newness of spirit," Rom. vii. 6, in a new way wherein he is "helped by the spirit of God," Rom. viii. 26. beyond the reach of flesh and blood. He "serveth not the true and living God," 1 Thess. i. 9. "in spirit and in truth," Jo. iv. 24. having spiritual apprehensions of God, and engaged in his very soul in that work, doing and saying truly and not feignedly when he worshippeth; still "desiring to approach unto him as a living God," who heareth and seeth

him, and can accept his service, Psal. xlii. 1, 2. "I grant, he fails of this many times; yet I may say, such worship he intendeth, and sometimes overtaketh, and doth not much reckon that worship, which is not so performed unto God; and the iniquity of his holy things is not the least part of his burden and exercise. Such a worship natural men are strangers unto. Whilst they babble out their vain-glorious boastings, like the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, 12. "to an unknown God," Acts xvii. 23.

III. The man that is in Christ is renewed in the way of his outward calling and employment in the world; he now resolveth to be about it, because God hath commanded so, "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," Rom. xii. 11. and to eye God in it as the last end, "doing it to his glory," 1 Cor. x. 31. and studieth to keep some intercourse with God in the exercise of his outward employments, as Jacob doth in his latter will, Gen. xlix. 18. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." And as Nehemiah did, Nehem. ii. 4. "Then the king said unto me, for what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven." So as the man resolveth to walk with God, and "set him always before him," Psal. xvi. 8. wherein, I deny not, he faileth often.

IV. He becometh new in the way of his relations; he becometh a more dutiful husband, father, brother, master servant, neighbor, &c.

"Herein doth he exercise himself, to keep conscience void of offence towards men," as well as "towards God," Acts xxiv, 16. becoming all things to all men, 1 Cor. ix. 22.

V. He becometh new in the way of lawful liberties. He studieth to make use of meat, drink, sleep, recreations, apparel, with an eye to God, laboring not to come under the power of any lawful thing, 1 Cor. vi. 12. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Nor to give offence to others in the use of these things, Rom. xiv. 20, 21. "For meat destroy not the work of God: for all things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence: it is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak, Rom. xv. 20. "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification, not using liberty as an occasion to the flesh," Gal. v. 13. Yea, he laboureth to use all these things, as a stranger on earth, so as his moderation may appear, Phil. iv. 5. "Let your moderation be known unto all men." And some way he doth eye God as the last end in these things, 1 Cor. x. 31. "Doing all to the glory of God:" So as we may say of that man, "old things are much passed away, all things are," in some measure, "become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. he that is so new creature, is undoubtedly in Christ.

This renovation of a man in all manner of conversation, and this being under the law to God in all things, is that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. Men may fancy things to themselves; but unless they study to approve themselves unto God in all well-pleasing, and reach some inward testimony of sincerity that way, they shall not assure their hearts before him. "The testimony of men's conscience is their rejoicing," 2 Cor. i. 12. "By this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments," 1 John ii. 3. "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him; for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God," 1 John iii. 19, 20, 21. No confidence if the heart condemn. This is the new creature, having a principle of new spiritual life infused by God into the heart, whereby it becometh new, and putteth forth acts of new life throughout the whole man, as we have said, so as he pointeth towards the whole law: both towards these commands which forbid sin; so he resolveth to set against secret sins, "not to lay a stumbling block before the blind," Lev. xix. 14. Little sins, which are judged so by many, the least things of the law, Mat. v. 19. "Whoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." Spi-

ritual sins, filthiness of the spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness in the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Sins of omission as well as of commission, since men are to be judged by these, Mat. xxv. 41, 42, 43, 44, 45. "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, &c." yea, sins that are winded in into his natural humour and constitution, and so are as "a right eye or hand to him," Mat. v. 29. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, &c." This new principle of life, by the good hand of God, maketh the man set aginst every known sin, so far as not to allow peacable abode to any known darkness, 2 Cor. vi. 14. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" As also he pointeth towards those commands which relate to duty, and the quickning of grace in man: it maketh a man "respect all God's known commands," Psal. cxix. 6. to "live godly, righteously, and soberly," Tit. ii. 12. yea, and to study a right and sincere way and manner of doing things, resolving not to give over this soul of conformity to God's will, whilst he liveth on earth, but still to "press forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high call-

ing or God in Christ Jesus," Philip. iii. 13. 14. This is true holiness, very becoming all those who pretend to be heirs of that holy habitation, in the immediate company and fellowship of a holy God, 1 John iii. 3. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him."

Some may think these things high attainments, and very hard to be won at. I grant it is true: but first, remember that there is a very large allowance in the covenant, promised to his people, which maketh things more easy. The Lord hath engaged "to take away the stony heart, to give a heart of flesh, a new heart, an heart to fear him for ever;" he hath engaged to "put his law in men's heart, to put his fear in their heart, to make them keep that law; to put his spirit in them, to cause them keep it:" he hath promised "to satisfy the priests with fatness," that the souls of "the people may be satiated with his goodness, and to keep and water them continually every moment," Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Jer. xxxi. 33. Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Jer. xxxi. 14. Jer. xxxi. 12. Isa. xxvii. 3. And if he must be "enquired to do all these things unto men," Ezek. xxxvi. 37. he engageth to pour out the spirit of grace and supplication on them," Zech. xii. 10. and so to learn them how to seek these things, and how to put them to it, to do all for them.

Secondly, For the satisfaction of the worker, I grant this new creature, as we have circumscribed and enlarged it, will not be found, in

all the degrees of it, in every gracious person. But it is well if,

I. There be a new man : we cannot grant less ; " if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17. And that is the new man, which all must put on who are savingly taught of Christ, Eph. iv. 21, 22, 23, 24. " If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus ; that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts ; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind ; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." There must be some renewing after the image of God in a man's soul and body ; there must be somewhat of every part of the man pointing towards God. Although I grant every one cannot instruct this to others, neither discern it in himself, because many know not the distinct parts of the soul, nor pieces of reformation competent to every part of the soul and body ; yet it will be found there is some such thing in them, yea, they have a witness of it within them, if you make the thing plain and clear to them what it is.

II. There must be such a respect unto God's known commands, that a man do not allow peaceably any known iniquity to dwell in him ; for " what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness ?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16.

He must not regard iniquity, Psal. cxix. 6. " Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Psal. lxxvi. 18. " If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." I grant men may be ignorant of many commands and many sins, and may imagine, in some cases, that some sins are not hateful unto God ; but supposing that they are instructed in these things, there can be no agreement between righteousness and unrighteousness.

III. Men must point towards all the law of God in their honest resolutions ; for this is nothing else than to give up the heart unto God, to put his law in it, without exception, which is a part of the covenant we are to make with God, Heb. viii. 10. " This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel—I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." I grant many know not how to point towards God's law in all their ways ; but if it be made manifest unto them how that should be done, they will point at it. And it is true, they will many times fail of their resolutions in their practice ; yet when they have failed, they can say, they did resolve otherwise, and will yet honestly, and without guile, resolve to do otherwise ; and it will prove their affliction to have failed of their resolution, when the Lord discovereth it to them, which he will do in due time.

IV. When we are to judge of our state by the new creature, we must do it at a conveni-

ent time, when we are in good case ; at least, not when we are in the worst case ; for " the flesh and spirit do lust and fight against other," Gal. v. 17 and sometimes the one and sometimes the other doth prevail. Now I say, we must choose a convenient time, when the spiritual part is not by some temptation worsted and overpowered by the flesh : for, in that case, the new creature is recoiled back in its streams, and much returned to the fountain and the habits, except in some small things not easily discernible, whereby it maketh opposition to the flesh, according to the foresaid scripture ; for now is it the time of winter in the soul, and we may not expect fruit, yea, not leaves, as in some other season. Only here, lest profane atheists should make advantage of this, we will say, that the spirit doth often prevail over the flesh in a godly man, and the scope, aim, tenor, and main drift of his way is in the law of the Lord, that is, his walk, Psal. cxix. 1. whereas the path-way, and ordinary course, of the wicked is sin, as is often hinted in the book of the Proverbs of Solomon. And if it happen that a godly man be overmastered by any transgression, ordinarily it is his sad exercise ; and we suppose he keeps it still in dependency before God to have it rectified, as David speaketh, Psal. lvi. 13. " Will thou not deliver my feet from falling ? "

C H A P. X.

The difference betwixt a truly renewed man who is in Christ, and hypocrites.

Object. **A**THEISTS and hypocrites may have great changes and renovation wrought upon them, and in them, I fear mine be such.

Answ. I grant that atheists and hypocrites have many things in them, which do look like the new creature. First, in regard of the parts of the man, they may, 1. Come to much knowledge, as Heb. vi. 4. " They are enlightened." 2. There may be a reel among their affections, as " they receive the word with joy, as he that received the seed in stony places," Mat. xiii. 20. 3. They may reach a great deal of outward reformation in the outward man, both about freedom from sin, and engagement to positive duty, as that Pharisee did, Luke xviii. 11, 12. " God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Yea, 4. In regard of their practical understanding, they may judge some things of God to be excellent ; the officers said, that never man spake as Christ, John vii. 46.

Secondly, Hypocrites may have a great deal of profession. 1. They may talk of the law and gospel, and of the covenant, as the wicked

do: Psal. l. 16. "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" 2. They may confess sin openly to their own shame, as king Saul did, 1 Sam. xxvi. 21. 3. They may humble themselves in sackcloth with Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27. 4. They may enquire busily after duty, and come cheerfully to receive it; Isa. lviii. 2. "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinance of justice: they take delight in approaching to God." 5. They may join with God's interest in a hard and difficult time, as Demas and other hypocrites in the book of the Acts of the apostles, who afterwards fell off. 6. They may give much of their goods to God and the saints, as Ananias, Acts v. 1. 2. if not all their goods, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Yea, 7. It is not impossible for some such, being straitly engaged in their credit, to "give their bodies to be burned," as in the last cited place.

Thirdly, Hypocrites may advance far in the common and ordinary steps of a christian work; such as the elect have when God leads them captive. As, 1. They may be under great convictions of sin, as Judas was, Mat. xxvii. 3, 4, 5. So was king Saul often. 2. They may tremble at the word of God, and be under much terror, as Felix was, Acts xxvi. 25.

3. They may rejoice in receiving of the truth, as "he that received the seed into stony places," Mat. xiii. 20. 4. They may be in some peace and quiet, in expectation of salvation by Christ, as the foolish virgins were, Mat. xxv. 5. All this may be backed and followed with some good measure of reformation, as the pharisees, Luke xviii. 11, 12. "The unclean spirit may go out of them," Mat. xii. 43. 6. This work may seem to be confirmed by some special experiences and "tastings of the good word of God," Heb. vi. 4, 5.

Fourthly, Hypocrites may have some things very like the saving graces of the spirit; as, 1. They may have a sort of faith with Simon Magus, Acts viii. 13. 2. They may have a sort of repentance, and may walk mournfully, Mal. iii. 14. "What profit is it that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" 3. They may have a great fear of God, such as Balaam had, who for a house full of gold would not go with the messengers of Balak, without being asked of God, and given, Num. xxii. 18. 4. They have a sort of hope, "Job viii. 13. "The hypocrite's hope shall perish." 5. They have some love, so had Herod to John, Mark vi. 26. I need not to insist, it is out of all question they have counterfeits of all saving graces.

Fifthly, They have somewhat like the special communications of God, and the witnessing of his spirit, as somewhat like the power

of the world to come, powerfully on them, with some flashes of joy arising thence, as Heb. vi. 4, 5. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghost, and have tasted the good words of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." Notwithstanding of all which, they are but "almost persuaded with Agrippa to be Christians," Acts xxvi. 28. It were tedious to speak particularly to each of these things, and to clear it up, that they are all but rotten ware; I shall therefore descend upon some few things, wherein a truly renewed man, who is in Christ, doth differ from hypocrites and reprobates.

I. Whatsoever change be in hypocrites, yet their heart is not changed and made new. The new heart is only given to the elect, when they are converted and brought under the bond of the covenant. Jer. xxxii. 39. "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may not turn for ever." Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Hypocrites did never apprehend Christ as the only satisfying good in all the world, for which with joy they would quit all; for then the kingdom of God were entered into them, Mat. xiii. 44. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a

field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." The truly renewed man dare, and can upon good ground, say, and hath a testimony of it from on high, that his heart hath been changed in taking up of Christ, and hath been led out after him, as the only enriching treasure, in whom to be found he accounteth all things else loss and dung." Philip. iii. 8, 9.

II. Whatsoever reformation or profession hypocrites do attain unto, as it cometh not from a new heart, and pure principle of zeal for God, so it is always for some wicked and by-end, as, "to be seen of men," Mat. vi. 5. or to escape and shun some outward smart, to be free of God's wrath, and the trouble of their own conscience, Isa. lviii. 3. "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" Mal. iii. 14. "What profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" In testimony of this, they never have respect to all known commands, else they should "never be ashamed," Psal. cxix. 6. Nor do they, without approved guilt in their own heart, resolve against every known iniquity, else they were freed of heart-condemnations, and so might justly have confidence before God," 1 John ii. 21, 22. If in never so many a case, they did, from a principle of love

into, and of zeal for Christ, and for a right end, confess and profess him, Christ well obliged by his own word "to confess them before his Father," Mat. x. 32.

III. Whatsoever length hypocrites advance in that work, by which people are led in up to Christ, yet they never "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," Mat. vi. 33. "The one thing that is necessary," viz. Christ's friendship and fellowship, is never their ~~all~~ thing and heart-satisfying choice, else that better part would never be taken from them, Luke x. 42.

IV. Whatsoever counterfeits of grace are in hypocrites, yet they are all bred there without any saving work of the Spirit of Christ; and it is enough to exclude them from the benefit of this mark, that they are never denied to these things, nor emptied of them, but still do rest on them as their saviour, so that "they fulfil not unto the righteousness of God," Rom. ix. 3. And that is enough to keep them at a distance from Christ, who will never clothe that old garment of hypocrites with his fine new linen, nor "put his new wine in these old bottles," Mat. vi. 16. 17.

V. We may say, let hypocrites, reprobates or atheists have what they can, they want the three great essentials of religion and true christianity. First, They are not broken in themselves, and emptied even of their righteousness, the length of self-loathing, yet lying open for relief. Such "lost ones Christ came to seek

and save," Luke xix. 10. Secondly, They never took up Christ Jesus as the only treasure and jewel that can only enrich, and should satisfy; and therefore have never cordially agreed unto God's device in the covenant, and so are not worthy of him; neither hath the kingdom of God savingly entered into their heart, Mat. xiii. 44. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth; and for joy thereof selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field." Thirdly, They never in earnest do close with Christ's whole yoke without exception, judging all his "will just and good, holy and spiritual," as Rom. vii. 12. And therefore no rest allowed ~~on~~ them by Christ, Mat. xi. 29. "Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Therefore, whosoever thou art, who can lay clear just claim to these three foresaid things; thou art beyond the reach of all atheists, hypocrites and reprobates in the world, as having answered the great ends and intents of the law and gospel.

Object. I am clear sometimes, I think, to lay claim to that mark of the new creature; yet at other times sin doth so prevail over me, that I am made to question all the work within me.

Answ. It is much to be lamented, that people professing his name should be so flattered and enslaved by transgression, as many are. Yet in answer to the objection, if it be seriously pro-

poned, we say, the saints are found in scripture justly laying claim unto God and his covenant when iniquity did prevail over them, as we find, Mal. lxx. 3. "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away." Rom. vii. 23, 25. Paul "thanks God through Christ, when a law in his members leads him captive unto sin." But for the better understanding, and safe application of such truths we must difference betwixt gross outbreakings and ordinary infirmities or heart-ills, or sins that come unawares upon a man without forethought or any deliberation. As for the former sort, it is hard for a man, whilst he is under the power of them, to see his gracious change, although it be in him; and very hard to draw any comfort from it, until the man be in some measure recovered, and begin seriously to resent such sins, and to resolve against them. We find David calling himself God's servant, quickly after his numbering of God's people; but he was then under the serious repentment of his sin, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. Jonah layeth claim to God as his master under his rebellion; but he is then ruing it, and in a spirit of revenge against himself for his sin, Jonah i. 9, 10, 12. Next, as for these sins of infirmity, and daily incursion and heart-ills, such as those whereof Paul doth complain, it is like, were;

We shall draw out some things from the seventh chapter to the Romans, whereupon Paul maintains his interest in Christ, and

you can apply them, it is well. 1. When Paul findeth that he doth much fail, and cannot reach conformity to God's law, he doth not blame the law as being too strict, so as men cannot keep it, as hypocrites use to speak; but he doth blame himself as being carnal; and he saith of the law, "that it is good, holy and spiritual," Rom. vii. 12, 14. 2. He can say, he failed of a good which he intended, and did outshoot himself, and he had often honestly resolved against the evil which he fell into, Rom. vii. 15, 18, 19. 3. He saith, that the prevailing of sin over him is his exercise, so as he judgeth himself wretched because of such a body of death, from which he longeth to be delivered, Rom. vii. 24. 4. He saith that whilst he is under the power and law of sin, there is somewhat in the bottom of his heart opposing it, although overmastered by it, which would be another way, and when that gets the upper hand, it is a delightful thing, Rom. vii. 22, 25. Upon these things he "thanks God in Christ that there is no condemnation," Rom. vii. 25 Rom. viii. 1. Now then look if you can lay claim to these things. 1. If you do blame yourself, and approve the law, whilst you fail. 2. If you can say, that you do often resolve against sin honestly, and without known guile; and do so resolve the contrary good before the evil break in upon you. 3. If you can say, that you are so far exercised with your failings, as to judge yourself wretched because of

such things, and a body of death which is the root and fountain of such things. 4. If you can say, that there is a party within you opposing these evils, which would be at the right way, and, as it were, is in its element when it is in God's way it is well; only be advised not to take rest, until in some good measure you be purged of the ground of this objection, or at least until you can very clearly say, you are waging war with these things. Now, a good help against the prevailing power of sin is, to cleave close to Christ Jesus by faith, which as it is a desirable part of sanctification, and a notable piece of conformity to God's will, and most subservient unto his design in the gospel, Gal. ii. 20, 21. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God:" and so should be much endeavoured by people, as a work pleasing unto God, John vi. 29. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent:" so it is the ready way to draw life and sap from Christ the blessed root, for fruitfulness in all cases, as John xv. 4, 5. "Abide in me and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

C H A P. XL.

Of the special communications of God, and the singular gracious operations of his spirit.

Object. I DO not partake of these special communications of God, mentioned in the scripture, and actings and outgoings of his spirit, whereof gracious people often are speaking, and wherunto they attain. The want of these things maketh me much suspect my state.

Ans. I shall shortly hint some of these excellent communications, and I hope, upon a right discovery of them, there will be but small ground found for the jealous complaints of many gracious people.

First (Beside these convictions of the spirit of God, which use to usher Christ's way into the souls of men, and these also which afterwards do ordinarily attend them) there is a seal of the spirit of God spoken of in scripture, the principal thing whereof is the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, imprinting the draughts and lineaments of God's image and revealed will upon a man, as a seal or signet doth leave an impression and stamp of its likeness upon the thing sealed. So it is, 2 Tim. ii. 19. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are his; and, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." And thus I

conceive the sea to be called a witness, 1 John v. 10. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself;" that is, the grounds upon which an interest in Christ is to be made out and proved are in every believer; for he hath somewhat of the sanctifying work of God's spirit in him, which is a sure, although not always a clear and manifest witness.

Secondly, There is communion with God, much talked of among christians, whereby they understand the sensible presence of God refreshing the soul exceedingly. But if we speak properly, communion with God is a mutual interest between God and a man, who hath closed with him in Christ. It is a commonness, or a common interest between God and a man; not only is a man interested in God himself, but in all that is the Lord's; so the Lord hath a special interest in the man, and all that belongs to him. There is a communion between husband and wife, whereby they have a special interest in other persons, goods, gear, and concerns? so is it here: there is such a communion with God, he is our God, and all things are ours, because he is ours. This communion with God all true believers have at all times, as we shall shew afterwards. I grant there is an actual improvement of that communion, whereby men do boldly meddle with any thing that belongs unto God, and do meddle with him. If, as their own, with much homeliness and familiarity; especially in worship, when the soul doth converse

with a living God, partaking of the divine nature, growing like unto him, and sweetly travelling through his attributes, and with some confidence of interest viewing these things as the man's own goods and gear: this we call communion with God in ordinances. This is not so ordinarily nor frequently made out to men, and all his people do not equally partake of it; and it is true, that what is in God, goeth not out for the behoof of the man, so his apprehension equally at all times; we certainly communion with God, properly called, viz. that commonness of interest between God and a man, who is savingly in covenant with him, doth always stand firm and sure; and so much of communion with God in ordinances have all believers, as that their heart converse with a living God there, now and then, and is in some measure changed into that same image; and there needeth be no doubt about any further in it.

Thirdly, There is a thing which is called fellowship with God, often mistaken also amongst believers. If by fellowship be meant the walking in our duty as in the sight of a living God, who seeth and heareth us, and is witness to all our carriage, it is a thing common unto all gracious men; they all have it habitually, and in design, Psal. xvi. 8. "I have set the Lord always before me." Yea, and often they have it actually in exercise, when their spirit is in any good frame; they walk as if they saw God standing by them, and have some thoughts of

his favor through Christ: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3. If we by fellowship mean a sweet refreshing, familiar, sensible conversing with God, which doth delight and refresh the soul, beside what the conscience duty doth; it is then a walking in the light, his countenance, and a good part of Tenure's presence: and although it seemeth Enoch to have much of it, whilst it is said, "he walked with God," Gen. v. 24. yet it is not so ordinary as the former, nor so common to all christians; for here the soul is filled "as with marrow and fatness, following hard after its guide, and figuratively upheld by his right hand," Psal. lxxiii. 5, 8. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; my soul followeth hard after thee, my right hand upholdeth me."

Fourthly, There is a thing which is called access unto God; and this I take to be the removing of obstructions out of the way between a man and God, so as the man is admitted to come near. We are said to have access to a great person, when doors are cast open, guards removed from about him, and we admitted to come close at him; so it is here. Now this access, in scripture, is sometimes taken for Christ's preparing of the way, the removing of enmity between God and sinners, so as men now have a patent way to come unto God through Christ; Eph. ii. 18. "For through him we both have an access by one spirit unto

the Father." Sometimes it is taken for the actual improvement of that access purchased by Christ, when a man finds all obstructions and differences, which do ordinarily fall in between him and God, removed: God is not uncouth to him, nor as a stranger, keeping up himself from him, or frowning on him; but the man is admitted to "come even to his seat," as Job xxiii. 3. Of the want of this doth Job complain, Job xxiii. 8, 9. whilst he saith, "I go forward, backward, to the right and left hand, but I find him not." The first sort of access is common to all believers; they are brought near by the blood of the covenant, and are no more far off, as the deadly enmity between God and them is removed. But access in the other sense is dispensed more according to the Lord's absolute sovereignty and pleasure, and it is left in the power of believers to obstruct it unto themselves, until it please the Lord mercifully and freely to grant it unto them again; so it is up and down, and there needs be no question as to a man's state about it.

Fifthly, There is a thing called liberty before God; and this properly is freedom, or free speaking unto God. Many do much question their state, because of the want of this now and then, since the scripture hath said, "Where the spirit is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. But they do unjustly confuse that liberty spoken of there, unto this free speaking before God. I grant where the spirit of the Lord doth savingly discover God's will in the

scriptures to a man, there is liberty from any obligation to the ceremonial law, and from the condemning power of the moral law, and from much of that gross darkness and ignorance which is on natural hearts as a veil hiding Christ in the gospel from them. I grant that sometimes even this liberty, which is free communing with God, and "ordering our cause before him, and filling of our mouth with arguments," Job xxiii. 4. is granted to the godly, but not as liberty taken in the latter senses. Although the Lord hath obliged himself to "pour out the spirit of prayer upon all the house of David" in some measure, Zech. xii. 10. yet this communication of the spirit, which we call liberty or free speaking unto God, dependeth much on the Lord's absolute pleasure, when, and in what measure to allow it. This liberty, which we call freedom or free speaking with God in prayer, is sometimes much abstracted from any great confidence in the time of prayer, at least, until it draw towards the close of it: it standeth much in a vivacity of the understanding to take up the case which a man is to speak before God, so as he can order his cause; and next, that be words, or verbal expressions, elegant, suitable, and very emphatical, or powerful and pithy. There is also joined a fervency of spirit in prayer, whereof the scripture speaketh, the soul is hot and bended, and very intent.

There is also ordinarity in this liberty, a special melting of the heart, when joined with

a great measure of the "spirit of grace and supplication," Zech. xii. 10. So the soul is poured out before God as for a first-born. Such is the liberty which many saints get before God, whilst in much brokenness of heart and fervency of spirit they are admitted to speak their mind fully to God, as a living God, noticing (at least) their prayer. Sometimes this liberty is joined with confidence, and then it is not only a free, but also a bold speaking before God. It is that boldness with confidence, Eph. iii. 12. "In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence by the faith of him." This is more rarely imparted unto men than the former, yet it is ordinary: it hath in it, beside what we spoke before, some influence of the spirit upon faith, making it put on some vigorous acting in prayer. There is a sweet mournful frame of spirit, by which a man poureth out his heart in God's bosom, and with some confidence of his favor and good-will, pleadeth his cause before him as a living God; and this is all the sensible presence that many saints do attain unto. There is no ground of doubt about a man's state, in the point of liberty before God, in this last sense, because there is nothing essential to the making up of a gracious state here: some have it, some want it; some have it at some times, and not at other times, so that it is much up and down: yet I may say, gracious men may do much, by a very ordinary influence, contri-

bying towards the attaining and retaining, or keeping of such a frame of spirit.

Sixthly, There is a thing called influence or breathing of the spirit. This gracious influence (for of such only do I now speak) is either ordinary; and this is the operations of the holy spirit on the soul, and the habits of grace there, whereby they are still kept alive, and in some exercise and acting, although not very discernible. This influence, I conceive, doth always attend believers, and is that keeping, watering night and day, and every moment, promised, *Isai. xxvii. 3.* Or, this influence is more singular and special, and is that same to a gracious, although a withered soul, as the wind and breath to the dry bones, putting them in good case, *Ezek. xxxvii. 9, 10.* and as the dew or rain to the grass, or newly mown field and parched ground, *Psal. lxxii. 6.* Such influence is meant, *Cant. iv. 16.* by the "blowing of the south wind, making the spices to flow out." When the spirit moveth thus, there is an edge put upon the graces of God in the soul, and they are made to act more vigorously. This is the "enlarging of the heart," by which a "man doth run in the ways of God," *Psal. cxix. 32.* This influence is more discernible than the former, and not so ordinarily communicated. Also here, sometimes the wind bloweth more upon one grace, and sometimes more discernably upon another, and often upon many of the graces together, and according to the lesser or greater measure

of this influence, the soul acteth more or less vigorously towards God: and since faith is a created grace in the soul, this influence of the spirit is upon it, sometimes less, sometimes more, and accordingly is the assurance of faith small or great.

Seventhly, There is the hearing of prayer, often spoken of in scripture; and many vex themselves about it, alledging that they know nothing of it experimentally. I grant there is a favorable hearing of prayer; but we must remember it is two fold. Either first, it is such as a man is simply to believe by way of argument on scriptural grounds: as if I be tied unto Christ, and do approach unto God in him, pray according to his will, not regarding iniquity in my heart, exercising faith about the thing I pray for, absolutely or conditionally, according to the nature of the thing, and promises about it; I am obliged to believe that God heareth my prayer, and will give what is good, according to these scriptures, *John xiv. 13, 14.* "Whatsoever ye ask in my name, I will do it." *1 John v. 14.* "This is our confidence that whatsoever we ask according to his will, he heareth us." *Mark xi. 24.* "Believe that ye receive, and ye shall have what ye desire." *Psal. lxvi. 18.* "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear:" then if I regard not iniquity, I may believe that he doth hear me. Or, secondly, a man doth sensibly perceive that God heareth his prayer; it is made out to his heart, with-

not any syllogistical deduction. Such a hearing of prayer got Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18. "her countenance was no more sad." Surely the Lord did breathe upon her faith, and made her believe that she was heard: she could not make it out by any argument; for she had no grounds whereupon to build the premises of the argument, according to scripture, in that particular: God did stamp it some way upon her heart sensibly, and so made her believe it. This is but rarely granted, especially in cases clearly deducible in scripture; therefore people are much to be satisfied in exercising their faith about the other, and ought to leave it to God to give of this latter what he pleaseth. A man's gracious state should not be brought upon debate, upon the account of such hearing of prayer.

Eighthly, There is assurance of God's favour by the witnessing of our own spirits; which assurance is deduced by way of argument syllogistically thus: whosoever believeth on Christ shall never perish; but I do believe on Christ; therefore I shall never perish: who so hath respect unto all God's commandments shall never be ashamed; but I have respect unto all his commands; therefore I shall never be ashamed. I say, by reasoning thus, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual things, a man may attain unto a good certainty of his gracious state. It is supposed, 1 John iii. 18, 19, that by "loving the brethren indeed and in truth, we may assure our hearts before God,"

and that a man may rejoice upon the testimony of a good conscience, 2 Cor. i. 12. a man "may have confidence towards God, if his heart do not condemn him," 1 John iii. 21. We may then attain unto some assurance although not full assurance, by the witness of our own spirits. I do not deny that in this witnessing of our spirits towards assurance, there is some concurrence of the Spirit of God: But I conceive, there needeth but a very ordinary influence, without which we can do nothing. Now, this assurance, such as it is, may be reached by intelligent believers, who keep a good conscience in their walk. So I hope, there needs be no debate about it, as to a man's gracious state; for if a man will clear himself of heart condemnings, he will speedily reach this assurance.

Ninthly, There is a "witnessing of God's Spirit," mentioned, Rom. viii. 16. "bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." This operation of the spirit is best understood, if we produce any syllogism by which our spirit doth witness our sonship; as for example, whosoever loveth the brethren is past from death to life, and consequently is in Christ; but I love the brethren; therefore I am past from death to life. Here there is a three-fold operation of the spirit, or three operations rather; the first is a beam of divine light upon the first proposition, persuading the divine authority of it, as the word of God.

The spirit of the Lord himself witnesseth the divinity of the scripture, and that it is the infallible word of God, far beyond all other arguments that can be used for it. The second operation is a glorious beam of light from the spirit, shining upon the second proposition, and so upon his own graces in the soul, discovering them to be true graces, and such as the scripture calleth so. Thus we are said to "know by his spirit the things that are freely given unto us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 13. The third operation is in order to the third proposition of the argument, or the conclusion; and this I conceive to be nothing else but an influence upon faith, strengthening it to draw a conclusion of full assurance upon the foresaid premises.

Now, (with submission unto others, who have greater light in the scripture, and more experience of these precious communications) I do conceive the witness of the spirit, or witnessing of it, which is mentioned Rom. viii. 16. "The spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," is not that first operation upon the first proposition; for that operation is that testimony of the spirit, by which he beareth witness to the divinity of the whole scripture, and asserteth the divine authority of it unto the souls of gracious men; and such an operation may be upon a truth of scripture, which doth not relate to a man's sonship or interest in Christ at all. The spirit may so shine upon any truth, relating to duty, or any other fundamental truth persuading the

divinity of it, upon ~~the~~ ^{the} soul, and speak nothing relating to a man's interest in Christ. Neither is the third operation of the spirit, by which he makes faith boldly draw the conclusion, this witnessing of the spirit; for that operation is nothing else but an influence upon faith, bringing it out to full assurance; but that whereupon this full assurance is drawn or put out, is somewhat deposed and witnessed already: therefore I conceive the second operation of the spirit upon the second proposition, and so upon the graces in the man, is that witness of God's Spirit, that beam of divine light shining upon those graces, whereby they are made very conspicuous to the understanding: that is the witness, the shining so on them is his witnessing; for only here in this proposition, and in this operation, doth the Spirit of God prove a co-witness with our spirit: for the main thing wherein the witness of our spirit lyeth is in the second proposition, and so the Spirit of God, witnessing with our spirits, is also in that same proposition. So these two witnesses having deposed and witnessed one and the same thing, viz. the truth and reality of such and such graces in the man, which our own spirit or conscience doth depose, according to its knowledge, and the Spirit of the Lord doth certainly affirm and witness to be so; there is a sentence drawn forth, and a conclusion of the man's sonship by the man's faith breath'd upon by the spirit for that effect; and this conclusion beareth the full assurance of a man's sonship. It may be pre-

sumed, that some true saints do not partake of this all their days, as Heb. ii. 15. "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Tenthly, I speak with the experience of many saints, and I hope according to scripture, if I say, there is a communication of the Spirit of God which is let out to some of his people sometimes, that is somewhat beside, if not beyond, that witnessing of a sonship spoken of before. It is a glorious divine manifestation of God unto the soul, shedding abroad God's love in the heart. It is a thing better felt than spoken of. It is no audible voice, but it is a waft of glory filling the soul with God, as he is life, light, love and liberty, countervailing that audible voice, "O man greatly beloved," Dan. x. 19. putting a man in a transport with this on his heart, "It is good to be here," as Mat. xvii. 4. It is that which went out from Christ to Mary, when he but mentioned her name, John xx. 16. "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master." He had spoken some words to her before, and she understood not that it was he: but when he uttereth this one word, Mary, there was some admirable divine conveyance and manifestation made out unto her heart, by which she was so satisfyingly filled, that there was no place for arguing and disputing whether or no that was Christ, and if she had any interest in him. That manifestation made faith to itself; and did

purchase credit and trust to itself; and was equivalent with "Thus saith the Lord." This is such a glance of glory, that it may, in the highest sense, be called "the earnest or first fruits of the inheritance," Eph. i. 14. for it is a felt armful of the holy God, almost wholly conforming the man unto his likeness, so swallowing him up, that he forgetteth all things except the present manifestation. O how glorious is this manifestation of the spirit! faith here riseth to so full an assurance, that it resolveth wholly into sensible embracements of God. This is the thing which doth best deserve the title of sensible presence, and, it is like, is not given unto all believers, some whereof "are all their days under bondage, and in fear," Heb. ii. 15. But here "love, almost perfect, casteth out fear," 1 John iv. 18. This is so absolutely let out upon the master's pleasure, and so transient, and passing, or quickly gone when it is, that no man may bring his gracious state upon debate for want of it.

Eleventhly, There is a thing we call peace, about which many do vex themselves. This peace is either about a man's state, that he is reconciled unto God by Jesus Christ, or it is about his present case and condition, that he is walking so as approved of God, at least, so far as there is no quarrel or controversy between God and him threatening a stroke. Both of these are either such in the count of scripture, and consequently in God's account; or in the court of a man's own conscience. Peace about

a man's state, as being in Christ, is sure in the court of scripture and of heaven, when a man doth by faith cleave with Christ and the new covenant. Rom. v. 1. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. It being sure and solid in the court of the scripture, it should hold sure in the court of a man's conscience, it being rightly informed; for in that case, it still speaks according to scripture: But, because often the conscience is misinformed and in the dark; therefore there is often peace about a man's state according to scripture, whilst his conscience doth threaten the contrary, and doth still condemn, and refuseth to assail the man, as being reconciled unto God through Christ. In this case the conscience must be informed, and the man's gracious state made out by the marks of grace, as we shewed before; and here the witness of my own spirit will do much to allay the cry of the conscience; and if the Spirit of the Lord join his witness and testimony, the conscience is perfectly satisfied, and proclaimed peace to the man.

The other peace about a man's present state or condition, viz. that it is approven of God in a gospel-sense, it may be wanting, and justly wanting, although the peace about a man's state be sure. This peace about a man's state and condition, is either such in the court of scripture: and this is when a man is not regarding iniquity, and respecting the command of God without exception; then the scripture saith, he stands in an even place, and he need

not fear nor stated quarrel between God and him, in order to a temporary stroke; and when it is thus, his conscience should also assail him that same way, and would do so, if it were rightly informed: but because the conscience is often in the dark, therefore a man may be alarmed with evil in the court of conscience, as if he were justly to expect a stroke from God because of his sin, and some quarrel God hath at him, although he intend salvation for him. This is enough to keep a man in disquiet, and to inhibit him the rejoicing allowed unto him, whilst he is walking in his integrity: therefore a man must here also inform his conscience, and receive no accusations nor condemnings from it, unless it make them clear by scripture. At that bar let every man stand, both about his state, and his condition or case; and let him appeal from all other courts to that, and not receive any indictment, but conform to the truth of God, by which the conscience is to proceed in all things. And if this were well looked unto, there would not be so many groundless suspicions amongst the Lord's people, either about their state, or their condition, upon every thought which entereth their mind.

Twelfthly, There is the joy of the Holy Ghost; and this is when the spirit doth breathe upon our rejoicing in God, (which is a grace very lively in exercise with many) and maketh it set out sensibly and vigorously; and he excitemeth and stirreth the passion of joy and of delight in the soul, so as there is an "unspeakable

and glorious joy in the soul," is the apprehension of God's friendship and nearness unto him. 1. Pet. i. 18. "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This joy followeth upon peace, and peace followeth righteousness. Rom. xiv. 17. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." This joy readily will not fail to be according to the measure of the assurance of faith, as 1. Pet. i. 8. "In whom believing ye rejoice: so that the removal of mistakes about other things will allay doubts about this.

Now, because some of these excellent communications of the spirit, after they are gone, are brought in question as delusions of Satan; for vindication of them, we say, that the special operations of God's spirit in any high degree, usually are communicated to people after such brokenness of spirit, Psal. li. 8. "Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." After so singular pains in religious duty, Dan. ix. 3, 21. "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth, and ashes. And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin—the man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me." Or, in time of such suffering for righteousness, 1. Pet. iv. 13, 14. "Rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed

ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye; for the spirit of glory, and of God resteth upon you." Or if they break in as the rain that waiteth not for man, then they do so humble and abase the person, Isai. vi. 5. "Wo is me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips—for mine eyes have seen the king the Lord of hosts." And there are found so many evidences of grace in the man, Rom. viii. 16. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Or these things do so provoke unto holiness, and to have every thing answerable and conform to these manifestations of God, 2. Tim. ii. 19. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." The person under them doth so lothe all things beside God's friendship and fellowship, Mat. xvii. 4. "Peter said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here." And these things do carry on them and with them so much authority and divine superintension, whilst they are in the soul, that afterwards they may appear sufficiently to be special communications of God, and singular gracious operations of his spirit, and no delusions of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light, 2. Cor. xi. 14. nor such common flashes of the spirit as may admit afterwards irrecoverable apostacy from God, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the hea-

venly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."

Now then, to conclude this part of the work that relateth unto trial; I say to all these who complain of the want of the gracious out-letting of the spirit, 1st, Bless God if you want nothing essential for making out of a saving interest in Christ. God hath given unto you Christ Jesus, the greatest gift he had; and since your heart is shapen out for him, he will, with him, give you all things that are good for you in their season. 2dly, I do believe upon a right search and trial, after you have understood the communications of the spirit, you are so great a stranger in many things as you did suspect yourself to be. But 3dly, remember the promises of life and of peace with God are no where, in scripture, made unto these special things whereof you alledge the want: the promises are made unto faith, followed with holiness; and it may be presumed that many heirs of glory do not in this life partake of some of these things, but are "in bondage all their days through fear of death," Heb. ii. 15. so that there should be no mistake about these things; we may seek after them, but God is free to give or withhold them. 4thly, many do seek after such manifestations before they give credit by faith unto God's word. He hath born record that there is life enough for

men in Christ Jesus; and if men would by believing set to their seal that God is true, they should partake of more of these excellent things. 5thly, I may say, many have not honorable apprehensions and thoughts of the spirit of God, whose proper work it is to put out the foresaid noble operations. They do not adore him as God, but vex, grieve, quench, and resist him; and many people complaining of the want of these things are not at the pains to seek the spirit in his outgoings, and few do set themselves apart for such precious receipts. Therefore be at more pains in religion, give more credit to his word, and esteem more highly of the spirit of God, and so you may find more of these excellent things.

PART II.

How to attain unto a saving interest in Christ.

HAVING, in the former part of this treatise, put every man's state to trial, it now remains, that in this following part, we give advice to those who neither can, nor dare lay claim to the marks formerly mentioned.

Quest. II. What shall they do who want the marks of a true and saving interest in Christ, already spoken of, and neither can nor dare pretend unto them?

Ans. If men miss in themselves the marks of a saving interest in Christ, spoken of before, then it is their duty, and of all that hear this gospel, personally and heartily to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, and this shall secure their state.

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CHAP. I.

Some things premised for the information of those who are more ignorant.

FOR the better understanding of this, we shall premise some things for information of those who are more ignorant, and then speak more directly to the thing. As for the things to be premised:

I. The Lord did at the beginning, out of his bounty, make a covenant with man in Adam, Gen. ii. 16, 17. and did enable man to abide in that covenant, Eccles. vii. 29. "God hath made man upright." But man by eating of that forbidden fruit, Gen. iii. did break that covenant, Hos. vi. 7. "They like Adam have transgressed the covenant;" and made it void for ever, Rom. iii. 28. "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight;" and involved himself into all misery thereby, Rom. v. 12. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

II. The Lord did most freely, from everlasting, purpose and intend to save men another way, viz. by Christ Jesus and the covenant of grace, in which he intended reconciliation with the elect through Christ Jesus, God and man, born of a woman in due time, to make this

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agreement effectual. And this device of satisfying his own justice, and saving of the elect by Christ, he did at first intimate to our parents in paradise; Gen. iii. 15. where he saith, "That the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And the Lord hath, in all generations, made this known to his church.

III. The Lord hath in all ages covenanted to be the reconciled God of all these who, by their subjection to his ordinances, did profess their satisfaction with this device, and oblige themselves to acquiesce in the same, and to seek salvation by Christ Jesus, as God doth offer him in the gospel; so all the people of Israel are called the Lord's people, and are said to "avouch him to be their God," and he "doth avouch them to be his people," Exod. xix. 5, 8. Deut. xxvi. 17, 18. Yea, the Lord doth also engage himself to be the God of the seed and children of those who so subject themselves to his ordinances. The covenant is said to be made between God and all the people, young and old, present and not present that day, Deut. xxix. 10, 11—15. and all are appointed to come under some seal of that covenant, as was enjoined to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 10. Not only was it so in the Old Testament, but it is so in the New Testament also: the Lord makes offer of himself to be our God in Christ Jesus; and the people professing their satisfaction in that offer, and in testimony thereof subjecting themselves unto the ordinances, they are reckoned a covenanted people, and are joined unto

his church in thousands, receiving a seal of the covenant, without any further particular previous trial, Acts ii. 38—41. "Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.—Then they that gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

IV. Many do deal treacherously with God in this covenant, Psal. lxxviii. 36, 37. "Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth; and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was no right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." And although they profess their estimation of Christ the Saviour, and their heart satisfaction with that device of saving sinners by him, and having the image of God restored by him in them; yet their heart is not right with God, and they do content themselves with an empty title, of being in a sealed covenant with God, John viii. 39. "Abraham is our father," say they. For although the Lord obligeth every man, who professeth his satisfaction with Christ Jesus the devised ransom, to be cordial and sincere herein; and only to those who are so doth he make out the spiritual promises of the covenant, they only being "privileged to be the sons of God, who do really receive Christ," John i. 12. yet the Lord doth permit many to profess their cloying with him in Christ, both in the Old and New Testament, whilst their

heart is not engaged; and he doth admit them to be members of his church, granting unto them the use of ordinances, and many other external mercies and privileges denied unto the heathen, who are not in covenant with him.

V. Although the great part of people do foolishly fancy, that they have closed with God in Christ Jesus sincerely and heartily; or at least, they do, without any ground or warrant, promise a new heart to themselves before they depart this life; yet there be but very few who do really and cordially close with God in Christ Jesus, as he is offered in the gospel; and so there be but very few saved, as is clear, Mat. vii. 13. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be who find it." Mat. xx. 16. "Many are called, but few are chosen." If people would believe this, it might help to alarm them.

VI. Although none at all do cordially close with God in Christ Jesus, and acquiesce in that ransom found out by God, except only such as are elected, Rom. xi. 7. "But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded;" and whose hearts the Lord doth sovereignly determine to that blessed choice, John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him;" yet the Lord hath left it as a duty upon people who hear this gospel, to close with his offer of salvation through Christ Jesus, as if it were in their power to do it: and the Lord through these commands and exhortations, wherein he

obligeth men to the thing, doth convey life and strength to the elect, and doth therein convey the new heart unto them; which pointeth kindly towards this new device of saving sinners; and towards Christ in his covenant relations; or, it is the Lord's mind in these commands and invitations, to put people on some duty, with which he useth to concur, for accomplishing that business between him and them: so then, it is a coming on our part, and yet a drawing on his part, John vi. 44. it is a drawing on his part, and a running on our part, Cant. i. 4. it is an approaching on our part, and yet a choosing and caring to approach on his part, Psal. lxxv. 4. it is a believing or receiving on our part, John i. 12. and yet it is given us to believe, Philip. i. 29.

CH A P. II.

What it is to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, and that it is a necessary duty.

HAVING premised these things, I say, if men miss in themselves the marks of a saving interest in Christ, spoken of in the former part of his treatise; then for securing their state, they are obliged with all diligence personally and heartily to accept of, and close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, held out in the gospel.

In handling of this, we shall, 1st, shew what it is to accept of, and close with that noble invention. 2dly, we shall shew that it is the necessary duty of those who would be in favor with God, and secure their souls. 3dly, what is previously required of those who perform this duty. 4thly, what are the qualifications and properties of this duty, if rightly managed. 5thly, what be the native consequences of it, if it be performed aright.

As for the first, what it is to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, held out in the gospel: here we must remember, as we shewed before, that at first God willed man to abide in his favor, by holding fast his first integrity in which he was created; but man by his transgression lost God's favor, made void that covenant of works, and put himself in an utter incapacity to regain the Lord's friendship, which he had lost by his sin, and to rescue himself from the curse and wrath now due to him for the same, or any way to procure his own salvation: but the Lord freely hath manifested another way of repairing man's lost estate, viz. by sending his Son Christ Jesus in the flesh, to satisfy his justice for the sins of the elect, and to restore in them his image now defaced, and to bring them unto glory: and he hath made open proclamation in the church, that whosoever will lay aside all thoughts of saving themselves by the covenant of works, or inherent righteousness, and will agree heartily to be saved by Christ Jesus, they shall be restored to

a better condition than formerly man was in; and shall be saved. So then, to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, is, to quit and forego all thoughts of help or salvation by our own righteousness, and to agree unto this way which God hath found out; it is to value and highly esteem of Christ Jesus, as the treasure sufficient to enrich poor man, and with the heart to believe this record, that there is life enough in him for men; it is to please this invention, and to acquiesce in it, as the only way to true happiness; it is to point towards this mediator as God holdeth him out in the gospel, with desire to lay the stress of our whole state on him. This is that which is called faith or believing, the "receiving of Christ, or believing on his name," John i. 12. This is that "believing on the Lord Jesus Christ," commanded unto the jailer for his safety, Acts xvi. 31. This agreeth to all the descriptions of justifying faith in the scripture. This doth answer the type of "looking to the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness," John iii. 14, 15. And this is supposed in in all these ordinary actings of faith, to which promises are annexed in the scripture; and will be found in all who have got the new heart from God, and it will be found in none else.

As to the second thing, viz. That this is the necessary duty of all such who would be in favor with God, and secure their souls; it appeareth thus:

I. This closing with God's device, or be-

believing in Christ, is commanded every where in scripture by the Lord, as the condition of the new covenant, giving title and right unto all the spiritual blessings of the same; for it is, upon the matter, the receiving of Christ. This is commanded, whilst God bids men "come and buy," that is, improprieate all, by closing with that device, Isa. lv. 1. The weary are commanded to come unto him thus, for their rest, Mat. xi. 28. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23. This is enough to prove it a duty incumbent. But further, it is such a duty, as only giveth title and right to a sonship; for, only they who receive him are privileged to be sons, John i. 12, "But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

II. It appeareth to be the necessary duty of all, thus; No less than this doth give a meeting unto God, offering himself to be our God in Christ; and no less than this doth answer our profession, as we are in covenant with him, as members of his visible church. The Lord offereth to be our God in Christ; if we do not close with the offer, laying aside all thoughts of other ways by which we may attain to happiness, we give no meeting to him. He saith, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; here ye him," Mat. xvii. 1. If we close not with the offer, we give no answer unto God. Moreover, we are all "bap-

tized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," Acts ii. 38. Now, unless we close with Christ, as said is, we falsify that profession; therefore, since this is the thing which doth answer God's offer in the gospel, and maketh good our profession as members of his church, it is a necessary duty lying upon us.

III. Whatsoever a man hath else, if he do not thus close with God's device about Christ Jesus, and do not receive him, it doth not avail, either as to the accepting of his person, or of his performances, or as to the saving of his soul. Men are accepted only in Christ the beloved, Eph. i. 6. Abel and his offering are accepted by faith, Heb. xi. 4. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 6. And "he that believeth not, is condemned already, and shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 18, 36. For want of this, no external title doth avail; the "children of the kingdom are cast out" if this be wanting, Mat. viii. 10, 11, 12. The people of Israel are like other heathens, in regard of a graceless state, lying open to the wrath of God, Jer. ix. 25, 26. "Behold, the days come saith the Lord, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised, Egypt, and Judah, and Edom—for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart." If men do not believe that he who was slain at

Jerusalem, who was called Christ Jesus, and witnessed unto by the prophets, and declared to be the Son of God by many mighty works; I say, if men do not believe that he is the way, and close not with him as the only way, they shall die in their sins, John viii. 24. "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

We say then, it is a most necessary duty thus to close with Christ Jesus, as the blessed relief appointed for sinners. Every one who has come to years of understanding, and hears this gospel, is obliged to take to heart his own lost condition, and God's gracious offer of peace and salvation through Christ Jesus; and speedily to flee from the wrath to come, by accepting and closing with this offer, heartily acquiescing therein as a satisfying way for saving poor sinners. And, that all may be the more encouraged to set about this duty, when they hear him praying them to be reconciled unto him, let them remember that peace and salvation is offered to the people in universal terms, to all without exception; "If any man will," he shall be welcome, Rev. xxii. 17. If any thirst, although after that which will never profit, yet they shall be welcome here, on the condition foresaid, Isa. lv. 2, 3. All are "commanded to believe," 1 John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." The promises are to all who are ex-

ternally called by the gospel. God excludes none, if they do not exclude themselves, Acts ii. 39. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." So that if any have a mind for the thing, they may come forward, "he will in no wise cast them out," John vi. 37. being "able to save to the uttermost them who come to God through him," Heb. vii. 25. And these who have long delayed to take this matter to heart had now the more need to look to it, lest what belongs to their peace be hid from their eyes. But all these words will not take effect with people, until "God pour out his Spirit from on high," Isa. xxxii. 15. to cause men approach unto God in Christ; yet we must still press men's duty upon them, and obtest and charge them, by the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, and their reckoning to him in that day, that they give the Lord no rest, until he send out that Spirit, which he will give to them that ask it. Luke xi. 13. and cause them to know what belongs unto their peace, and bring them up to their duty.

C H A P. III.

What is previously required of those that would believe in Christ Jesus.

WE come now to speak of the third thing, viz. what is previously required of

these who are to perform this duty. Men must not rashly, inconsiderately and ignorantly rush in upon this matter, saying, they please that device of saving sinners by Christ, and will acquiesce and rest on him for safety: often, men do deceive themselves here, and do imagine that they have done the thing. We shall therefore hold out some things pre-required in a person who is to close with Christ Jesus; which although we offer not as positive qualifications fitting a man for Christ that way, Isa. lv. 1. "Come without money, and without price;" yet they are such things, as, without them, a man cannot knowingly and cordially perform the duty of believing on Christ Jesus.

Beside the common principles which are to be supposed in those who live under gospel ordinances: as the knowledge that men have immortal souls; that soul and body will be united again at the last day; that there is a heaven and hell, one of which will be the everlasting lot of all men; that the Old and New Testament is the true word of God, and the rule of faith and manners; that every man is by nature void of the grace of God, and is an enemy unto God, and an heir of condemnation; that reconciliation is only by the Mediator Christ Jesus; that faith unites unto him, and is the condition of the new covenant; that holiness is the fruit of true faith, and is to be studied, as that without which no man shall see God. I say, beside these things, the knowledge of which is necessary, it is required of

him who would believe on Christ Jesus, 1st. That he take to heart his natural condition; and here he must know some things, and also be very serious about them: I say, he must know some things; as,

I. That as he was born a rebel and out-law unto God; so he hath by many actual transgressions disobliged God, and ratified the forfeiture of his favor: yea, a man should know many particular instances of his rebellion on all hands; as that he is a liar, sabbath-breaker, blasphemer, or the like; as Paul speaketh very particularly of himself afterwards, 1 Tim. i. 13.

II. The man must know, that the wrath of God denounced in scripture is standing in force against those very sins whereof he is guilty; and so consequently he is the party actually against whom God, who cannot lie, hath denounced war. A man must know, that when the scripture saith, "Cursed is he that offereth a corrupt thing unto God," Mal. i. 14. it speaketh against him for his superficial service performed unto God with the outward man, when his heart was far off. When the word saith, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain," Exod. xx. 7. the man must know it speaketh against himself, who hath often carelessly profaned that dreadful name, before which all knees should bow, Philip. ii. 10. and which his enemies do take in vain, Psal. cxxxix. 20. When the word saith, "Cursed is he that doth the work

of the Lord negligently," Jer. xlviii. 10. the man must know that it speaks against himself, who hath irreverently, with much wandering of heart, and drowsiness, heard the word preached; and without sense, faith or understanding, hath often prayed before him. When the word saith, "Wo be unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, and putteth his bottle to him, to make him drunk also, that he may look on his nakedness," Hab. ii. 15, 16. the man must know that it is spoken against himself, who hath gloried in making his neighbor drunk, and that dreadful wrath is determined by the Lord against him, according to that scripture. When the word saith, "God will judge unclean persons," Heb. xiii. 4. and will close the door, &c. new "Jerusalem, and they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxi. 8. the man must know that the scripture speaketh these very words against him, he being an unclean person; so that he is the person against whom the curses of the law do directly strike.

III. A man must know, that he hath nothing of his own to procure his peace, and to set him free of the hazard under which he lieth; because "all his righteousness is as an unclean thing," Isa. lxiv. 6. His prayers, his other services done to God, his alms-deeds, &c. are not pass-gilt before God, since they came not from a right principle in his heart, and were not performed in a right way, nor upon a right account, nor for a right end: his "sacrifices

have been an abomination unto God," Prov. xxi. 27.

IV. He must know, that as he is void of all the saving graces of the spirit, as the true love of God, the true fear of his name, godly sorrow for sin, &c. so particularly, that he wants faith in Christ, who taketh burden for all them who believe on him. Until a man know this, he will still leave all his debt and burden, without care or regard, any where else, before he bring it to the common cautioner.

Now, not only must a man know these things, as I said before, but must also very seriously take them to heart; that is to say, he must be affected with these things, and be in sad earnest about them, as he useth to be in other cases, wherein he useth to be most serious; yea, he should be more in earnest here, than in other cases, because it is of greater concernment unto him. This seriousness produceth,

I. A taking of salvation to heart more than any thing else. Shall men be obliged to "seek first the kingdom of God?" Mat. vi. 33. Is there but one thing necessary? Luke x. 42. Shall Paul count all things loss and dung for this matter? Philip. iii. 8. Is a man a loser gaining all the world, if he lose his soul? Mark viii. 36. Shall this be the only ground of joy, "that men's names are written in the book of life?" Luke x. 20. and shall not men, who would be reckoned serious, take their soul and salvation more to heart than any thing else? Surely it cannot fail. Let none deceive them-

selves. If the hazard of their soul, and the salvation thereof, and how to be in favor with God, hath not gone nearer to their heart than any thing in the world beside, it cannot be presumed, upon just grounds, that they ever knew sin or God, or the everlastingness of his wrath aright.

II. This seriousness breaketh the man's heart, and fainteth the stoutness of it, and leadeth it out to sorrow, "as one doth for a first-born," Zech. xii. 10. I grant their sorrow will better fit that scripture afterwards, when they apprehend Christ pierced by their sins.

III. It leadeth a man to a self-loathing. A man, taking up himself so, cannot but loathe himself for his abominations, whereby he hath destroyed himself. There is somewhat of that spirit of revenge, which is mentioned as a fruit of true repentance, 2 Cor. vii. 11. "This self same thing that ye sorrow after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you—yea, what revenge!"

IV. This seriousness doth make the man peremptory to find relief; since it is not in himself, he dare not put off and delay his business, as before: and this is indeed required, that he find himself so pursued and put to it, that he flee for refuge somewhere. I grant some have a higher and some a lesser degree of this seriousness, as we shewed in the former part of this treatise: but if we speak of the Lord's ordinary way of working with those who are come to age, we say, they must very seriously

take their soul's estate to heart, despairing of help in themselves, since "the whole need not a physician, but those that are sick," Mat. ix. 12. As for the measure, we plead only that which probably doth suppose that a man will be induced thereby to transact ~~with~~ ^{seriously} with Christ, on any terms he doth offer himself to be closed with.

The second thing pre-required of him who ~~shall~~ believe on Christ Jesus, is, he must ~~know~~ and take to heart the way of escape from God's wrath: the spirit must convince him of ~~his~~ ^{his} righteousness. Here a man must understand somewhat distinctly, that God hath devised a way to save poor lost man by Jesus Christ, whose perfect righteousness hath ~~been~~ ^{been} offered of ~~God's~~ ^{God's} justice, and procured pardon and everlasting favor to all those whom he persuaded, by his gospel, to accept of God's offer, Acts xiii. 38, 39. "Be it known unto you therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things."—John i. 12. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." So that no person is excluded, of whatsoever rank or condition, whatsoever hath been his former way, unless he be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is a malicious hatred and rejection of the remedy appointed for sinners, as we shall hear: for all manner of sin is forgiven unto those who accept of the offer in God's way,

Mat. xii. 31. "He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God through him," Heb. vii. 25.

The third thing pre-required, is, a man must know, that as God hath not excluded him from the most appointed, so he is willing to be reconciled unto men through Christ, and hath obliged men to close with him through Christ Jesus; and so to impropriate that salvation to themselves. He not only invites all to him, Isa. lv. 1, 2. and welcomes all that come to him, we find in the gospel, and commendeth him to all who come, as the centurion, Mat. viii. 8. and the woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. 28. and chideth for not coming and closing with him, John 6. 40. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life;" and condemneth for not closing so with him, John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already:" but he commandeth all to believe on Christ, John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ:" so as a man is not to question the Lord's willingness to receive men who go to Christ honestly, for God hath abundantly cleared that in scripture. Unless that a man know so much, he will scarcely dare to lay his heart open for that noble device of saving sinners, or adventure his own weight and stress upon Christ Jesus.

The fourth thing pre-required, is, the man who would close with Christ Jesus, must resolve to break all covenants with hell and death,

Isa. xxviii. 15. Whatsoever known evil men are engaged unto, they must resolve to forego it; for, "there is no concord between Christ and Belial," 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. The Lord requireth that they who would expect him to be for them, should not be for another, Hos. iii. 3. This is far from evangelic repentance, which I grant doth not precede a man's closing with Christ by faith: there is here beyond a misregard of these things unto which a man was formerly devoted, and a fighting what he was mad upon, because he hath himself destroyed thereby, and relief now offered; whereupon his heart beginneth to be more intent than formerly it was. After this, when Christ is looked upon alone, his worth and beauty doth appear, so as among all the gods there is none like unto him; and he looketh out as a sufficient covering of the eyes to all who get him: upon which the heart loveth God's device in the new covenant, and loveth to lay its weight upon Christ rather than any other way, bending towards him; and so the man becometh a believer.

Now, I will not say that all these things thereof we have spoken are formally, orderly and distinctly found in every person before he close with God in Christ: for, the way of the heart with Christ may be added to the four wonderful things, Prov. xxx. 18, 19. It is hard to trace the heart in its translation from darkness to light. Yet we hold out the most ordinary and likely way, to him who doth ask

the way; debarring thereby ignorant and senseless persons from meddling, and discharging them so pretend to any interest in him whilst they remain such.

C H A P. IV.

The properties and native consequences of true believing.

THE fourth thing we proposed to speak is, the properties of this duty, which I shall only hint a few.

I. Believing on Christ must be personal. A man himself and in his own proper person must close with Christ Jesus; "The just shall live by his faith," Hab. ii. 4. This faith, that will not suffice for a man's safety and redemption, that he is in covenant with God, as a member of the visible church, by virtue of his parents' subjection to God's ordinances: shall it suffice, that the person had the ratiating seal of baptism added, and that he is virtually engaged to seek salvation by Christ's blood, as all infants do: neither doth it suffice, that men are come of believing parents: their faith will not institute their children in right to the spiritual blessings of the covenant: neither will it suffice that parents did in former respect engage for their children, and give them away unto God: all these things do not admit the children of the kingdom and of godly

deceit are cast out; unless a man, in his own person, put out faith in Christ Jesus, and with his own heart please and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners, he cannot be saved. I grant this faith is given unto him by Christ; but certain it is, that it must be personal.

II. This duty must be "cordial and hearty; with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," Rom. x. 10. A man must be sincere, and without guile in closing with Christ, judging him the only covering of the eyes, not hankering after another way. The matter must not swim only in the head or understanding, but it must be in the heart; the man not only must be persuaded that Christ is the way, but affectionately persuaded of it, loving and liking the thing, having complacency in it; so that "it is all a man's desire," as David speaketh of the covenant, 2 Sam. x. iii. 5. If a man be cordial and affectionate in any thing, surely he must be so here in this one thing, that is necessary. It must not be simply, a fancy in the head, it must be a heart-business, a soul-business; yea, not a business in the outer court of affections, but in the flower of affections, and in the inmost cabinet of the soul, where Christ is formed. Shall a man be cordial in any thing, and not in this, which doth comprise all his chief interest, and his everlasting state within it? Shall "the Lord be said to rejoice over a man, as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride?" Isa. lxii. 5. and to "rejoice over him that is born of him?"

in his love with joy?" Zeph. iii. 17. and shall not the heart of man go out and meet him here? The heart or nothing; love or nothing; marriage-love, which goeth from heart to heart, love of espousals, or nothing, Prov. xxiii. 26. "My son, give me thine heart." 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." I will not say, that there is in all, as soon as they believe, a prevailing sensible love, which maketh sick; but there must be in believing a rational and kindly love, so well grounded and deeply engaging, that "many waters cannot quench it. It is strong as death, and jealousy in it burneth as fire," Cant. viii. 6, 7.

The third property or qualification of believing, as it goeth out after Christ, it must be rational. Hereby I mean, that the man should move towards God in Christ, in knowledge and understanding; taking up God's device of saving sinners by Christ, as the scripture doth hold it out; not fancying a Christ to himself, otherwise than the gospel speaketh of him, nor another way of relief by him than the word of God holdeth out. Therefore we find knowledge joined to the covenant between God and man as a requisite, Jer. xxiv. 7. "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Jer. xxxi. 34. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor

and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord." I mean here also, that a man be in calmness of spirit, and, as it were, in his cold blood in closing with Christ Jesus. Not in a simple fit of affection, which soon evanisheth, Mat. xiii. 20. "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it:" nor in a distemper through some outward distress, as the people were, Psal. lxxviii. 34. "When he slew them, then they sought him, and proved "not steadfast in his covenant;" nor under the temptation of some outward temporary interest, as Simon Magus was when he believed, Acts viii. A man must be rationally, as being master of himself, in some measure able to judge of the good or evil of the thing as it stands before him.

The fourth is, faith; as it goeth out rationally, so it goeth out resolutely. The poor distressed people in the gospel did most resolutely cast themselves upon Christ. This resoluteness of spirit is in order to all difficulties that lie in the way; violence is offered to these. The man whose heart is a shaping out for Christ Jesus, cannot say, "There is a lion in the street," Prov. xxvi. 13. If he cannot have access by the door, he will break through the roof of the house, with that man, Luke v. 19. He often doth not regard that which the world calleth discretion or prudence, like Zaccheus

climbing upon a tree to see Christ, when faith was breeding in his bosom, Luke xix. This resoluteness of spirit looketh towards what inconveniencies may follow, and waveth all these, at least resolving over all these, like a wife begetter who reckoneth the expense beforehand, Luke xiv. 28. This resoluteness is also in order to all a man's idols, and such weights as would easily beset him, if he did not bend after Christ over them all, like that blind man who did cast his garment from him, when Christ called him, Mark x. 50. This resoluteness is the soul proceedeth from desperate self-necessity within the man, as it was with the jailer, Acts xvi. 30. and from the sovereign command of God, obliging the man to move towards Christ, John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ;" and from the good report gone abroad of God, that "he putteth none away that come unto him through Christ," John vi. 37. but doth commend such as do adventure over the greatest difficulties, as the woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. 28. But above all, this resoluteness doth proceed from the arm of Jehovah, secretly and strongly drawing the sinner towards Christ, John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him."

I will not say, that every one, closing with Christ in the offers of the gospel, hath all the foresaid thoughts formally in his mind; yet, upon search it will be found, if he be put to it,

or put in mind of these things, they are then aloft in the soul.

By what is said, it doth manifestly appear, that many, in the visible church, had need to do somewhat further for securing of their souls, when they come to years of discretion, than is found to have been done by them before, in the covenant between God and the church, sealed to them in baptism.

By what is said also, there is a competent guard upon the free grace of God in the gospel, held out through Christ Jesus; so as ignorant, senseless profane men cannot, with any shadow of reason, pretend to an interest to it. It is true, believing in Christ, and closing with him as a perfect Saviour, seemeth easy, and every godless man saith, that he believeth on him: but they deceive themselves, since their soul hath never cordially, rationally and resolutely gone out after Christ Jesus, as we have said. It may be some wicked men have been enlightened, Heb. vi. 4. and have found some reel in their fear, "Felix trembled," Acts xxiv. 25. or in their joy, "he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it," Mat. xiii. 20. and Herod heard John gladly, Mark vi. 20. But not "having engaged their heart in approaching to God," Jer. xxx. 21. have either sitten down in that common work, as their sanctuary, until the trial came, Mat. xiii. 20, 21. "When tribulation or persecution aris-

seth because of the word, by and by he is offended ; or they return back with the dog to their vomit from which they had in some measure escaped by the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour," 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22. or they utterly fall away to the hatred and malicious despising and persecuting of Christ and his interests ; " from whence hardly can they be recovered," Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. and x. 26, 29. Which things should provoke men to be serious in this great business.

We come now to speak to the fifth thing proposed, and that is, what be the native consequences of true believing ? I shall reduce what I will speak of them to these two, viz. Union with God, and communion. First then, I say, when a sinner closeth with Christ Jesus, as said is, there is presently an admirable union, a strange oneness between God and the man : as the husband and wife, head and body, root and branches, are not to be reckoned two but one ; so Christ, or God in Christ, and the sinner closing with him by faith, are one ; " we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," &c. Eph. v. 30, 31, 32. " He that is so joined unto the Lord, is one spirit," 1 Cor. vi. 17. " As the Father is in the Son, and Christ in the Father ; so believers are one in the Father and the Son : they are one as the Father and the Son are one. The Father in Christ, and Christ in believers, that they may be made perfect in one," John xvii. 21, 22, 23.

26. O what a strange interweaving and indissoluble knot there !

Because of this union betwixt God and the believer, I. They can never hate one another henceforth the Lord will never hate the believer. " As no man hateth his own flesh at any time, but cherisheth and nourisheth it," so doth Christ his people, Eph. v. 29. He may be angry, so as to correct and chastise the man that is a believer ; but all he doth to him is for his good and advantage. " All the Lord's paths must be mercy and truth to him," Psal. xxv. 10. " All things must work together for good to him," Rom. viii. 28. On the other side, the believer can never hate God maliciously ; for, " he that is born of God sinneth not," 1 John iii. 9. For the Lord hath resolved and ordained things so, that his hand shall undoubtedly so be upon all believers for good, that they shall never get leave to hate him, and be so plucked out of his hand.

II. Because of this union, there is a strange sympathy and fellow-feeling between God and the believer. The Lord is afflicted with the man's affliction, Isai. lxiii. 9. He doth tenderly, carefully and seasonably resent it, as if he were afflicted with it. He who toucheth the believer, toucheth the apple of the Lord's eye, Zech. ii. 8. " He is touched with the feeling of their infirmities," Heb. iv. 15. " and precious in his sight is their blood," Psal. cxvi. 15. In a word what is done to them, is done unto him ; and what is not done unto them,

is not done unto him, Mat. x. 40. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me," Mat. xxv. 40, 45. "In as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me; in as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." On the other part, the zeal of his house sitteth in the heart of the believer, Psal. lxxix. 9. the Lord's reproach lighteth on the believer. If it go well with his affairs, that is the business of his people. So there is a strange sympathy between God and the believers, all by virtue of the union between them; because of which, men should hate every thing which would compete with him in their love or affections, and should disdain to be slaves to the creatures, since these are the servants of their Lord and husband, and their servants through him. What a hateful thing for a queen to whore with the servants of her prince and husband? It is also a shame for a believer to be "afraid of evil tidings," since the Lord, with whom he is one, alone ruleth all things, "and doth whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven and earth." 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Psal. cxii. 6, 7. "Surely he shall not be moved for ever, he shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord, his heart is established, he shall not be afraid." Psal. cxv. 3. "Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased."

The other great consequence of believing,

is an admirable unparalleled communion; by virtue whereof, I. The parties themselves do belong each to other. The Lord is the God of his people: He himself, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is their God, in all his glorious attributes, his justice as well as his mercy, his wisdom, power, holiness, &c. for he becometh the God of his people, as he often speaketh in the covenant. On the other part, the believers are his people. In their very persons they are his, as the covenant doth speak: they shall be his people; their head, their heart, their hand, &c. whatsoever they are, they are his.

II. By virtue of this communion, they have a mutual interest in one another's whole goods and gear, in as far as can be useful. All the Lord's word doth belong to the believer, threatnings as well as promises, for their good; all his ways, all his works of all sorts, special communications death, devils, even all things, in so far as can be useful. 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." On the other side, all which belongeth to the believer is the Lord's; heritage, children, life, wife, credit, &c. all is at his disposing; if any of these can be useful to him, the believer is to forego them, else he falsifieth that communion, and declar-eth himself in so far unworthy of Christ. Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate

not his father—yea, and his life also, he can not be my disciple.”

LII. By virtue of this communion there should be much homeliness and familiarity between God and the believer. The Lord may meddle with any thing which doth belong to the believer, and do unto him what seemeth good to him; and the man is not to mistake, or say unto God, “What dost thou?” except in so far as concerneth his duty; yea, he is still to say in every case, “Good is the word and will of the Lord,” Isa. xxxix. 8. 2 Kings iv. 23, 26. On the other part, the believer may, in a humble way, be homely and familiar with God in Christ; he may “come with boldness to the throne of grace,” and not use a number of compliments in his addresses unto God, Heb. iv. 16. “For he is no more a stranger unto God,” Eph. ii. 19. so that he needs not speak unto God, as one who has acquaintance to make every hour, as many professors do; and it maketh a huge inconsistency in their religion.

The believer also may lay open all his heart unto God, 1 Sam. i. 15. “I have poured out my soul before the Lord,” and impart all his secrets unto him, and all his temptations, without fear of a mistake. The believer also may enquire into what God doth in so far as may concern his own duty, or in so far as may ward off mistakes of the Lord’s way, and reconcile it with his word; so Job xiii. 15. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; but I will

maintain mine own ways before him.” The believer is a friend in this respect, as “knowing what the master doth.” See Gen. xviii. 23, &c. Jer. xii. 1. Isa. lxiii. 17.

The believer also may be homely with God to go in daily with his failings, and seek repentance, pardon and peace through Christ’s advocateship, Acts v. 31. “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” 1 John ii. 1. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” O how often in one day may the believer plead with God if he intend not to mock God, or turn his face into wantonness! The Lord hath commanded us to “forgive seventy times seven times in one day,” and hath hinted there in the parable “of a king who took account of his servants,” how much more the Master will forgive, Mat. xviii. 22—28.

The believer also may be homely to intrust God with all his outward concernments, for he doth care for these things, Mat. vi. 30, 31, 32. “If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewith shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” 1 Pet. v. 7. “Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.” Yea, the believer may humbly put God to it, &c.

him forthcoming for him, in all cases, as he seemeth, and to help him to suitable fruit in every season, "even grace in time of need," Heb. iv. 16. Yea, how great things may be sought for from him in Christ Jesus, both for themselves and others, 1 John v. 14, 15. "If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." John xiv. 13, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." Isa. xlv. 11, "Ask of me things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command me." It is the shame and great prejudice of his people, that they do not improve their communion with God more, than they do. They may justly upbraid them, "that they ask nothing in his name," John xvi. 24. What is said, it doth appear, of how great consequence this duty of believing is, by which a man closeth with Christ Jesus, whom the Father hath sealed, and given for a covenant to the people. It is so honorable for God, in serving his very design, and serving his interest, the whole contrivement and manifestation of the gospel; and it is so advantageous to men, that Satan and an evil heart of unbelief do mightily oppose it, by moving objections against it. I shall hint some most ordinary.

Objection taken from a man's unworthiness, and the baseness of his sin, answered.
Ans. All so base, worthless, and unworthy, as I am, I shall not think it vain

high presumption for me to meddle with Christ Jesus, or the salvation purchased at the rate of his blood.

Ans. It is true all the children of Adam are base and naughty before him, "who charged his angels with folly," Job, iv. 18. "All nations are less than nothing, and vanity before him," Isa. xl. 17. There is such a disproportion between God and men, that unless he himself had devised that covenant, and his own free will had offered so to unite with men, it had been high treason for the angels to have imagined, that they should have taken on our nature, and have united themselves to the blessed God-head, and he should have subjected himself to the shameful death of the cross; and all this, that men, who were rebels, should be reconciled unto God, and be made eternally happy, by being in his holy company for ever.

But I say, all that was his own device and free choice; yea, moreover, if God had sovereignly commanded men so to close with him in and through Christ, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. Mat. xi. 28. 1 John iii. 23. 2 Cor. v. 20. no man durst have made use of that device. So then, although with Ahithail I may say, "let me be but a servant, to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord," 1 Sam. xxv. 41. yet since he hath in his holy wisdom devised that way, and knoweth how to be richly glorified by it.

Eph. i. 18. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints;" John xvii 10. "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and thou glorified in them;" and he hath commanded me, as I shall be answerable in the great day, to close with him in Christ, as said is; I dare not disobey, nor enquire into the reasons of his contrivements and commands, but must adventure on the effects. "I would not be found to trust in the grace of God," Gal. ii. 21. and in a word, the gospel, and falsify the promise God hath borne of his Son, "I will be enough in him for men," 1 Tim. ii. 4. and so make God a liar, and my rebellion to all my former transgressions.

Object. I am a person singularly sinful, beyond any I know; therefore I dare not presume to go near unto Christ Jesus, or look after that salvation which is through his righteousness.

Ans. Is your sin beyond the drunkenness and incest of Lot; adultery covered with murder in David; idolatry and horrid apostasy in Solomon; idolatry, murder, and witchcraft in Manasseh; anger against God, and his way, in Jonah; forswearing of Christ in Peter, after he was forewarned, and had vowed the contrary; bloody persecution in Paul, making the saints to blaspheme, &c. (but wo to him who is emboldened to sin by these instances record-

ed in scripture, and adduced here, to the commendation of the free and rich grace of God, and to encourage poor penitent sinners to flee unto Christ) I say, are your sins beyond these? yet all these obtained pardon through Christ, as the scripture doth shew.

Know therefore, that all sins do lye alike level before the free grace of God, "who loveth freely," Hos. xiv. 4. and looketh not to less or more sin. If the person have a heart to come unto him through Christ, then "he is able to do to the uttermost," Heb. vii. 25. Yea, it is more provoking before God, when a man with Christ when the offer cometh, and yet rejecteth the rest of his transgressions are forgiven, who believeth not, hath made God a liar, and in record he hath borne of life in the Son," 1 John v. 10, 11. "And he who doth not believe, shall be condemned, for not believing on the Son of God," John iii. 18. That shall be the main thing in his ditty; so that much sin cannot excuse a man, if he scar at Christ, and shift his offer; since God hath openly declared, that this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, "Christ came to save sinners, whereof I am chief." Even he who is chief of sinners in his own apprehension, is bound to believe and accept this saying, 1 Tim. i. 15.

Object. My sins have some aggravating circumstances beyond the same sins in other persons, which doth much terrify me.

Ans. What can the aggravations of thy sins be, which are not paralleled in the forecited

examples? Is thy sin against great light? so behaved many of these we spake of before. Was it against singular mercies and deliverances? so was that of Lot and Noah's drunkenness. Was thy sin done with much deliberation? so was David's, whilst he wrote the letter against Uriah. Was it against, or after any singular manifestation of God? so was Solomon's. Was it by a small and special temptation? so was that of Jonah and of Peter, if we consider the heinousness of their transgression. Hast thou reiterated the sin, and committed it over again? so did Peter, so did Jehoshaphat, so did Ahab and Jehoram, 2 Kings iii. Are there many sins concurring together in thee? so were there in Manasseh. Hast thou stood long out in rebellion? (that, as the former, is thy shame: but) so did the thief on the cross; he stood it out to the last gasp, Luke xxiii. 42, 43. If yet "thou hast an ear to hear," thou art commanded to hear, Mat. xiii. 9. Although thou hast long "spent thy money for that which is not bread," Isa. lv. 1, 2. thou hast the greater need now to make haste, and to flee for refuge; and if thou do so, he shall welcome thee, and "in no wise cast thee out," John vi. 37. especially, since he hath used no prescription of time in scripture. So that all those aggravations of thy sin will not excuse thy shifling of the Lord's offer.

Object. In all these instances given, you have not named the particulars whereof I am

guilty; nor know I any who ever obtained mercy before God, being guilty of such things as are in me.

Answer. It is hard to condescend upon every particular transgression which may vex the conscience; yea, lesser sins than some of those I have mentioned may hugely disquiet, if the Lord blow the fire. But, for thy satisfaction, I shall condescend upon some truths of scripture, which do reach sins and cases more universally, than any man can do particularly. See Exod. xxxiv. 7. "God pardoneth iniquity, transgression and sin," that is, of sin. Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, 30. "If a man turn from all his wickedness, it shall no more be remembered, or prove his ruin." John vi. 37. "Him that cometh, he will in no wise cast out;" that is, whatsoever be his sins, or the aggravations of them. John iii. 16. "Whosoever believeth shall have everlasting life," that is, without exception of any sin, or any case, Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save to the uttermost these who come to God through him;" no man can sufficiently declare what is God's uttermost. Mat. xii. 31. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" that is, there is no sort of sin, whereof one instance shall not be forgiven in one person or other, "except the sin against the Holy Ghost." These and the like scriptures do carry all sorts of sin before them: so that, let thy sins be what they will, or can be, they may be sunk

in one of these truths; so as thy sin can be no excuse to thee for shifting the offer of peace and salvation through Christ, since "any man who will," is allowed to "come and take," Rev. xxii. 17.

We will not multiply words: the great God of heaven and earth hath sovereignly commanded all who see their need of relief, to betake themselves unto Christ Jesus, and to close cordially with God's device of saving sinners by him, laying aside all objections and excuses, as they shall be answerable unto him in the day he shall judge the quick and the dead, and shall drive away out of his presence all those who would dare to say, their sins and condition were such, as that they durst not adventure upon Christ's perfect righteousness for their relief, notwithstanding of the Lord's own command often interposed, and in a manner his credit engaged.

C H A P. VI.

Of the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Object. I SUSPECT I am guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, and so am incapable of pardon; and therefore I need not think of believing on Christ Jesus for saving of my soul.

Ans. Although none should charge this sin on themselves, or on others, unless they

can prove and instruct the charge according to Christ's example, Mat. xii. 25, 26, 32. yet for satisfying of the doubt, I shall, 1. Shew what is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, properly so called, because there be some gross sins which people do unwarrantably judge to be this unpardonable sin. 2. I shall shew what is the sin against the Holy Ghost. 3. I shall draw some conclusions in answer directly to the objection.

As for the first, There be many gross sins, which although, as all other sins, they be sins against the Holy Ghost, who is God equal and one with the Father and the Son, and are done against some of his operations and motions; yet are they not "the sin against the Holy Ghost," which is the unpardonable sin. As, 1. Blaspheming of God under bodily tortures, is not that sin; for some saints fell into this, Acts. xxvi. 11. "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme." Much less, blaspheming of God in a fit of distraction or frenzy: for a man is not a free rational agent at that time: and "he that spareth his people, as a father doth the son that serveth him," Mal. iii. 17. "and pitieth them that fear him, as a father pitieth his children," Psal. ciii. 13. so doth he spare and pity in these ravings; for so would our fathers according to the flesh do, if we blasphemed them in a fit of distraction. Much less are horrid blasphemies against God carted in upon the soul, and not allowed there, this unpardonable

sin; for such things were offered to Christ, Mat. iv. and are often cast in upon the saints.

II. The hating of good in others, whilst I am not convinced that it is good, but in my light do judge it to be evil; yea, the speaking against it; yea, the persecuting of it in that case; is not the sin against the Holy Ghost; for all these will be found in Paul before he was converted; and he obtained mercy, because he did these things ignorantly.

III. Heart-rising at the thriving of others in the work and way of God, whilst I love it in myself; yea, the rising of heart against providence, which often expresseth itself against the creatures nearest our hand; yea, this rising of heart entertained and maintained (although they be horrid things leading towards that unpardonable sin, yet) are not that sin; for these may be in the saints, proceeding from self-love, which cannot endure to be darkened by another, and proceeding from some cross in their idol under a fit of temptation; the most part of all this was in Jonah, Jonah iv.

IV. Not only are not decays in what once was in the man, and falling into gross sins against light, after receiving of the truth, this unpardonable sin; for then many of the saints in scripture were undone: but further, apostasy from much of the truth, is not that sin; for that was in Solomon, and in the church of Corinth and Galatia: yea, denying, yea, forswearing of the most fundamental truth under

a great temptation, is not this sin; for then Peter had been undone.

V. As resisting, quenching, grieving and vexing of the spirit of God by many sinful ways, are not this unpardonable sin; for they are charged with these, who are called to repentance in scripture, and not shut out as guilty of this sin: so neither reiterating sin against light, is the sin against the Holy Ghost, although it leadeth towards it; for such was Peter's sin in denying Christ; so was Jehoshaphat's sin in joining with Ahab and Jehoram.

VI. Purposes and essays of self-murder, and even purposes of murdering godly men, the party being under a sad fit of temptation; yea, actual self-murder (although probably it often joineth in the issue with this unpardonable sin, which ought to make every soul look upon the very temptation to it with horror and abhorrence, yet) is not the sin against the Holy Ghost. The jailer intended to kill himself, upon a worse account than many poor people do, in the sight and sense of God's wrath, and of their own sin and corruption; yet that jailer obtained pardon, Acts xvi. 27. 34. and Paul, before his effectual calling, was accessory unto the murder of many saints, and intended to kill more, as himself granteth, Acts xxvi. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Although all these are dreadful sins, each of them deserving wrath everlasting, and not being repented of, bring endless vengeance; especially the last cuts off hope of relief, for ought

can be expected in an ordinary way; yet none of these is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost: and so under any of these, there is hope to him that hath an ear to hear the joyful sound of the covenant. All manner of such sin and blasphemy may be forgiven, as is clear in the scripture, where these things are mentioned.

As for the second thing; Let us see what the sin against the Holy Ghost is. It is not a simple act of transgression, but a complex of many mischievous things, involving soul and body of man in guilt. We thus describe it: It is a rejecting and opposing of the chief gospel truths, and way of salvation, made out singularly to a man by the spirit of God, in truth and good thereof; and that avowedly, freely, wilfully, maliciously, and despitefully, breeding hopeless fear. There be three places of scripture which do speak most of this sin, and thence we will prove every part of this description, in so far as may be useful to our present purpose; by which it will appear that none who have a mind for Christ, need stumble at what is spoken of this sin in scripture. See Mat. xii. 23—32. Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. and x. 25—29.

First then, let us consider the object about which this sin, or sinful acting of the man guilty thereof, is conversant, and that is the chief gospel-truth and way of salvation; both which run to one thing. It is the way which God hath contrived for saving of sinners by Jesus

Christ the promised Messiah and Saviour, by whose death and righteousness men are to be saved, as he hath held forth in the ordinances, confirming the same by many mighty works in scripture tending thereaway. This way of salvation is the object. The Pharisees oppose this, that Christ was the Messiah, Mat. xii. 23, 24. "And all the people said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of devils." This wrong is done against the Son of God, Heb. vi. 6. "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and make him to an open shame." And against the blood of the covenant, and the spirit graciously offering to apply these things, Heb. x. 29. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?"

Secondly, In the description, consider the qualification of this object. It is singularly made out to the party by the spirit of God, both in the truth and good thereof. This saith, 1. That there must be knowledge of the truth and way of salvation. The Pharisees knew that Christ was the heir, Mat. xxi. 38. "But when they saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him."

The party hath knowledge, Heb. x. 26. "But if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." 2. That knowledge of the thing must not swim only in the head, but there must be some half heart persuasion of it. Christ knew the Pharisees thoughts, Mat. xii. 25. and so did judge them, and that the contrary of what they spake was made out upon their heart. There is a tasting which is beyond simple enlightening, Heb. vi. 4, 5. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have tasted of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come." Yet there is such a persuasion ordinarily as leads to a deal of outward sanctification, Heb. x. 26. "Who hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing." 3. This persuasion must not only be of the verity of the thing, but of the good of it. The party "tasteth the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," Heb. vi. 5. and he apprehendeth the thing as eligible. 4. This persuasion is made out, not only by strength of argument, but also by an enlightning work of God's spirit, shining on the truth, and making it conspicuous; therefore is that sin called the sin against the Holy Ghost, Mat. xii. 31, Mark iii. 29. The persons are said "to have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost," Heb. vi. 4. and "to do despite unto the spirit

of grace," Heb. x. 29. who was in the nearest step of a gracious operation with them.

Thirdly, In this description, consider the acting of the party against the object so qualified. It is a rejecting and opposing of it; which importeth, 1. That men have once, some way at least, been in hands with it, or had the offer of it, as is true of the Pharisees. 2. That they do reject, even with contempt, what they had of it, or in their offer. The Pharisees deny it, and speak disdainfully of Christ, Mat. xii. 24. "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." They fall away, intending "to put Christ to an open shame," Heb. vi. 6. 3. The men set themselves against it by the spirit of persecution, as the Pharisees did still. They rail against it; therefore it is called "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," Mat. xii. 24, 31. They would "crucify Christ again," if they could, Heb. vi. 6. they are adversaries, Heb. x. 27.

Fourthly, Consider the properties of this acting. 1. It is avowed, that is, not seeking to shelter or hide itself. The Pharisees speak against Christ publicly, Mat. xii. 24. They would "have Christ brought to an open shame," Heb. vi. 6. They "forsake the ordinances" which favor that way, Heb. x. 25. and despise the danger; for "looking for indignation, they trample that blood still," Heb. x. 27, 29. 2. The party acteth freely. It is not from unad-

visedness, nor from force or constraint, but an acting of free choice; nothing doth force the Pharisees to speak against and persecute Christ. They "crucify to themselves," they re-act the murder of their own free accord, and in their own bosom, none constraining them, Heb. vi. 6. They sin of free choice, or, as the word may be rendered, spontaneously, Heb. x. 26. 3. It is acted wilfully, There are so resolute, they will not be dissuaded by any offer, or the most precious means, as is clear in the foresaid scriptures. 4. It is done maliciously, so as it proceeds not so much, if at all, from a temptation to pleasure, profit or honor. It proceedeth not from fear, or force, or from any good end proposed; but out of heart-malice against God and Christ, and the advancement of his glory and kingdom: so that it is of the very nature of Satan's sin, who hath an irreconcilable hatred against God, and the remedy of sin, because his glory is thereby advanced. This is a special ingredient in this sin. The Pharisees are found guilty of heart-malice against Christ, since they speak so against him, and not against their own children casting out devils. And this is the force of Christ's argument; "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?" Mat. xii. 27. They do their utmost "to crucify Christ again, and to bring him to an open shame," Heb. vi. 6. They are adversaries like the devil, Heb. x. 27. 5. It is done despitefully. The malice must bewray itself. The Pharisees must pro-

claim that Christ hath correspondence with devils, Mat. xii. 24. He must "be put to an open shame, and crucified again," Heb. vi. 6. they must tread under foot that blood, and do despite to the spirit, Heb. x. 29. So that the party had rather perish a thousand times, than be in Christ's debt for salvation.

The last thing in the description is, the ordinary attendant or consequence of this sin; it breedeth desperate and hopeless fear. They fear him whom they hate, with a slavish hopeless fear, such as devils have, Heb. x. 27. "A certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." They know that God will put out his power against them: they tremble in the remembrance of it; and if they could be above him, and destroy him, they covet it; and since they cannot reach that, they hate with the utmost of heart-malice, and do persecute him, and all that is his, with despite.

As for the third thing proposed, viz. the conclusions to be drawn from what is said, whereby we will speak directly to the objection, 1. As I hinted before, since the sin against the Holy Ghost is so remarkable, and may be well known where it is, none should charge themselves with it, unless they can prove and instruct the charge; for it is a great wrong done unto God, to labor to persuade my soul that he will never pardon me: it is the very way to make me desperate, and to lead me unto that unpardonable sin; therefore, unless thou can

and dare say, that thou dost hate the way which God hath devised for saving of sinners, and dost resolve to oppose the thriving of his kingdom, both with thyself and others, out of malice and despite against God, thou oughtest not to suspect thyself guilty of this sin. 2. Whatsoever thou hast done against God, if thou dost rue it, and wish it were undone, thou cannot be guilty of this sin; for in it, heart-malice and despite against God do still prevail. 3. If thou art content to be his debtor for pardon, and would be infinitely obliged unto him for it, then thou cannot, in that case, be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost; for, as we shewed before, they who are guilty of it do so despite God, that they would not be his debtors for salvation. 4. Whatsoever thou hast done, if thou hast a desire after Jesus Christ, and dost look with a sore heart after him, and cannot think of parting with his blessed company for ever; or, if thou must shed with him, yet dost wish well to him, and all his, thou needest not to suspect thyself to be guilty of this unpardonable sin; for there can be no such hatred of him in thy bosom, as is necessarily required to make up that sin. 5. If thou wouldst be above the reach of that sin, and secure against it for ever, then go work up thy heart to please salvation by Christ Jesus, and to close with God in him, acquiescing in him as the sufficient ransom and rest, as we have been pressing before, and yield to him to be saved in his way. Do this in good earnest, and thou shalt be for ever put out of the reach

of that ugly thing wherewith Satan doth affright so many poor seekers of God.

C H A P. VII.

Objections, taken from want of power to believe, and unfruitfulness, answered.

Object. **A**LTHOUGH I be not excluded from the benefit of the new covenant, yet it is not in my power to believe upon Christ; for faith is the gift of God, and above the strength of flesh and blood.

Ans. It is true, that saving faith, by which alone a man can heartily close with God in Christ, is above our power and is the gift of God, as we said before in the premises: yet remember, 1. The Lord hath left it as a duty upon all who hear this gospel, cordially by faith to close with his offer of salvation through Christ, as is clear in scripture. And you must know, that although it be not in our power to perform that duty of ourselves; yet the Lord may justly condemn for not performing of it, and we are inexcusable; because at first he made man perfectly able to do whatsoever he should command. 2dly, The Lord commanding this thing, which is above our power, will-eth us to be sensible of our inability to do the thing, and would have us putting it on him to work it in us. He hath promised to give the

new heart, and he hath not excluded any from the benefit of that promise. 3dly, The Lord useth by these commands and invitations, and men's meditation on the same, and their supplication about the thing, to convey power unto the soul to perform the duty.

Therefore, for answer to the objection, I do obtest thee, in the Lord's name, to lay to heart these his commandments and promises, and meditate on them, and upon that blessed business of the new covenant, and pray unto God, as you can, over them, "for he will be enquired to do these things," Ezek. xxxvi. 37. and lay thy cold heart to that device of God exprest in the scriptures, and unto Christ Jesus, who is given for a covenant to the people, and look to him for life and quickning. Go and essay to please that salvation in the way God doth offer it, and to close with, and rest on Christ for it, as if all were in thy power; yet looking to him for the thing, as knowing that it must come from him; and if thou do so, "he who meets these who remember him in his ways," Isa. lxiv. 5. will not be wanting on his part; and thou shalt not have ground to say, that thou movedst towards the thing until thou couldst do no more for want of strength, and so left it at God's door: it shall not fail on his part, if thou hast a mind for the business; yea, I may say, if by all thou hast ever heard of that matter, thy heart loveth it, and desireth to be in hands with it, thou hast it al-

ready performed within thee; so that difficulty is past, before thou wast aware of it.

Object. Many who have closed with Christ Jesus, as said is, are still complaining of their leanness and fruitlessness, which maketh my heart lay the less weight on that duty of believing.

Ans. If thou be convinced that it is a duty to believe in Christ, as said is, you may not shift it under any pretence. As for these complaints of some who have looked after him, not admitting every one to be judge of his own fruit, I say,

I. Many by their jealousies of God's love, and by their misbelief, after they have so closed with God, do obstruct many precious communications, which otherwise would be let out to them, Mat. xiii. 58. "And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."

II. It cannot be, that any whose heart is set out after Christ "have found him a wilderness," Jer. ii. 31. Surely they find somewhat in their spirit swaying them towards God in these two great things, viz. How to be found in him in that day, Philip. iii. 8, 9. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is

of God by faith :” and, how to be forthcoming to his praise in the land of the living, Psa. cxix. 17. “ Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and keep thy word.” Psa. lvi. 13. “ Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living ?” They find these two things aloft in the soul, and that is much. Moreover, they shall, after search, if they judge aright, find ever since an emptiness in the creature, which abundance of the creature cannot fill up : all is vanity, only God can fill the empty room in their heart ; and when he but breatheth a little, there is no room for additional comfort from creatures. This faith, that God hath captivated the man, and hath fixed that saving principle in the understanding and heart. “ Whom God but the Lord ? worship him, all ye gods.” Psa. xcvi. 7. Yea, further, these whose hearts hath closed with God in Christ, as said is, will not deny that there have been seasonable preventings and quicknings now and then, when the soul was like to fail, Psa. xxi. 3. “ For thou preventest me with the blessings of thy goodness.” Psa. xciv. 18, 19. “ When I said, my foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.” Therefore let none say, that there is no fruit following, and let none shift their duty upon the unjust and groundless complaints of others.

C H A P. VIII.

Of covenanting with God.

Object. **A**LTHOUGH I judge it my duty to close with God’s device in the covenant, I am in the dark how to manage that duty ; for sometimes God doth offer to be our God without any mention of Christ, and sometimes saith, that he will betrothe us unto him ; and in other places of scripture, we are called to come to Christ, and he is the Bridegroom. Again, God sometimes speaketh of himself as a Father to men, sometimes as a Husband ; Christ is sometimes called the Husband, and sometimes a Brother ; which relations seem inconsistent, and do much put me in the dark how to apprehend God, when my heart would agree with him, and close with him.

Ans. It may be very well said, that men do come to God, or close with him : and yet they come to Christ, and close with him. They may be said to come under a marriage-relation unto God, and unto Christ also, who is Husband, Father, Brother, &c. to them ; and there is no such mystery here as some do conceive.

For the better understanding of it, consider these few things. I. Although God made man perfect at the beginning, and put him in some capacity of transacting with him immediately, Eccl. vii. 29. “ God hath made man upright.” Gen. ii. 16, 17. “ And the Lord God com-

manded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat," &c. yet man, by his fall, did put himself at a perfect distance with God, and in an utter incapacity to bargain or deal any more with him immediately.

II. The Lord did, after Adam's fall, make manifest the new covenant, in which he did signify he was content to transact with man again in and through a mediator; and so did appoint men to come to him through Christ, Heb. vii. 25, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him," and to look for acceptation only in him, Eph. i. 6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved;" ordaining men to hear Christ, he being the only party in whom God was well pleased, Mat. xvii. 5. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him."

III. This matter is so clear, and supposed to be so notour in the scripture, and so manifest to all who are under the ordinances, that the Lord doth often speak of transacting with himself not making mention of the mediator because it is supposed, that every one in the church knoweth that now there is no dealing with God, except by and through Christ Jesus the mediator.

IV. Consider that Christ Jesus, God-man, is not only a fit tryſting-place for God and men to meet into, and a fit spokesman to treat between the parties now at variance, 2 Cor. v. 19. "God was in Christ, reconciling the

world to himself." But we may say also, he is immediate bridegroom; and so our closing or transacting with God may be justly called, "the marriage of the King's Son," and the elect may be called, "the Lamb's wife;" Christ Jesus being, as it were, the hand which God holdeth out unto men, and on which they rely hold when they deal with God. And so through and by Christ we close with God, as our God, on whom our soul doth terminate lastly and ultimately through Christ, 1 Pet. i. 21. "Who by him do believe in God that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God."

V. Consider that the divers relations mentioned in scripture are set down, to signify the sure and indissoluble union and communion between God and his people: whatsoever likeness is between head and members, root and branches, king and subjects, shepherd and flock, Father and children, brother and brother, husband and wife. &c. all is here, John xvii. 21, 23, 26. "And they all shall be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou givest me, I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it:

that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." So that, whatsoever be spoken in scripture, people may be clear, that God calleth them to be reconciled unto him through Christ, and doth offer himself to be their God and husband in him alone: and men are to accept God to be their God in Christ, pleading that way of relief for poor man, and to give up themselves unto God in Christ, in whom alone they can be accepted. And they who close with Christ, they do close with God in him, "who is in Christ reconciling the world to himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. John. xiv. 8, 9, 10, 11. And we are not to dip further into the divers relations mentioned in scripture, between God, or Christ, and men, than as they may point out union and communion, or nearness with God through Christ Jesus, and our advantage thereby.

These things being clear, we will not multiply words: but, since to believe on Christ is the great duty required of all that hear this gospel, we obtest very one in the Lord's name, to whom the report of this shall come, that without delay they take to heart their lost condition in themselves; and that they lay to heart the relief which God hath provided by Jesus Christ, whereof he hath made a free offer unto all who will be content of the same, and to be saved that way; and that they lay to heart, that there is no other way of escape from the wrath that is to come; because of which men would be glad, at the last day, to run into a lake of melted

lead, to be hid from the face of the lamb, whom they do here despise: we say, we obtest all in the consideration of these things, to work up their hearts to this business, and to lay themselves open for God, and to receive him through Christ in the offers of the gospel, acquiescing in him, as the only desirable and satisfying good, that so they may secure themselves. Go speedily and search for his offers of peace and salvation in the scripture, and work up your heart and soul to close with them, and with Christ in them, and with God in Christ; and do it so, as you may have this to say, that you were serious, and in earnest, and cordial here, as ever you were in any thing, to your apprehension; and for ought you know, Christ is the choice of your heart, at least, you neither know nor allow any thing to the contrary; whereupon your heart did appeal unto God to search and try if there be ought amiss, to rectify it, and lead into the right way.

Now this cleaving of the heart unto him, and casting itself upon him, to be saved in his way, is believing; which doth indeed secure a man from the wrath that is to come, because now he hath received Christ, and believeth on him, and so shall not enter into condemnation, as saith the scripture.

Object. When I hear what it is to believe on Christ Jesus, I think sometimes I have faith; for I dare say, to my apprehension, I please the invention of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, my

heart goeth out after him, and doth terminate upon him as a satisfying treasure; and I am glad to accept God to be my God in him. But I often do question if ever I have done so, and so am, for the most part, kept hesitating and doubting if I do believe, or be savingly in covenant with God.

Ans. It is ordinary for many whose hearts are gone out after Christ in the gospel, and have received him, to bring the same in question again: therefore I shall advise one thing as a notable help to fix the soul in the maintaining faith and an interest in God, and that is that men not only close heartily with God in Christ, as said is, but also, that they expressly, explicitly, by word of mouth and vive voice, and formally, close with Christ Jesus, and accept God's offer of salvation through him, and so make a covenant with God. And this, by God's blessing, may contribute not a little for establishing them about their saving interest in God.

Before I speak directly to this express covenanting with God, I premise these few things. I. I do not here intend a covenanting with God, essentially differing from the covenant between God and the visible church, as the Lord doth hold it out in his revealed will; neither do I intend a covenant, differing essentially from the transacting of the heart with God in Christ formerly spoken unto: it is the same covenant; only it differeth by singular circumstances, viz.

the formal expression of the thing, which the heart did before practise.

II. I grant this express covenanting and transacting with God is not absolutely necessary for a man's salvation; for if any person close heartily and sincerely with God, offering himself in Christ in the gospel, his soul and state is thereby secured, according to the scripture, although he utter not words with his mouth: but this express verbal covenanting with God is very expedient for the better being of a man's state, and his more comfortable maintaing of an interest in Christ Jesus.

III. This express covenanting with God by word of mouth is of no worth, without sincere heart-closing with God in Christ joined with it; for without that, it is but a profaning of the Lord's name, and a mocking of him to his face, so to draw near unto him with the lips, whilst the heart is far away from him.

IV. I grant, both cordial and verbal transacting with God will not make out a man's gracious estate unto him, so as to put and keep it above controversy, without the joint witness of the spirit, by which we know what is freely given unto us of God; yet this explicit way of transacting with God, joined with that heart-closing with him in Christ, contributes much for clearing up unto a man, that there is a fixed bargain between God and him, and will do much to ward off him many groundless objections of an unstable mind and heart, which use to affrontedly to deny this hour, what it did really

act and perform the former hour. This explicit covenanting is as an instrument taken of what passeth between God and the soul, and so hath its own advantage for strengthening of faith.

As for this express covenanting, we shall, 1. Shew that it is a very warrantable practice. 2. We shall shew shortly what is preparatorily required of those who do so transact with God. 3. How men shall go about that duty. 4. What should follow thereupon.

As to the first, I say, it is a warrantable practice, and an incumbent duty, expressly and by word to covenant with God: which appeareth thus.

I. In many places of scripture, if we look to what they may bear, according to their scope, and the analogy of faith, God hath commanded it, and left it on people as a duty. Isa. xlii. 5. "One shall say, I am the Lord's." Isa. xiv. 24. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Jer. iii. 4. "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth." Zech. xiii. 9. "They shall say, the Lord is my God." Hos. ii. 16. "Thou shalt call me Ishi," and in many places elsewhere. Now since God hath so clearly left it on men in the letter of the word, they may be persuaded, that it is a practice warranted and allowed by him, and well-pleasing unto him.

II. Argument. It is the approved practice of the saints in scripture, thus expressly to co-

venant with God, and they have found much quiet in that duty afterwards. David did often expressly say unto God, that he was his God, his portion, and that himself was his servant. Thomas will put his interest out of question with it, John xx. 28. "And Thomas answered and said unto him, my Lord, and my God." Yea, I say the saints are much quieted in remembrance of what hath passed that way between God and them, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Psal. cxlii. 5. "I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." We find it often so in the book of the Canticles. Now shall the chief worthies of God be so much in a duty, breeding so much quiet and satisfaction to them in many cases, and shall we, under the New Testament, unto whom access is ministered abundantly, and who partake of the sap of the Olive; shall we, I say, lye behind in this approved piece of homeliness with God? Since we study to imitate that cloud of witnesses in other things, as faith, zeal, patience, &c. let us also imitate them in this.

III. Argument. The thing about which we move here, is a matter of the greatest concernment in all the world: "It is the life of our soul," Deut. xxxii. 47. Oh, shall men study to be express, explicit, plain and peremptory in all their other great businesses, because they are such; and shall they not be much more

peremptory and expresse in this, which doth must concern them? I wonder that many not only do not speak it with their mouth, but that they do not swear and subscribe it with their hand, and do not every thing for securing of God to themselves in Christ, and themselves unto God, which the scripture doth warrant, Isa. xlv. 5.

This also may have its own weight, as an argument to press this way of covenanting with God, that the business of an interest in Christ, and of real and honest transacting with him, is a thing which, in the experience of saints, is most frequently brought upon debate and in question; therefore men had need, all the ways they can, even by thought, word and deed, to put it to a point.

This also may have place here for pressing this is a duty, that God is so formal, expresse, distinct and legal, to say so, in all the business of man's salvation, viz. Christ must be a near kinsman, to whom the right of redemption doth belong; he must be chosen, called, authorised and sent; covenants formally drawn between the Father and him, the Father accepting payment and satisfaction, giving formal discharges, all done clearly and expressly. Shall the Lord be so expresse, plain and peremptory in every part of the business, and shall our part of it rest in a confused thought, and we be as dumb beasts before him? If it were a marriage between man and wife, it would not be judged enough, although there were consent in

heart given by the woman, and known to the man; if she did never expresse so much by word, being in a capacity to do so. Now this covenant between God and man is held out in scripture as a marriage between man and wife, Hos. ii. 19, 20. 2 Cor. xi. 2. The whole song of Solomon speaketh it. The Lord useth similitudes, to signify unto us what he intends; and surely this is a special requisite in marriage, that the wife give an expresse and explicit consent unto the business: the man saith, So I take thee to be my lawful wife, and do oblige myself to be a dutiful husband: the woman is obliged, on the other part, to expresse her consent, and to say, Even so I take thee to be my lawful husband, and do promise duty and subjection. It is so here; the Lord saith, "I do betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt call me Ishi," that is my husband, Hos. ii. 16, 20. I will be for thee as a head and husband, if thou wilt not be for another, Hos. iii. 3. The man ought to answer and say, Amen, so be it, thou shalt be my God, my head and Lord, and I shall and will be thine, and not for another, Cant. vi. 3. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." And so this making of the covenant with God is called a giving of the hand to him, as the word is, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. which doth hide a very expresse, formal, explicit and positive bargaining with God. So then we conclude it to be an incumbent duty, and a very approved practice, necessary for the quieting of a

man's mind, and his more comfortable being in covenant with God, and more fully answering God's condescendency and offer in that great and primary promise, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people."

Not only may and should people thus expressly close with God in Christ for fixing their heart; but they may, upon some occasions, renew this verbal transaction with God, especially when through temptations they are made to question if ever they have really and sincerely closed covenant with God. As they are then to put out new acts of faith, embracing Christ as the desirable portion and treasure, and also upon other occasions, so it were expedient, especially if there remain any doubt about the thing, that by vive voce and express word, they determine that controversy, and say of the Lord, and to him, that he is their refuge and portion, Psa. xci. 2. Psa. cxlii. 5. We find the saints doing so; and we may imitate them, especially,

I. In the time of great backsliding, people were wont to renew the covenant with God; and we should do so also. Our heart should go out after Christ in the promises of reconciliation with God: for he is our peace upon all occasions, and our advocate; and we are bound to apprehend him so, when we transgress, 1 John ii. 1. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and to express so much by word,

as the saints did in their formal renewing of the covenant.

II. When people are in hazard, and difficulties are present or foreseen, then it were good that they should send out their heart after him, and express their adhering unto him, for securing their own heart. We find Joshua doing so, when he was to settle in the land of Canaan, in the midst of snares, Josh. xxiv. So David doth in his straits, Psa. lvi. 1. "In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."

III. When men apprehend God to be at a distance from them, and their soul to be under withering and decay, then it is safest heartily to close with Christ, and embrace him by faith for the securing of the soul; and it were good to put it out of question, by the expression of the thing. This is the ready way to draw sap from Christ the root, for recovering of the soul, and for establishing the heart before him. The spouse in the song of Solomon doth so, thus asserting her interest in him, when, in such a condition, professing and avowing him to be her beloved, Cant. v.

IV. At the celebration of the Lord's supper, men should thus cordially close with God in Christ, and speak and express so much: for that is a feast of love; and then and there we come under a solemn profession of closing with God in Christ personally and openly, and do receive the seal of it: it is therefore becoming, at that time, to bring up both heart and tongue

to second and answer our profession, apprehending God to be our God, and resigning over ourselves to be his, and at his disposing.

We shall not confine the Lord's people to times and seasons of this duty, the Lord may bind it upon them at his pleasure; only there is hazard, that by too frequent express covenanting with God, men turn too formal in it. Therefore it is not so fit that people should ordinarily at full length renew that explicit transaction with God, but rather to declare unto God, that they adhere unto the covenant made with him, and that they do maintain and will never revoke nor recall the same; and withal, they may hint the sum of it, in laying claim unto God in Christ, as their own God; and this they may do often, even in all their addresses to God. And probably this is the thing designed by the saints in their so ordinary practice in scripture, whilst they assert their interest in God, as their God and portion; and it is fit, that men, in all their walk, hold their heart at the business, by heart cleaving to God in Christ. "The life we live in the flesh should be by faith in the Son of God," Gal. ii. 20.

As to the second thing, viz. What is preparatorily required of him who is expressly to transact with God here: beside what we speak before, as previous to a man's closing with Christ Jesus, we only add, 1, That he who would explicitly bargain with God must know, that to do so is warranted and allowed by God, as we shewed before: if this were wanting,

a man cannot do it in faith, and so it will be sin unto him, Rom. xiv. 23. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." 2. The man must labor to bring up his heart to the thing, that it do not belie the tongue; it will be a great mocking of God, so to "draw near him with the lips, whilst the heart is far off from him," Isa. xxix. 13.

The third thing to be considered in this express verbal covenanting with God, is the way how it is to be performed and managed; and beside what was said before in heart-closing with Christ, I add here,

I. The man should do it confidently, not only believing that he is about his duty when he doth it; but also, that God in Christ Jesus will accept his poor imperfect way of doing this duty: he doth "accept a man according to what he hath, if there be a willing mind," 2 Cor. vi. 12. A mite is accepted, since it is all the poor woman's substance, Mark xii. 44. Yea, if it can be attained the man should believe that the issue and consequence of this transacting shall prove comfortable, and all shall be well; and that God who engageth for all in the covenant, (since he hath determined the man to this happy choice) will in some measure make him forthcoming, and will perfect what concerns him: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it," 1 Thess. v. 24. If this confidence be wanting, the matter will be done with much fear and jealousy, if

not worse; and will still prove a disquieting business to the man.

II. It should be done holily. It is called the holy covenant, Luke i. 72. the holy things of David, Acts xiii. 34. Here it were fitting that what is done in this express transacting with God, should not be done passingly, and on the by, but in some special address unto God; the thing should be spoken unto the Lord, Psal. cxlii. 5. "I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, thou art my refuge and my portion." It is becoming in so great a business, that a piece of time were set a part for confession and supplication before God; yea also, the person so transacting with God, should labor to have high apprehensions of God's greatness and sovereignty, 2 Sam. vii. 22. "Thou art great, O Lord God; for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee," although he thus humble himself to behold things in heaven and earth; and these high and holy thoughts of him, will and should be attended with debasing and humbling thoughts of self, although admitted to this high dignity, 2 Sam. vii. 18. "Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord; and he said, who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" It is no small thing to be allied unto, and with the great God of heaven, and his Son Christ; as David speaketh when king Saul did offer his daughter unto him, 1 Sam. xviii. 22. Yea, further, there should be special guarding and watching,

that the heart keep spiritual in transacting with God. There is great reason for this holy way of performing the duty; for men are ready to misken themselves, and to shape the Lord according to their own fancy; and to turn carnal in the business, since it is a marriage-transaction held out in all the ordinary expressions of love, as in the song of Solomon, Isa. lxii. 5. Zeph. iii. 17.

The fourth thing we shall speak a word unto, is, what should follow upon this express verbal covenanting with God. I say, beside that union and communion with God in Christ, following upon believing, if a man explicitly by word transact with God.

I. He should thenceforth be singularly careful to abide close with God in all manner of conversation; for, if a man thenceforth do any thing unsuitable, he doth falsify his word before God, which will stick much in his conscience, and prove a snare. If a man henceforth misken God, and take on him to dispose of himself, since he is not his own, and hath opened his mouth unto the Lord, "he makes enquiry after vows, and devoureth that which is holy," Prov. xx. 25.

II. He who so transacteth with God, should hold steadfast that determination and conclusion. It is a shame for a man, whose heart hath closed with God, and whose mouth hath ratified and confirmed it solemnly before him, to contradict himself again, and to admit any thing to the

contrary; he ought boldly to maintain the thing against all deadly.

Then let me obtest you who desire to be established in the matter of your interest in God, that with all conveniency you set apart a piece of time for prayer before God, and laboring to work up your heart to seriousness, affection, and the faith of the duty, to make a covenant, and to transact with God by express words after this manner:

“O Lord, I am a lost and broken creature by natural, and by innumerable actual transgressions, which I do confess particularly before thee this day: and although, being born within the visible church, I was from the yet, womb in covenant with thee, and had the same sealed to me in baptism; for a long time, I have lived without God in the world, senseless and ignorant of my obligation, by virtue of that covenant. Thou hast at length discovered unto me, and bound upon my heart, my miserable state in myself, and hast made manifest unto my heart the satisfying relief thou hast provided by Christ Jesus, offering the same freely unto me, upon condition that I would accept of the same, and would close with thee as my God in Christ, warranting and commanding me, upon my utmost peril, to accept of this offer, and to flee unto Christ Jesus: Yea, to my apprehension, now thou hast sovereignly determined my heart, and shaped it for Christ Jesus, leading it out after him in the offers of the gospel, causing me to approach

unto the living God, to close so with him, and to acquiesce in his offer, without any known guile. And that I may come up to that establishment of spirit in this matter, which should be to my comfort, and the praise of thy glorious grace: therefore, I am here this day to put that matter out of question by express word before thee, according to thy will. And now I, unworthy as I am, do declare, that I believe that Christ Jesus, who was slain at Jerusalem, was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; I do believe that record, That there is life eternal for men in him, and in him only; I do this day in my heart please and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners by him, and do entrust my soul unto him; I do accept of reconciliation with God through him, and do close with thee as my God in him; I choose him in all that he is, and all that may follow him, and do resign up myself, and what I have or have unto thee: desiring to be divorced from every thing hateful unto thee, and ~~that~~ without exception, or reservation of any thing consistent within my knowledge, or intended reversion. Here I give the hand to thee, and do take all things about me witnesses, that I, whatever I be, or have hitherto been, do accept of God's offer of peace through Christ; and do make a sure covenant with thee this day, never to be reversed, hoping that thou wilt make all things forthcoming, both on thy part and mine, seriously begging, as I desire to be saved, that my corruptions may be subdued,

and my neck brought under thy sweet yoke in
an humble way, and my heart made cheerfully to ac-
quiesce in whatsoever thou dost unto me, or
with me, in order to these ends. Now glory
be unto thee, O Father, who advised such a
salvation, and gave the Son to accomplish it :
glory be to Christ Jesus, who at so dear a rate,
did purchase the outlasting of that love from
the Father's bosom, and through whom alone
this access is granted, and in whom I am re-
conciled unto God, and honorably united unto
him, and am no more an enemy or stranger :
glory to the Holy Ghost, who did alarm me
when I was destroying myself, and who did
not only convince me of my hazard, but did
also open my eyes to behold the relief provided
in Christ ; yea, and did persuade and determine
my wild heart to fall in love with Christ, as
~~the~~ enriching treasure ; and this day doth teach
me how to covenant with God, and how to
impropriate to myself all the sure mercies of
David, and blessings of Abraham, and to se-
cure to myself the favor and friendship of God
for ever. Now with my soul, heart, head,
and whole man, as I can, I do acquiesce in my
choice this day, henceforth resolving not to be
my own, but thine ; and that the care of what-
soever concerns me, shall be on thee as my
head and Lord : protesting humbly, that fail-
ings on my part (against which I resolve, thou
knowest) shall not make void this covenant,
for so hast thou said, which I intend not to
abuse, but so much the more to cleave close

unto thee; and I must have liberty to renew, ratify, and draw extracts of this transaction, as often as it shall be found needful. Now I know thy consent to this bargain stands recorded in scripture, so as I need no new signification of it; and I having accepted of thy offer upon thy own terms, will henceforth wait for what is good, and for thy salvation in end. As thou art faithful, pardon what is amiss in my way of doing the thing, and accept me in my sweet Lord Jesus, in whom I only desire pardon. And in testimony hereof, I set to my seal that God is true, in declaring him a competent Saviour."

Let people covenant with God in fewer or more words, as the Lord shall dispose them; for we intend no platform of words for any person: only it were fitting that men should before the Lord acknowledge their lost state in themselves, and the relief that is by Christ, and that they do declare that they accept of the same as it is offered in the gospel, and do thankfully rest satisfied with it, entrusting themselves henceforth wholly unto God, to be saved in his way, for which they wait according to his faithfulness.

If men would heartily and sincerely do this, it might, through the Lord's blessing, help to establish them against many fears and jealousies; and they might date some good thing from this day and hour, which might prove comfortable unto them when they fall in the

dark afterwards, and even when many failings do stare them in the face, perhaps at the hour of death, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "These be the last words of David—although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." It is much if a man can appeal unto God and say, thou knowest there was a day and an hour, when in such a place I did accept of peace through Christ, and did deliver up my heart to thee, to write on it thy whole law without exception: heaven and earth are witnesses of it. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope," Psal. cxix. 49.

Object. I dare not venture to speak such words unto God, because I find not my heart coming up full length in affection and seriousness: so I should but lie unto God, in transacting so with him.

Answer. It is to be regretted that men's heart doth not, with much benefit of desire and affection, embrace and welcome that blessed offer and portion: yet for answer to the objection, remember, I. That in those to whom the Lord giveth the new heart, forming Christ in them, the whole heart is not renewed; there is flesh and spirit lusting against each other, the one contrary unto the other, so as a man can neither do the good or evil he would do, with full benefit, Gal. v. 17. It is well if there be a

good part of the heart going out after Christ desiring to close with him on his own terms.

II. That there is often a rational love in the heart unto Christ Jesus, expressing itself by a respect to his commandments, 1 John v. 3. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous;" when there is not a sensible prevailing love which maketh the soul sick, Cant. ii. 5, "I am sick of love;" men must not always expect to find this. I say then, although somewhat in your heart draw back; yet if you can say, that you are convinced of your broken state without him, that you want a righteousness to cover your guilt, and that you want strength to stand out against sin, or to do what is pleasing before God, and that you also see fulness in him; in both these respects, if you dare say, that somewhat within your heart would be fain at him upon his own terms, and would have both righteousness for justification, and strength in order to sanctification; and that what is within you contradicting this is your burden, in some measure, and your bondage: if it be so, your heart is brought up a tolerable length; go on to the business, and determine the matter by covenanting with God, and say with your mouth, that you have both righteousness and strength in the Lord, as he hath sworn you shall do, Isa. xlv. 23, 24. It is approved divinity, to say unto God, I believe, when much misbelief is in me, and the heart divided in the case, Mark ix. 24. "Lord,

I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Withal, shew unto God how matters are in your heart, that so you may be without guile before him, concealing nothing from him; and put your heart, as it is, in his hand, to write his law on it, according to the covenant: for that is the thing he seeks of men, that they deliver up their heart to him, that he may stamp it with his whole will, without exception; and if you can heartily consent unto that, judging Christ's blood a sufficient ransom and satisfaction for man's transgression, you may go and expressly strike covenant with God, for your heart and affection is already engaged.

Object. I dare not so covenant with God, lest I break to him; yea, I persuade myself, that if such a temptation did offer, so and so circumstantiated, I would fall before it and succumb: therefore to transact so with God, whilst I foresee such a thing, were but to aggregate my condemnation.

Answ. I. You have already entered covenant with God, as you are a member of his visible church; and what is now prest upon you, is, but that you more heartily, sincerely, particularly, and more expressly covenant and transact with him: you are already obliged heartily to close with God in Christ; and if you do it in heart, I hope the hazard is no greater by saying that you do so, or have done so.

II. What will you do if you still hearty transacting with God in Christ, and do not accept his peace, if it is offered? you have not a

second of it in the world; either you must do this, or perish for ever: and if you do it with your heart, you may also say it with your tongue.

III. If people may fear at covenanting with God, because they will afterwards transgress, then not one man should covenant with God; for truly every one will transgress afterwards, if they live any length of time after the transaction; and we know no way like this to secure men from falling; for if you covenant honestly with him, he engageth, beside the new heart, to put his fear and law therein, to give his spirit to cause you walk in his way. And when you covenant with God, you deliver up yourself unto him to be sanctified and made conform to his will. It is rather a giving up of yourself to be led in his way in all things, and kept from every evil way, than any formal engagement on your part to keep his way, and to hold off from evil: so that you need not fear at the covenant, the language whereof is, "wilt thou not be made clean?" Jer. xiii. 27. And all that stand to strike covenant with God do thereby declare, that they desire not to be made clean.

IV. As it is hard for any to say confidently, they will transgress, if such a temptation did offer, so and so circumstantiated, because men may think that either God will keep a temptation out of their way, or not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, or give to them a way of escape, Psal. xli. 1. "God is our refuge and strength, a very pre-

sent help in trouble." 1 Cor. x. 13. "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." So the question is not, what I may do afterwards; but, what I now resolve to do. If my heart charge me presently with any deceit or resolution to transgress, I must lay aside that deceit before I transact with God: but if my heart charge me with no such purpose, yea, I dare say, I resolve against every transgression; and although I think I will fall before such and such a temptation, yet that thought floweth not from any allowed and approved resolution to do so, but from knowledge of my own corruption, and of what I have done to provoke God to desert me: but the Lord knows I resolve not to transgress, nor do I approve any secret inclination of my heart to such a sin, but would reckon it my singular mercy to be kept from sin in such a case; and I judge myself a wretched man, because of such a body of death within me, which doth threaten to make me transgress. In that case, I say, "my heart doth not condemn me; therefore I may and ought to have confidence before God," 1 John iii. 21. If this then be the case, I say to thee, although thou should afterwards fail many ways, and so perhaps draw upon thyself sad temporal strokes thereby, and lose for a season many expressions of his love; yet "there is

an Advocate with the Father to plead thy pardon," 1 John ii. 1. who hath satisfied for our breaches, Isa liii. 5, 6. "He was wounded for our transgressions he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." And for his sake, God resolveth to hold fast the covenant with men after their transgression, Psal. lxxxix. 30,—37. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness."—Else how could he be said "to betrothe us unto himself for ever?" Hos. ii. 19, 20. and how could the covenant be called "everlasting, ordered in all things and sure," if there were not ground of comfort in it, "even when our house is not so and so with God?" 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Yea, it were no better than the covenant of works, if these who enter it with God, could so depart from him again, as to make it void unto themselves, and to put themselves into a worse condition than they were in before they made it, Jer. xxxii. 40. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that

I will not turn away from them, to do them good"—compared with Heb. viii. 6. "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much more also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." Mal. ii. 16. "The Lord hateth putting away." No honest heart will stumble at this, but will rather be strengthened thereby in duty, Hos. xiv. 4. to the end, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him—Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent and he shall know them: for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them." For other ties and bonds, beside the fear of divorce, and punishment by death, do oblige the ingenuous wife unto duty; so here men will "fear the Lord and his goodness, Hos. iii. 5.

Object. I have at the celebration of the Lord's supper, and at some other occasions, covenanted expressly and verbally with God; but my fruitlessness in his ways, and the renewed jealousies of my gracious state, maketh me question if ever I transacted with God in sincerity, and I think I can do it no otherwise than I have done it.

Ans. I. Men are not to expect fruitfulness according to their desire, nor full assurance of God's favor immediately after they have fed unto Christ, and expressly transacted with God in him: these things will keep a man on work all his days. The saints had their billings and

short comings, yea, and backslidings, with many fits of dangerous misbelief, after they had very seriously and sincerely, and expressly closed with God as their God in Christ.

II. Many do look for fruitfulness in their walk, and establishment of faith, from their own sincerity in transacting with God, rather than from the spirit of the Lord Jesus. They left their heart in their own honesty and resolutions, and not in the blessed root Christ Jesus, without whom we can do nothing, and are vanity altogether in our best estate. Men should remember, that one piece of grace cannot produce any degree of grace: further nothing can work grace but the arm of Jehovah: and if men would lean unto Christ, and covenant with him as their duty absolutely, whatsoever may be the consequence, at least, looking only to him for the suitable fruit, it should fare better with them. God pleaseth not that men should betake themselves unto Christ, and covenant with him for a season, until they see if such fruit and establishment shall follow, purposing to disclaim their interest in him and the covenant, if such and such fruit doth not appear within such a length of time. This is to put the ways of God to trial and is very displeasing unto him. Men must absolutely close with Christ, and covenant with him, resolving to maintain these things as their duty, and a ready way to reach fruit, whatsoever shall follow thereupon; they having a testimony within

them, that they seriously design conformity to his revealed will in all things; and that they have closed covenant with him for the same end, as well as to be saved thereby.

III. Men should be sparing to bring in question their sincerity in transacting with God, unless they can instruct the same, or have great presumptions for it. If you can instruct any deceit or guile in your transacting with him, you are obliged to disclaim and rectify it, and to transact with God honestly, and without guile: but if you know nothing of your deceit or guile, in the day you did transact with him; yea, if you can say, that you did appeal unto God in that day, that you dealt honestly with him, and intended not to deceive; and did obtest him, according to his faithfulness, to search and try if there was any crookedness in your way, and to discover it unto you, and heal it. "Search me O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting," Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. and that afterwards you came to the light, that your deeds might be made manifest, John iii. 20, 21. And if you can say, that God's answers from his word to you, in so far as you could understand, were answers of peace, and confirmations of your sincerity. Yea further, if you dare say, that if upon life and death, you were again to transact with him, you can do it no other way, nor intend more sincerity and seriousness than be-

fore: then I dare say unto thee, in the Lord's name, thou ought not to question thy sincerity in transacting with God, but to "have confidence before God, since thy heart doth not condemn thee," 1 John iii. 21. and thou art bound to believe, that "God dealeth uprightly with the upright man, and with the pure doth shew himself pure," Psal. xviii. 25, 26. If a man intend honesty, God will not suffer him to beguile himself; yea, the Lord suffereth no man to deceive himself, unless the man intend to deceive both God and men.

IV. Therefore impute your unfruitfulness to your unwatchfulness and your misbelief, and impute your want of full assurance, unto an evil heart of unbelief, helped by satan to act against the glorious free grace of God; and charge not these things upon want of sincerity in your closing with Christ. And resolve henceforth to abide close by the root, and you shall bring forth more fruit; and by much fruit you lay yourself open to the witness of God's spirit, which will testify with your spirit, that you have sincerely and honestly closed with God, and that the rest of your works are wrought in God, and approven of him; and so the witness of the spirit and the water joining with the blood, whereupon you are to lay the weight of your soul and conscience, and where alone you are to sink the curses of the law due unto you for all your sins, and failings in your best things. These three do agree in one, viz. That this is the way of life and peace, and

that you have interest therein, and so you come to quietness and full assurance, John xv. 4, 5. "Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me: I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." John xiv. 21, 23. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Rom. viii. 16. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." 1 John v. 1. There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.

O blessed bargain of the new covenant, and thrice blessed Mediator of the same! let him ride prosperously, and subdue nations and languages, and gather in all his jewels, that honorable company of the first-born, that stately troop of kings and priests, whose glory it shall be to have washed their garments in the blood of that spotless Lamb, and whose happiness shall continually flourish in following him whithersoever he goeth, and in being in the immediate company of the ancient of

days, one sight of whose face shall make them in a manner forget, that ever they were in the earth. Oh if I could persuade men to believe that these things are not yea and nay, and to make haste towards him, who hasteth to judge the world, and to call men to an account, especially about their improvement of this gospel. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

The whole Treatise resumed in a few Questions and Answers.

Quest. 1. **W**HAT is the great business a man hath to do in the world?

Ans. To make sure a saving interest in Christ Jesus, and to walk suitable thereunto.

Q. 2. Have not all the members of the visible church a saving interest in Christ?

A. No verily; yea, but a very few of them have it.

Q. 3. How shall I know if I have a saving interest in him?

A. Ordinarily the Lord prepareth his own way in the soul, by a work of humiliation, and discovereth a man's sin and misery to him, and exerciseth him so therewith, that he longs for the physician Christ Jesus.

Q. 4. How shall I know if I have got a competent discovery of my sin and misery?

A. A competent sight of it makes a man take salvation to heart above any thing in this world: it maketh him disclaim all relief in himself, even his best things; it maketh Christ, who is the Redeemer, very precious to the soul: it makes a man stand in awe to sin afterwards, and make him content to be saved upon any terms God pleaseth.

Q. 5. What other way may I discern a saving interest in him?

A. By the going out of my heart seriously and affectionately towards him, as he is held

out in the gospel, and this is faith or believing.

Q. 6. How shall I know if my heart goeth out after him aright, and that my faith is true saving faith?

A. Where the heart goeth out aright after him, in true and saving faith, the soul pleaseth Christ alone above all things, and pleaseth him in all his three offices, to rule and instruct, as well as to save; and is content to cleave unto him, whatsoever inconveniencies may follow.

Q. 7. What other mark of a saving interest in Christ can you give to me?

A. He that is in Christ savingly is a new creature, he is graciously changed and renewed in some measure in the whole man, and in all his ways; pointing towards all the known commands of God.

Q. 8. What if I find sin now and then prevailing over me?

A. Although every sin deserveth everlasting vengeance; yet if you be afflicted for your failings, and confess them with shame of face unto God, resolving to strive against them honestly henceforth, and flee unto Christ for pardon, you shall obtain mercy, and your interest stands sure.

Q. 9. What shall the man do who cannot lay claim to Christ Jesus, nor any of those marks spoken of?

A. Let him not take rest until he make sure unto himself a saving interest in Christ.

Q. 10. What way can a man make sure an

interest in Christ, who never had a saving interest in him hitherto?

A. He must take his sins to heart, and his great hazard thereby, and he must take to heart God's offer of pardon and peace through Christ Jesus, and heartily close with God's offer, by betaking himself unto Christ the blessed refuge.

Q. 11. What if my sins be singularly heinous and great beyond ordinary?

A. Whatsoever thy sins be, if thou wilt close with Christ Jesus by faith, thou shalt never enter into condemnation.

Q. 12. Is faith in Christ only required of men?

A. Faith is the only condition upon which God doth offer peace and pardon unto men: but be assured, faith, if it be true and saving, will not be alone in the soul, but will be attended with true repentance, and a thankful study of conformity to God's image.

Q. 13. How shall I be sure that my heart doth accept of God's offer, and doth close with Christ Jesus?

A. Go make a covenant expressly, and by word speak the thing unto God.

Q. 14. What way shall I do that?

A. Set apart some bit of time, and having considered your own lost estate, and the relief offered by Christ Jesus, work up your heart to please and close with that offer, and say unto God expressly, that you do accept of that offer, and of him to be your God in Christ; and do

give up yourself to him to be saved in his way, without reservation or exception in any case; and that you henceforth will wait for salvation in the way he hath appointed.

Q. 15. What if I break unto God afterwards?

A. You must resolve on his strength not to break, and watch over your own way, and put your heart in his hand to keep it: and if you break, you must confess it unto God, and judge yourself for it, and flee to the advocate for pardon, and resolve to do no more so: and this you must do as often as you fail.

Q. 16. How shall I come to full assurance of my interest in Christ, so as it may be above controversy?

A. Learn to lay your weight upon the blood of Christ, and study purity and holiness in all manner of conversation; and pray for the witness of God's spirit, to join with the blood and the water; and his testimony added unto these, will establish you in the faith of an interest in Christ.

Q. 17. What is the consequence of such closing with God in Christ by heart and mouth?

A. Union and communion with God, all good here, and his blessed fellowship in heaven for ever afterwards.

Q. 18. What if I slight all these things, and do not lay them to heart to put them in practice?

A. The Lord cometh with his angels in flaming fire, to render vengeance to them who

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obey not this gospel ; and thy judgment shall be greater than the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah ; and so much the greater that thou hast read this treatise, for it shall be a witness against thee in that day.

F I N I S.