

THE
GREAT CONCERN
OF
SALVATION.

IN THREE PARTS,

VIZ.

I. A Discovery of Man's Natural State; or, The Guilty Sinner Convicted.

II. Man's Recovery by Faith in Christ; or, The Con-

vinced Sinner's Case and Cure.

III. The Christian's Duty, with respect to both Personal & Family Religion.

BY THE LATE
REV. MR THOMAS HALYBURTON,
SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT CERES, AND AFTER-
WARDS PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF ST ANDREW'S.



EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY SCHAW AND FILLANS,

1797.

P R E F A C E.

WERE it not to answer the expectation of readers, and comply with the custom of writers, the following book might be ventured out to the world, without either preface, introduction, or recommendation, the very title-page containing enough to entitle it to a careful and candid reading and perusal.

The worth and credit of the author is sufficiently established among such as have any taste of piety or learning.

By the history of his life, which has met with very good acceptance, it appears that he was a man of God, one whom he had set apart for himself. How distinct and pointed was he in observing the Lord's way and work, in bringing him to himself! And where can we see a brighter example, in these latter days of the world, of the humbling exercises and comfortable enjoyment of Christians, than in the author?

How exciting and edifying is it, to see how close he walked with God in his secret intercourse with him, in his domestic relations, and family devotions, in his public and ministerial work, and his conversation before the world, *setting the Lord always before him, and acknowledging him in all his ways!*

May we not then expect something very well worth our while, in the performance of one of such a character? One that had the contents of the book written upon his own heart, before

he preached them to his people, and was a living and lively witness and example of the great and grave truths now exhibited to public view.

However little this part of his character may take with the multitude, yet those truly serious, who valued him while living, and have an honour for his memory when dead, will, no doubt, take pleasure to see how the great purposes in the book were managed by such an excellent hand ; and the brethren that were concerned in the publishing of it, can, with a good deal of assurance, say, that the experience, upon perusing, will answer the expectations raised, of meeting with a spirit of seriousness and piety breathing in it, and a great deal of solid judgement and distinct thought ; and, in some incident questions, not uncurious, there is sufficient evidence of his penetration, and what may be very agreeable and taking to them who set up for something above what is vulgar.

There is nothing in it mean, or unworthy of a grave, judicious, and learned author : if any thing look that way, it is where the necessity of the matter, and capacity of those he dealt with, required it, *becoming all things to all men* ; particularly when dealing with children, it was fit to do it as near their own terms as possible : for to suit matter to the designs we have, and to the conditions of these we deal with, is no argument of the want, but of the strength of judgement.

He was excellently fitted and enriched with talents, for every post Providence called him to, having filled and adorned the Doctor's chair,

as

as Professor of Divinity, as well as the pulpit, while pastor to a Christian flock.

But though there had been less to say for the author, the contents of the book deserve a fair hearing, and a serious perusal; why? it is the GREAT CONCERN, it is not a trifle, it is not an amusement; no, it is of the last consequence to us to know these things. Many live unconcerned, and love to do so; it may be, the very title shall be with such an argument against reading; there is little hope of fixing such so long as to read the book, or so deep as to do it seriously, and with due concern: and no wonder, when those so indifferent about the great concerns of eternity, and their precious souls, suffer the scripture-oracles to lie by them, without due, frequent, and serious inquiry into them.

Here is presented to the view of Christians, and those who would indeed be such, what, by the blessing of God, may be very entertaining, edifying, and useful.

The first fruits of his labours, in the sermon next after his ordination, printed as an introduction to the book, shews how much his work was at heart, and under what concern he was, to prepare the people for entertaining and improving his ministry and message, and to approve himself to God, in the discharge and delivery thereof.

In the First Part, the state of nature is represented as a state of sin, misery, and wrath, in the most pungent, affecting, and convincing terms imaginable; where the guilty sinner is closely pursued into all the turns and stages of,
A 3 life,

life, and convicted of sin: in each and all of them, sin is represented as odious and abominable, as exceeding sinful.

It is laid open in such glasses, and with such aggravations, as it is hard to avoid the conviction of it, but where natural hardness is increased, by the malignant influence of Satan, whose great design and strength lies in keeping all in peace.

The divine resentments against sin, wrath, and judgement, upon sinners, are likewise set forth in such a manner, as cannot easily miss to raise terror in the consciences of the guilty: present wrath in the direful effects of it, wrath to come in the extent and extremity of it, are held forth in such a lively manner, as must raise the gratitude of those happily delivered from it, and bids very fair to alarm and awaken those yet under it, to escape and flee for their lives.

Then, upon supposition of conviction of sin and guilt, in the Second Part, the exercises of the convinced sinner are opened up most distinctly and judiciously, in their nature, rise, workings, and degrees, and in such a feeling manner as may easily persuade one, that he has, in this matter, copied over his own experience: and it is some degree of satisfaction to one in this condition, to have one going before them, and to think that their guide has trodden the same path.

With what tenderness and compassion doth he touch the cases of the distressed! while yet, with faithfulness and freedom, he opens up the mistakes and deceits, both in the workings and
issue

issue of convictions, approving himself *an interpreter, one among a thousand*. Those who by the Spirit are convinced of sin, will know how to put a value upon a piece so suitable to their case; and those awakened and convinced are led, by a skilful hand, to the centre of rest for wearied souls, by the way of faith, and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, which gives occasion for opening up the mystery of faith, in its nature, acts, and properties, concomitants, and consequences, which will be found very useful for informing the less knowing, confirming the weak, and comforting the strong believer.

And what can be of greater importance for us to know, than the only way of escaping wrath to come, and being delivered from the curse and condemnation of the law, of being united to Christ, and being found in him, upon which he becomes our righteousness and strength, whereby we are intitled to the great salvation?

Of which salvation the author treats as the great encouragement of believing; and this is the one thing necessary: for, *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* This salvation is set forth in scripture-light, accounted for in its parts and properties, at a good length: and as this is of the last consequence to all, so it must be the delight of those that have it at heart.

If thou art convinced and awakened, and brought to a concern about salvation, if brought to the jailor's case, thou wilt welcome the help here offered, and readily attend to the answer

of the apostle to his question : for what can be more proper and pertinent to the case of such, than the true way to escape the misery of a natural state, and attain the felicity of a gracious one ? These, as they will not spare, so they will not repent, the pains of reading these sheets.

Such as are by grace engaged to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are a people saved of the Lord, will have it at heart, what to do for God : they will set themselves, in the strength of grace, to all the duties of religion, whereby God may be glorified, and their faith justified, and their begun salvation promoted : all which good designs are answered in the Third Part of the book.

And this gives an account of personal religion, of the service of God, how we must enter into it, and persevere in it ; and what more useful piece of knowledge is there, than how we may do service to, and keep up our communion with God ? Here our first transactions and after walk are pointedly and piously directed.

Here also family-religion is opened in its parts, the foundations of it fixed, and the practice of it enforced with powerful arguments, and suitable directions for people's walking in their house, and the proper duties of the several relatives in a family ; which, if duly observed, would turn houses into churches : and this is very necessary, when family-devotion is declining, and like to wear out.

A public religion comes also under consideration in this Part, or a public spirit ; whence the thing is recommended, and yet cautioned with great wisdom and judgement, to prevent
people's

people's going out of their sphere, and beyond their line.

The order, subordination, and mutual dependencies and relations of personal, domestic, and public religion, are nicely stated, and judiciously discovered, and proper caveats entered against beginning at the wrong end, as seldom missing to end either in apostacy or division; which cannot be but very useful in the present juncture, when divisions so much abound, and dividing inclinations are so much aloft.

In a word, there is no part of the book but what is of high importance and great usefulness; which, joined with the established character and reputation of the author, intitles it to a kind reception, and due perusal.

As these were the main prompters of the publishing the book, so they may be reckoned sufficient arguments for a careful reading and improvement of it, now when published.

It comes out with very little alteration, even as to words, as they stood in the manuscript, partly because it did not much need it, and partly out of veneration for the author, whose pulpit skill and style was so generally acceptable; yet it is not to be supposed, but if it had received a finishing stroke from his own hand, for the press, it might have appeared more beautiful; though even under this want, it will be found, that neither method nor style is disagreeable, though popular, and just as prepared and delivered to his people.

May all that have encouraged the design of publishing the book, meet with the double reward of edification to their own souls, and

seeing it do much good to others. We live in a time when all helps and advantages need to be improved, for awakening secure sinners, and bringing them under soul-uptaking inquiries about salvation, and stirring up Christians to the universal practice of piety and godliness. And as the book has a plain tendency to these ends, go on and read it, and digest and apply it, begging that God may effectually bless and prosper it to those good ends for which it is designed.

RECOM-

RECOMMENDATION.

THE Author of these Discourses has discovered to the world, a bright genius, strong reason, and solid learning; in the Treatise which he has published against the Deists; wherein he has carried the war into their quarters, has beat the infidels at their own weapons, and triumphs over them in their own camp.

The Memoirs of his Life, and the Secret Transactions between God and his Soul, copied from his private papers; sufficiently manifest his acquaintance with the inward and vital part of religion, and his deep insight into the affairs of sin and grace.

Now, where such natural ingenuity, and such learned endowments, are sanctified by such a variety of rich experiences, and attended with such a train of Christian graces, what a glorious composition must all these make! And how well furnished must such a man be for the service of God, and for the salvation of men!

The title-page gives you a short, but true account, of the substance of this book; and the Preface informs you in what manner the Author has pursued and handled those solemn and most important subjects. I have perused a great part of this Treatise, and I can boldly say, That the Preface gives an honourable, but a just account of the performance, and leaves very little for me to add by way of recommendation; and this also can be only necessary to those who have had no opportunity of acquaintance with the Author, or his works.

I would first take notice of this character of it, That it is written much in the strain of some of the best of our English sermons in the last age, when the pulpits did not affect politeness and indolence, but spoke thunder to the secure conscience, and made the hearers feel the terrors of the Lord; when the preachers applied the grace of the gospel to souls that were wounded by the law, in a more skilful and successful manner than has been generally practised in later years. This Treatise seems to be written in the power and spirit of that day, when stupid souls were convinced in multitudes, and sinners were led by troops into the paths of salvation, by faith in the Son of God; when conversions were numerous, and the power of godliness was almost as common as the stricter forms of it are now-a-days.

In the work of convincing secure sinners, young and old, the Author has suited his addresses to every character of mankind, and hath shown himself a workman that need not to be ashamed. There may happen now and then a single thought or expression, that may be conceived too strongly, or pushed too far, under the warm influence of his zeal. But let it be remembered, that these were his common popular discourses, prepared weekly for the use of his parish, unlaboured, unpolished, and undesigned for the view of the public; yet, such as they are, they contain more useful thoughts for the real benefit of souls, than any of the polite and well-fashioned discourses that obtain too much of modern applause.

In his handling the doctrine of faith in Christ, his sentiments are very conformable to those of the pious and venerable Dr John Owen: his own Christian experiences seem to have been in some part moulded and formed by the practical and spiritual writings of that great man; who, in the matters of experimental godliness, was, in my esteem, one of the prime writers of the last age, if not superior to them all. Nor does my veneration of him arise from the honour that Divine Providence has done me, in appointing me his successor, in the pastoral office to the same church of Christ; but from the sensible benefit which I have often received from his writings, and that before I was ever acquainted with the people to whom he ministered. And wherever I see the
breathings!

breathings of the same spirit, they secretly influence me to favour such a writer, and refresh my early reverence for that great man. I confess his style was long and intricate; and herein this author has the advantage of him, whose language is plain and condescending, popular and easy: so that I dare venture to recommend this work to the perusal even of the meanest souls, who are willing to concern themselves in this world about their salvation in the next.

The Third Part of this Treatise is very proper to awaken sleepy Christians to life, and vigour, and activity, as well as to direct the new convert how he may shape and square his conduct to the glory of saving grace, and to inform him what he should do for that God who has done so much for him. I hope it will be of use also to raise up the dying power of family-religion, and set many a master of the household upon inquiry, what they have done to promote the power of godliness among those that are under their care.

I would take the freedom particularly to recommend this Discourse to be distributed by Christians who have a tender concern for the souls of their children, or any other dear relatives or friends. If the work of grace be already begun upon their hearts, by the blessing of God, this may help to promote and advance it with power and glory; but if they are yet in ignorance and darkness, unawakened, and thoughtless of their eternal concerns, I would more especially propose this book to be given them; and may it be attended with the divine influences of the Spirit, that the Author, who is now dead, may yet speak in these sermons, to the salvation of many who are yet living! Amen.

I. WATTS.

LONDON,
Nov. 7. 1721. }

A N

INTRODUCTORY SERMON.



*Acts x. 29.—I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent
for me?*

WAVING the formality of an introduction, I shall lay before you a few remarks for clearing the occasion of the apostle's using this question, and the reason why we have made choice of this text at this time, for the subject of this discourse. And,

1. This chapter contains a large and particular account of one Cornelius, a Roman centurion, or captain of an hundred soldiers, his conversion to Christianity.

2. Cornelius, though by birth a Roman, was of the Jewish religion, a proselyte. These who of other nations embraced the true religion, associating themselves to the Jews, were called proselytes; and they were either such as joined with the Jews in the whole rites of their religion, being circumcised as were the Jews; or such as adhered to the substantials of their religion, but remained uncircumcised. The former sort were called proselytes of righteousness, or of the covenant; the latter, proselytes of the gate. Interpreters seem to agree that Cornelius was a proselyte of the gate, one who owned the substance of religion, but remained uncircumcised, and did not join in the whole of their worship.

3. This captain was a true convert before this discovery of the gospel came to him by the apostle: he was accepted of God, and therefore was not to be accounted unclean.

unclean. Now, none save those who are converted can be accepted ; for “ they that are in the flesh cannot please God ; and without faith it is impossible to please him ; for he that comes to him must believe that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” Heb. xi. 6. Wherefore,

4. He, no doubt, leaned upon the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, for his acceptance with God ; since “ none can come to the Father but by him,” who is “ the way, the truth, and the life,” and who only can guide sinners in their approaches to God.

5. God being a rewarder of such as diligently seek him, did reward this man’s faith and obedience with the gospel-revelation of his Son Jesus Christ, whence he came to understand, that the Messiah he looked for was already come. His prayers and alms-deeds are said to come up for a memorial before God ; not as if there had been any thing of merit in what was done or attained to, but to encourage others, and to discover the riches of God’s bounty, in rewarding freely, according to his rich grace, the diligent improvement of light with greater degrees of light and life ; and this reward is not of debt, but of rich and sovereign grace.

6. This saint, waiting for the consolation of Israel, has a vision from God, bidding him send for the apostle Peter ; whence we may learn, that God has a great respect for his own institutions. The gospel-ministry is of divine appointment ; and therefore the Lord refers Cornelius to it, though it had been no less easy to have discovered Christ to him in the vision.

7. Peter has a vision to the same purpose, removing such objections as might make him scruple : whence we may remark, that when the Lord designs good to a people, by a minister, he gives both the people clearness to call, and the minister clearness to come ; though not in such an extraordinary manner as this here made use of.

8. When the apostle, in compliance with Cornelius’s call, and God’s call, or rather the Lord’s joining in the same call with him, comes to the place where he was, the first question he puts to him is that which we have
read.

read to you: *I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?* and this he doth, notwithstanding he had got some account of this from the servants who were sent for him by Cornelius.

The words are in themselves plain; and therefore we shall not offer any explication of them, but lay before you this doctrine, which is palpably contained in them.

DOCT.—“A faithful gospel-minister, coming among a people upon their call, will be very desirous to know what their designs in calling him were:” *I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?*

In discoursing this point, we shall inquire,

I. What designs a people should have in calling a gospel-minister.

II. What way they should evidence these to be their designs.

III. Make some inquiry into the reasons of the doctrine. And, lastly, Apply the whole.

I. To begin with the first of these, *The designs a people should have in calling a gospel-minister*; they are many. We shall endeavour to reduce them to a few. And,

1. A people should, in calling a gospel-minister, design to *hear from him the whole counsel of God*, in reference to their eternal salvation. This is the great business of gospel-ministers, to declare the whole counsel of God to these to whom they come, to *keep nothing back* from them that may be of use to them. So their commission runs, Matth. xxviii. 19. 20. “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Amen.” And the great apostle of the Gentiles, in that famous farewell sermon of his to the church of Ephesus, which we have recorded, Acts xx. from ver. 17. and downward, appeals to the conscience of that people as to his faithfulness in fulfilling his commission in declaring to them the *whole counsel of God*, ver. 27: *And in keep-*
ing

ing back nothing that could be profitable to them, ver. 20. Whoever would approve himself a faithful gospel-minister, must take care faithfully to discover to his hearers their *lost and undone state* by nature; that they are all become guilty before God; and that there is no other way of their obtaining access to him but through Jesus Christ, who is made of God to them who believe "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." To these two doth the apostle refer the whole of that counsel of God, he shunned not to declare to the Ephesians, in that forecited scripture, Acts xx. 21. He testified to all persons, Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God, (*i. e.* that they were guilty of such offences against God, as called for deep humiliation), and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, that there was no way of escaping the wrath of God, but that of closing with Christ by faith. This is the matter of the gospel: and Christ's servants are to make it their business faithfully to unfold the mind of God in reference to these two, man's state by nature, and what he may by grace be advanced to. This is called, 1 Tim. v. 17. a "labouring in the word and doctrine."

This preaching of the gospel takes in three things.
 1. A full proposal of the doctrine just now mentioned. Ministers must, without mincing the matter, plainly discover to men their lost state, and the impossibility of recovery, any other way than by the gospel-method, through Jesus Christ, Acts xx. 21. 2. They must discover these things, not as their private sentiments, built upon some rational conclusions of their own drawing and framing, but as the word of God. It is the word of God they are to propose, and not their own private opinions; and it is the word of God hearers are to receive from them, 1 Thess. ii. 13. "For this cause also thank we God," saith the apostle, "without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." 3. This preaching of the word takes in not only a proposal of the word of God, but an authori-
 tative

tative declaration of it by virtue of a commission derived from God. "These things speak; and exhort, and rebuke with all authority," Tit. ii. 15. The word, in the first language, may be rendered *command*, with all command. Ministers are clothed with authority from God; and in his name, by virtue of a commission received from him, they are to preach the gospel, and to speak the counsel of God, as being his mouth to the people; 1 Pet. iv. 11. This is the principal part of the minister's work; and therefore to hear the word of God from them in this manner should be the great design of these who call a gospel-minister, that they may hear from them as the mouth of God, what by nature they are, and what through the grace of God in Christ Jesus they may be. But now,

2. When a people call a gospel-minister, they should design *the regular and orderly performance of the worship of God*. This worship of God, as it is contradistinguished from the doctrine of the gospel, of which under the former head, consists principally in the administration of the sacraments and prayer; public prayer, I mean, under which PRAISES are comprehended, as belonging to, and always to be joined with it, according to our blessed Lord's appointment in that form, commonly called the *Lord's Prayer*, which concludes with thanksgiving. In Acts ii. 42. we have an account of the public worship of the church, which consists in preaching, there expressed by doctrine, and breaking of bread, that is, administering the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and prayers and praises. And they," saith the Spirit of God speaking of the church, "continued in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers;" and, ver. 47. "praising God." The celebration of the sacraments, public prayers and praises, are divine institutions for the salvation and edification of the church, which cannot be gone about, or orderly performed, without a gospel-ministry, who only have commission to celebrate the sacraments, and to be the mouth of the people to God in their public assemblies, being furnished with spiritual gifts for the work, Matth. xxviii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 23. and xiv. 16. And therefore,

therefore, when a people call a gospel-minister, they should have this in view, as one great design, that thereby they may have the gospel-worship celebrated among them in all its parts, according to Christ's institution, to their spiritual advantage and his glory.

3. They should call a gospel-minister to *rule over them*. This is one part of the minister's work, to rule over his flock, 1 Tim. v. 17. "Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." This superiority which gospel-ministers have, is not a lordly dominion over either the persons or faith of their flock. No, any thing of this sort that ever crept into the church, had its rise from the subtilty of Satan, who envied its peace; and is directly opposite to the gospel, which forbids lordly dominion, the gospel-minister's authority being given only for "edification, and not for destruction," as the apostle has it, 2 Cor. x. 8. And it consists, 1. In an authoritative publication of the laws of Christ's house. 2. In an authoritative enforcement of them, by a ministerial offer of the gospel-privileges as the rewards of obedience. And, 3. In a power to inflict, according to Christ's appointment, the gospel-punishments upon the disobedient, the highest whereof is excommunication, whereby the disobedient are "delivered over to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," as the apostle has it, 1 Cor. v. 5. And to one of these three ends might all be reduced, according to the common distinction of gospel-ordinances, in doctrine, worship, and government. But that you may the better understand this matter, we shall name some more particular designs: and therefore we say,

4. A people in calling a gospel-minister, should design *the closing of a bargain, and making a match with Christ upon his own terms*. It is the work and business they are sent out for, to espouse sinners to Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 2. to woo a bride for the Lamb. They have a commission, as Abraham's servant had, to go and seek a wife for their Master's Son; and those who call them should do
it

it in order to the *conclusion of this happy match*; that from them they may hear the terms whereon they are to be admitted into this near relation, the advantages that shall accrue to them by it, the inconveniences they will run themselves into by a refusal, and the warrant they have to enter into so high and honourable a relation.

5. They should design *their own furtherance in acquaintance with Christ*. They should “as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby,” 1 Pet. ii. 2. that they may be furthered in their joy and faith, “growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

6. They should design *their own establishment in the ways of God*, that they may not be “tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine,” but that “being rooted and grounded in the faith, they may grow up in all things to him who is the head and Saviour of the body.”

This is expressly declared to be the design of the ministry, Eph. iv. 11. The apostle, having spoken of Christ’s exaltation, and his having received gifts for men, tells us of him, in this verse and the following, “That he gave some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the flight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive,” &c. And to the same purpose speaks the Spirit of God frequently elsewhere, of the design of the ministry. Paul, Rom. i. 11. expresseth his earnest desire to see them, and to “impart some spiritual gift” unto them, to the end “they may be established.” These who are already engaged in God’s ways should design their own establishment in them in their calling a gospel-minister.

7. They should design *their own direction through all the difficulties of religion*. The Lord’s people have many

many dark steps in their way ; sometimes they are under temptation, and know not how to carry ; sometimes they are engaged in a close fight with their adversaries, and know not how to wield their spiritual armour to advantage ; sometimes they are out of the way, and know not how to get into it again : and therefore they need some to guide them into the meaning of God's word ; for how can they understand, unless they be taught, Acts viii. 31. " How can I understand," says the Ethiopian eunuch, " unless some man should guide me : " and who should guide them but those who are guides by office, as the word may be rendered, Heb. xiii. 8, " Consider them who have the rule over you," or who are your guides. This, as the end of a gospel-ministry, is promised in Isa. xxx. 20. 21. " And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into corners any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers : And thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." It is impossible we should condescend on all the particular intentions or ends a people should propose to themselves in calling a gospel-minister ; and therefore we shall conclude all this in one, which is sure to comprehend them.

8. They should seek *to have one who may answer in some measure Timothy's character*, with respect to the church of the Philippians, Phil. ii. 20. *one who may naturally take care of them*, that is, one who may, out of love to their souls, *affectionately, prudently, carefully*, and with *impartial boldness*, open and apply the word, dispense the sacraments, and administer discipline, for the instruction of the ignorant, strengthening the weak, comforting the disconsolate, affecting the impenitent, reproving the faulty, recovering wanderers, directing and helping forward those who doubt and halt ; that he may both save himself and them, to the praise and glory of God's grace. We shall not insist upon each of these particulars, which would require not one or two, but many sermons, which suits not our present design. We shall therefore proceed, in the

Second place, to inquire, *How a people should make it appear that they were acting upon those designs in their calling a gospel-minister.* This inquiry might be understood, either to respect their own satisfaction, or the satisfaction of the word, or of the minister himself as to this matter; but time not allowing us to be so particular, we shall hold the inquiry in the general; and in answer to it we say,

1. A people should discover their designs to be such as we have mentioned, by a *punctual attendance upon all the ordinances*, to be by him dispensed in public or private. Thus we see it was with Cornelius; he not only waited on himself, but he called together those on whom he had any influence. “And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends,” Acts x. 24. Those who will not give attendance to the public dispensation of the word, and the private instructions, either family or personal, but withdraw, we cannot think these persons had the right end before them in calling a gospel-minister: surely, had they been right in their aims, they would have been ready to say with Cornelius, “We are all here present,” &c.

2. They should not only present their bodies upon such occasions, but they should *sit themselves as in God’s sight, to hear all things whatever are commanded of God* by his servants. “We are all here present,” says Cornelius to Peter, “to hear all things that are commanded thee of God,” Acts x. 33. To give attendance to the ordinances, either more public or private, on any other design than this, is to “offer the sacrifice of fools,” contrary to that injunction of the wise man, Eccl. v. 1. “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools.” When we come to God’s ordinances, we must come to hear what he speaks to us.

3. They should evidence the honesty of their designs, by *obeying the word which they hear* at his mouth; they should comply with all the commands of God, and say to their minister, as the people of Israel said to Moses, Deut. v. 27. “Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord

Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." For, as the apostle James well observes, "It is not the hearer of the word, but the doer who is blessed of God," James i. 25. As we must hear and do, so our attendance must not be limited, but our ear must be opened to reproofs, and the most terrible denunciations of wrath from God, as well as to the sweet promises and charming discoveries of the glory of Christ, the beauties of religion, the surprising happiness of the saints in heaven; and there must not only be obedience to these commands, which may bring in honour, external gain, and pleasure, by our compliance, but these also must be obeyed, which may bring us under the lash of wicked men's tongues, and expose us to reproach, hazard, and ignominy, in the world. *All things whatsoever are commanded of God* must be punctually obeyed without reserve.

4. There must be a *submitting to all the ordinances of God*. Both this obedience and submission you will find spoken of, Heb. xiii. 17. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for this is unprofitable for you." The word rendered *obey*, signifies properly a believing upon persuasion, and respects our belief of the truths proposed by them, and a compliance with our duty that way; and, on the other hand, this submission has a respect to the power they have over their people for edification, and not for destruction; that is, that authority they have for admonishing, reproofing, rebuking, and censuring offenders; and by a submission to them in the dispensation of these ordinances of Christ, reproof and censure, I mean, they are to evidence to all the uprightness and Christian sincerity in their designs.

5. They are to evidence their designs to be justifiable, by a *careful diligence in applying to their minister upon all occasions*; when they are under difficulties, when they are in the dark as to duty, when they have to do with corruptions which they cannot get mastered, when
under

under the Lord's hand, and so of all other exigencies of the like nature. For as the "priest's lips should preserve or keep knowledge, so the people should ask the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts," Mal. ii. 7. And these who are sick, are bid "send for the elders or ministers of the church to pray over them," James v. 14. Those who have the advantage of a gospel-minister, are indispenfibly obliged to acquaint him with the state of their souls, when there is any thing peculiar in it, and when they are reduced to any strait or extremity: And that, 1. Because God has laid it upon them as a duty, in that forecited Mal. ii. 7. "The people should ask the law at his mouth." 2. Because otherwise he will be at a loss in his bringing messages to you, if he mistake your case, or be unacquainted with it; how can he direct you, if he understand not your state and condition? The Lord gives no immediate revelation now, we have no warrant to expect any such thing; and therefore the way wherein ministers ordinarily come to understand their people's condition is by themselves, who upon this ground are called to have recourse to their ministers. 3. They should acquaint their ministers with their circumstances, because they are the people's mouth to God; and if they be not acquainted with the circumstances and condition of the flock, how shall they, according to their duty, hold up the case of their people to God, as they are indispenfibly obliged to do, and that both in public, in secret, and in private?

6. Once more, and we have done: A people may and should prove their intentions honest, by a *diligent application to their own proper work and business*, with respect to his furtherance in these great designs. Every member of the congregation should be helpful to him, in contributing their utmost assistance to him in his work. A minister may spend "his strength in vain," if elders in their place, masters of families in theirs, and every particular person in his station, do not join, by prayer and otherwise, in assisting their ministers. Then do men appear sincere in their designs, for the glory of God, and their own salvation, when every one puts to

his hand to the work, and endeavours the removal of what may retard and obstruct its progress and success; and likewise studies by all means to strengthen the minister's hands, that he may not be discouraged, diverted, or taken off from his work. In fine, then do a people appear single in their aims, when their words, their hearts, their hands go one way, and all they do is levelled at the ends mentioned, the glory of God, in the conversion, edification, and salvation of souls. I proceed now,

THIRDLY, To inquire into *the reasons of the doctrine*, why a faithful gospel-minister coming amongst a people, will be careful to understand their design or intent in calling him. And,

1. This will be the desire of a gospel-minister, because a mistake in this matter will be of very dangerous consequence to the people. That people may be influenced by wrong and sinister ends and motives in this matter, is beyond all peradventure. They may design the "gratification of their itching ears" by the preacher's gifts, as the prophet Ezekiel's hearers did; they may seek the gospel-ordinances for a *charm* as it were, that they may sit down and rest upon them, as many people do, like those with whom the prophet Jeremiah had to do, who said, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." Or they may design the *strengthening of factions and parties*; or to get *occasion to mock*, as many do now in our days. These and the like sinister designs may a people go upon: and there can be nothing more prejudicial to a people than to be under the influence of such intentions; since, past all peradventure, God will not sit with such an affront as is done him by this means, when that ordinance of the ministry, which he designed for the good of souls, and his glory, is prostitute, and made subservient to quite different, nay, opposite designs: and surely a faithful gospel-minister, who will have a tender regard to the salvation of his people, cannot chuse but be solicitous to understand that they are not in so dangerous a mistake.

2. The knowledge of this will be of great use to
clear

clear his call. It is a great evidence that God designs good to a people when they call a gospel-minister upon such designs; and it cannot but go a great length towards his satisfaction as to God's calling him to work among them, in order to the compassing the great designs of his ministry. When Peter got the account before spoken of from Cornelius, he is further confirmed as to the hand of God in his coming to him, in compliance with his desire.

3. If upon inquiry they be found to be such as we have mentioned, it will be a great comfort to him, in *grappling with the difficulties* he may meet with in the discharge of his duty. It will give a great deal of satisfaction to him, to know that those for whose sakes he runs those hazards, and grapples with these difficulties, have the same aims, and are joining in the same design with him. In fine, *the right management of his whole work* depends very much upon this knowledge of his people's intentions; and therefore it is no wonder he be inquisitive into them, since by his acquaintance with these he may be capacitate to further both his own and their salvations.

We might, for improvement of this point, discourse to you at length of the necessity of a gospel-minister's inquiring into his own designs in undertaking the charge of a people. The arguments made use of to discover the reasonableness of inquiring after the people's designs, conclude no less strongly with respect to the minister's. We might likewise discourse to you of the way how he is to manifest the integrity and sincerity of his aims; but time will not allow us to enter upon these things, and you heard the minister's duty so fully and largely discoursed of within these few days, viz. at the ordination, that we judge it needless to enter upon that subject; and therefore all the improvement we design, of what has been said shall be dispatched in a short address to you in this congregation.

You have called me to labour among you in the work of the gospel; upon your call I have *come*; I *ask* therefore to what intent sent ye for me? What did ye
 B 2 design

design in this matter? Was it to hear what God has to say to you, that God's worship may be ordered according to his own appointment, that you may be brought to acquaintance with Christ, or that you be established in his ways? Were these and the like the designs you had in view? Were these the motives influenced you? If you narrowly look into your own hearts, and make an impartial inquiry, you may readily come to understand what your aims have been; and for your help, I would only, in God's name, pose your consciences with a question or two, that may be of use. 1. Dare you, without heart-condemning, as in the sight of God, say, that in calling a minister you had respect to the command of God? Was it duty that moved you, or did custom and your own ease influence you? 2. Dare you hold up your faces and say, that it was a taste of God's goodness in ordinances, that made you desire them, that you might grow thereby? 3. Did this desire lead you much to the throne of grace to pray for a minister, that God might send you one "according to his own heart, that might feed you with knowledge and understanding?" 4. When you saw any prospect of the return of your prayers, to a gospel-ministry, were you careful to plead that the blessing might come along?

What say ye to these things? Give God, give conscience justice; let conscience speak freely, and tell whether things be so or not. They must either own, that there was not a regard to the command, that there was not a desire after the sincere milk of the word, occasioned by a taste of the Lord's goodness, that there was not that serious application to God by prayer, either for a minister, or for the blessing of the ordinance; or that there was; and this will cast you all into two classes. *1st*, Those who have not been so employed in this matter, and consequently have not been acting for right ends. And, *2^{dly}*, Those who have been busied in duty, in the way just now mentioned. To each of these a word. And

1st, As for you who have not had a regard to your duty in this matter, who have not been wrestling with God in prayer, that God might send you a minister

with the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, to you we say,

1. Your designs are not such as God will approve of. Had they been such as we mentioned in the former part of this discourse, then surely they would have led you to earnest wrestling with God, for his direction, who only can point to one that is meet to answer those blessed ends.

2. You are guilty of horrible wickedness. You have committed a great provocation, in calling a minister upon any other design. God designed them for the ends formerly mentioned, and no other; and your calling them upon other aims, is an endeavour to counteract God, prostitute his ordinance, and serve your lusts of that which God designed for his own glory.

3. Whatever good others may get by the gospel, you have no reason to look for any. God may answer you according to the idols of your own hearts: and when he satisfies the soul of the hungry with good things, he may send leanness to you. When he gives a commission to the word to enlighten, convert, confirm, and strengthen others, you have reason to fear that it may have a commission to make you blind, deaf, and dead.

4. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven you; lie in the dust before God; endeavour to get your hearts affected with your guilt, that you may be deeply humbled and abased before him whom you have provoked to anger.

5. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Let us know by your carriage that you are really penitent, and that now you have got the right designs in view; and this you may do by a close attendance upon all the ordinances, by hearing and doing whatever is enjoined you of God, and by all the other ways mentioned in the doctrinal part of this discourse.

6. And, lastly. Whether you hear or forbear, yet we tell you, the kingdom of God is come near unto you; whatever you design, the Lord has given you a gospel-day; and if our gospel be hid from you, it is because

you are lost, the god of this world having blinded your eyes, that you should not discern the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God.

As to the *second* sort of persons, those who have been importunate with God, and have had an eye to his command in this work, to you we say,

1. This your conduct, past all peradventure, is no mean evidence of the sincerity of your good intentions; and this is certainly matter of thankfulness, and is more over a ground to hope, that the Lord may not altogether frustrate your desires.

2. Do not think your work is over. Wrestle, plead strongly with God for the blessing of gospel-ordinances: whoever plants or waters, it is only God that gives the increase; and therefore, if you mean to grow under the means, be instant in prayer for the blessing on them, plead that God may not send leanness to your souls, while he provides plenty of spiritual provision for you.

3. Beware of sitting down upon gospel-privileges. You may, if you do so, lose what you have wrought, and justly bring the sincerity of your aims in question. There is nothing more ordinary, than upfitting of this sort. Persons, who it may be would say, O had they a gospel-dispensation! how glad would they be, how carefully would they improve it; and yet when they get what they seek, their improvement is in no measure answerable to their resolutions. Take heed of, and guard against this.

4. Let there be a suitable care to evidence your sincerity in this matter, by the whole of your deportment. If you turn careless in attending ordinances, if you hear but do not, if you neglect your own work, and be wanting to yourselves in this matter, then who will believe your sincerity? who can believe it? your own conscience will accuse you; and "if your hearts condemn you, God is greater than your hearts, and knows all things," 1 John iii. 20.

5. If you find that the Lord has made endeavours successful, take care that you sacrifice not to your own net, and burn incense to your drag. God is a holy and jealous

jealous God, and will not be mocked; and if you begin to rob him of his glory, he will get him glory in such a way as may lay you low, and make you smart severely for your own folly.

6. If the Lord give you the gospel-light, then walk in the light while you have it. Carry like children of the light and of the day, work out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling; for none of us can tell how soon our gospel-day may be gone, and the night succeed wherein none can work.

We shall conclude this discourse with a few general advices to all of you. Would you have our ministry made successful? would you obtain the real advantage of gospel-ordinances, and have our meetings such as may be matter of rejoicing both to you and me in the day of the Lord? then we intreat, beseech, nay, and obtest you by the mercies of God, in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, as you would have your own souls and ours to be saved.

1. Pray for us. As a minister is indispensibly obliged to mind his people before God, and to carry them ever upon his heart, so are they obliged to pray for their minister: "Pray for us," says the apostle, Heb. xiii. 18. "for we trust we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly." To give weight to this advice, I shall lay before you a few considerations. And,

(1.) Consider, ministers are not sufficient of themselves for this work; the work is great, weighty, and important, and the difficulties are many; and who is sufficient for it? Sure ministers are not; for if the apostle said with justice of himself, "That he was not of himself sufficient to think any thing as he ought," 2 Cor. iii. 5: then much more may gospel-ministers now-a-days own it to be so with them; and therefore all their sufficiency is only of God, from whom suitable and needful supplies should be sought.

(2.) Consider that in their plenty and fulness you shall have plenty. They are indispensibly obliged to lay out what they receive for you, to spend and be spent in the work and service of your faith; and therefore it is your

interest that they abound, since it is for your sake they labour; and the more so, if you be instrumental by your prayers, in procuring advantages and supplies for them.

(3.) Consider, that they are exposed to great hazards for your sake, and therefore you are to contribute your utmost to their assistance this way, wherein you may be most helpful to them. They being made watchmen, do thereby become the butt of Satan's malice; and the more faithful they are, the more will he oppose them, and seek their ruin. The enemy's principal design is sure to be against the watchman, because he prevents the surprising of his people by Satan, at least it is his business to do so; and therefore no stone will be left unturned, in order to his ruin. 1. Satan will endeavour to lay him asleep, and make him turn secure, that he may neglect his post. 2. If he miss of this, he will endeavour to fill him with disturbance and fear, that so he may be diverted from his duty, and made to quit his post. Or, 3. He will ply his corruptions, that he may, by attending to them, and striving against them, take him off from, or discourage him in his opposition to those of others. 4. He will endeavour to blind his eyes by false appearances, that so he may give false alarms; and this will weaken his credit, and make people not believe his warnings. 5. He will endeavour to amuse him with great appearances of danger where there is none; that his eyes may turn off from those things which may really endanger his flock. And, 6. He will endeavour to beget and cherish jealousies betwixt his people and him, whereby his warnings will be less regarded, and his hands be weakened, and his heart be discouraged. 7. If these fail, he will endeavour to get him removed; if he see the gospel like to prove successful, then he will take care to find out ways to oblige the watchman to remove from his post. And, 8. If he fail of this, he will endeavour to kill him, either by multiplying troubles and griefs, or else by more direct methods, employing his emissaries and servants to take away his life; and this, by God's permission, for the punishment of a people's sins, has proven successful. Surely these and a great many more methods,

methods, used by Satan, the wicked world, pretended friends, and their own corruptions, against the ministers of the gospel, and all upon the people's account, should make them careful in praying to God in their behalf, that they may be saved from the attempts of all their spiritual adversaries, and may be made to grow in grace and gifts. Pray for much grace to your minister, that he may persuade, as knowing the terrors of the Lord; that he may deal tenderly with you, as having himself had acquaintance with soul-sickness on account of sin; that he may take you to Jesus safely, as having himself been with him; that he may comfort you with the consolations wherewith he has been comforted of God. In fine, that he may speak, because he himself has not only believed, but experienced the work of grace upon his own soul, as one that has tasted that sin is an evil and bitter thing, and has found that Christ is useful, is sufficient, is precious; and that he may pray acceptably for you, as one who has found acceptance in his own behalf. Pray likewise for gifts to him, knowledge in the mystery of God, and of Christ, and of faith; that he may have much spiritual wisdom, zeal, boldness, and courage, to fit him for his work; and withal, that the Lord may give a door of utterance.

(4.) Consider, that a careful attendance to your duty, in holding up your minister's case, will be a great mean to promote love, mutual love betwixt you and him; and this will help to break Satan's engines. Nothing contributes more to the furtherance and success of one's ministry in a place, than much love, mutual kindness betwixt a minister and people; and no love so useful this way, as that which vents itself in prayer for one another, and is cherished by this means. But,

2. I intreat you may carefully attend ordinances, public, private, and secret; and catechising, as the Lord shall give occasion. This will make us cheerfully go about these duties, if we see you studying to make advantage of them: this will be profitable to you; it will discourage our enemies; it will rejoice our heart, and be a credit to religion.

3. Any advantage you receive, be sure that ye attribute

bute it entirely to God ; beware of placing it to the minister's account, who is only the instrument ; if you rob God of the glory, and give it to the instrument, you may by this provoke the Lord to blast your minister, and to withdraw from him his presence ; which will soon make you see, that it is not the minister that can do any thing. Give God his due, and so account of us as the servants of Christ, and the stewards of the mysteries of the gospel ; and when ye get any good by it, put it all to God's account ; bless him for it ; and let the instrument have an interest in your affections and prayers, that he may be further useful to you and others.

4. Once more and we have done. Do not count us your enemies, if we tell you the truth ; we must by any means be free, in laying open your sins, and in carrying home the conviction of them to your consciences ; nor dare we gratify any, by holding our peace in this matter ; for if we please men, then are we not the servants of Christ ; and if any soul die in its sin by our silence, then we bring the blood of souls upon our own heads, and hazard our own souls. We are obliged, by the manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to consciences ; and if the more we love, the less we are loved, then God will require it at your hands. But whether you will hear, or whether you forbear, we must, as we shall give answer to the great Shepherd of the sheep, deal plainly with you. Consider but that one scripture, Lev. xix. 17. and ye will see reproof to be an act of great love, and that the neglect of it in God's account is hatred : "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt in any ways rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him ;" or, as the last clause may be rendered, *That thou bear not sin for him*. Now, if you follow these advices, and if there be a single eye to God, and close dependence upon him, both in minister and people, mutual love and helpfulness, and a joint endeavour to promote the great design of the ministry, the glory of God in our own salvation, then our labour shall not be in vain, but shall be blessed with increase, and God, even our God, shall bless us.

THE

GREAT CONCERN OF SALVATION.

PART I.

A DISCOVERY OF MAN'S NATURAL STATE; OR, THE
GUILTY SINNER CONVICTED.

Rom. iii. 23.—*For all have sinned, and come short of
the glory of God.*

WHOMEVER considers his present condition, will soon see, that his great business and chief concern lies in three important inquiries: "What have I done?" Jer. viii. 6. "What shall I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. "What shall I render to the Lord?" Psal. cxvi. 12. The answer of the first will make way for the second, and that will give occasion for the third.

Though wise men have busied their heads, and toiled themselves with wearisome inquiries after happiness; yet none of them could ever give men a satisfying answer to any one of these three queries. But what they by their wisdom could not do, that God, in his infinite wisdom and unparalleled goodness has done, to the satisfaction of all rational inquirers, in the scriptures of truth.

If it be inquired, What have we done? our text answers, *All men have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* If the question be put, What shall we do to be saved? look Acts xvi. 31. and there we are bid "be-
B 6 lieve

lieve on the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall be saved." In fine, if we ask, What we shall render to the Lord for his matchless and unparalleled favour to us, we may turn to Psal. cxvi. 13. and there we are told what to do, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." And much to the same purpose is that of the prophet, Micah vi. 8. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

The great concernment of gospel-ministers lies in the second inquiry. It is our principal business to persuade men and women to believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to commend our blessed Maker to poor sinners. But since we come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, it is necessary we lay the foundation in a discovery of man's natural state. Before we offer Christ, we shall show you need him: before we tender mercy, we shall endeavour to represent your misery: before you be called to repentance, we shall shew you are sinners, who stand in need of repentance. And upon this account we have made choice of the words now read, which do offer a fair occasion for a discovery of your sin, and of your misery on that account.

We shall not spend time in considering the connection of the words, which may perhaps afterwards fall more conveniently in our way.

The text is a general assertion, in which all stand convicted of, and concluded under sin: for,

The persons to whom sin is attributed, are not some single persons, to a seclusion of others, but all mankind. It is not some degenerate wretches in the heathen world; but all, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, high and low, who have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

It is not asserted of them, that they may sin, that they are fallible, and if artfully plied by a temptation, may be taken off their feet; but that they all are already involved in the guilt of sin, and have thereby come short of the glory of God. The original word, which
is

is here rendered *come short*, is emphatical ; it properly signifies to fall short of the mark one aims at, or to fall behind in a race, whereby the prize is lost. Man in his first estate was in a fair way for glory : power he had to run the race, and the devil had no power to stop him in it ; he had not such weights as we now are clogged with, and yet he fell short of the glory of God ; *i. e.* he lost that glory in the enjoyment of God, which he had so good a prospect of ; he lost the image of God, which was his glory, given him of God, with all the consequential advantages of it.

We need not draw any doctrine from the words ; they themselves do express that which we design to insist upon.

DOCT. “ That all men and women, descending from Adam in an ordinary way, have sinned, and thereby come short of the glory of God.”

This doctrine, standing so clear in the words, supercedes any further proof ; and therefore we shall not spend time in producing other scriptures asserting the same thing.

Before we *apply* this truth, we shall,

I. *Premise a few propositions* for clearing the way to the further explication of this great and momentous truth.

II. We shall inquire *what sin formally implies*.

III. Mention *a property or two of it*.

IV. Inquire into the import of this *all* in the text.

V. Shew what is implied in this expression, *Come short of the glory of God*.

VI. Whence it is that *all have sinned, and thereby come short of the glory of God*.

Now of each of these in order. And,

I. We shall *premise a few propositions* for clearing the way to what we further design in the explication of this truth. The

1st Proposition we offer to you is, *That God is the absolute*

solute and independent Sovereign of the world. Men do often usurp an absolute power over their subjects, and claim a blind and unlimited obedience; but they had need take heed they do not invade God's right, and that which is his sovereign prerogative. He, and he only, is absolute Lord and King of the earth, as the Psalmist sings, in Psal. xlvii. 2. "The Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth." And indeed he alone is fit to manage so great a province; forasmuch as there is "none among the gods like unto him, neither are there any works like unto his," Psal. lxxxvi. 8. His claim is founded upon the excellency of his nature, Jer. x. 6. 7. "Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great in might, who would not fear thee, O King of nations? For to thee doth it appertain, forasmuch as there is none like unto thee:" And upon his creation of all things, "The Lord is a great King above all gods. The sea is his, and he made it," Psal. xcv. 3. 5: "O Jacob and Israel, thou art my servant, I have formed thee, thou art my servant, O Israel," Is. xlv. 21. In fine, his preservation of all things, and the manifold mercies he loads his creatures with, do give him the noblest title to absolute dominion; and his glorious perfections of wisdom, power, holiness, and justice, do not only fit him for it, but make his sway desirable to all who understand their own interest.

2d, Take this proposition, *God the absolute Sovereign of the world has prescribed laws to all his creatures, by which he governs them.* Not to speak of these laws which he has given to the inanimate part of the creation, he has prescribed men their work, he has given them his laws, whereby they are indispensibly obliged to live. "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy," James i. 12. "The Lord is Judge, King, and Lawgiver," Is. xxxiii. 22. We are not in any thing left altogether arbitrary. He who has said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther," has dealt so likewise with man; he has limited him on every hand by his holy laws, the incontestible statutes of heaven.

ven. We are obliged to eat, drink, sleep, converse, and do every thing by rule : God has set us our bounds as to all these things, and thither should we come, and no further. Indeed, these limits God has set us are not such as he sets to the waves of the tumultuous sea : no, he deals with us in a way suited to our nature ; he has set such limits as none can pass, till they act in direct contradiction to their very natures, till they abandon a due consideration of that wherein their greatest concern and chiefest interest lies ; as will appear plain enough from that which we offer, in the

3^d place, for clearing the way, *That the great Law-giver of the world has annexed rewards and punishments to those laws he has made.* The authority of God is a tender point indeed. He has said, “ he will not give his glory to another,” and therefore he has taken care to guard the laws he has made with suitable rewards and punishments. God indeed is not obliged to give man any further reward for his obedience, than what flows from the obedience itself, which is sufficient to be a reward to itself ; for “ in keeping God’s commands there is great reward,” Psal. xix. 11. But such is his matchless and unbounded goodness, that he proposed no less reward of obedience than eternal life ; a reward suitable not to man’s obedience, which deserves no such thing, but to the bounty of the giver. On the other hand, again, he has annexed a dreadful penalty to his laws, break them we may if we will ; for God has not made it impossible we should ; but if we do, then the heavy curse of God will follow us. “ Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” The same mouth that pronounced law, pronounces the curse, Gal. iii. 10. And we know, whom he *curses they are cursed, and whom he bleisseth they are blessed* indeed.

4th, These laws, which God hath given us to walk by, *have a fourfold property* mentioned by the apostle, Rom. vii. 12. “ Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good ;” and ver. 14. “ We know

know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin."

1. We say it is *holy*; the law of God is the exact transcript of the holy will of God. There is nothing in it disagreeable to, or unworthy of the holy God, who always acts like himself, and is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, or look upon sin.

2. It is *just*. It is the very measure of all justice among men. It is a law that gives God his due and man his: nay, man has no right or property in, or title to, any thing but from this law. What this makes his, is so, and no more can justly be claimed.

3. It is *good*. It is not a law made to gratify the lusts of an earth-worm, it is not a law made without regard to the advantage of these who live under it: but God, in framing his law, has exactly considered what might be for man's good, both in time and in eternity; and has, in matchless goodness and infinite wisdom, ordered the matter so, that duty and interest go ever together, and a man can never act against his duty, but he wrongs his real interest, even abstracting from the consideration of future rewards and punishments in another life.

4. The law is *spiritual*. It is not such a law as is prescribed by man, which only reaches the outward man; no, it is spiritual, reaching to the soul and all its inward actings. It prescribes bounds to the spirits of men, obliging them to inward obedience and conformity to it in their motions, inclinations, and affections; not a thought, nay, nor the circumstance of a thought, but falls under this spiritual and extensive law, which made the Psalmist say, "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad," Psal. cxix. 96.

The way being thus cleared, we shall now, in the *Second* place, shew you *what sin is*. Sin, which is here charged upon all, *properly and formerly imports,*

1. *A want of conformity to the law*, of which we have been discoursing. The law requires and enjoins duty. It obliges us not only to actions so and so qualified,

lified, but to have a right principle of action ; it not only enjoins holy thoughts, holy words, and holy actions, but moreover it requires that the very frame and temper of our hearts be holy ; and when we fall short of this, then we sin. That the law obliges us as to the frame of our heart, is plain, since it requires that the tree be good as well as the fruit ; that the worship and service we perform to God be with the whole strength, soul, and heart.

2. Sin imports a *transgression of the law*, for “ sin is a transgression of the law,” 1 John iii. 4. Indeed, when transgression is taken in a large sense, it comprehends all sin ; but it may be, and is frequently restricted to actual sins, and sins of commission ; as the former branch of the description is to original sin, and sins of omission. Sin is an opposition to the law of God. God bids *do, arise, work* ; man transgresses, breaks the command, and *sits still idle*. God forbids such and such sinful actions, man does them in opposition to the command of God, which flows from a contempt of God’s authority ; so that we may say,

3. That every sin implies, in its formal nature, *contempt of God*, as that which is its source. Sin flows from a secret enmity of heart against the Almighty, and therefore carries in it a high contempt of him. It may be, men are so blind that they cannot discern any such thing in it ; but God makes breaking the law, and despising or contemning the law, to be all one, Amos ii. 4. “ Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked,” Sin in most men’s eyes is a harmless thing ; but how far otherwise would it be if its nature were seen in a just light by the eye of faith ; if we saw it trampling upon God’s authority, goodness, and holiness, and even endeavouring as it were to ungod him.

But that ye may further understand what sin is, we shall, in the

Third

Third place, mention a twofold inseparable property or adjunct of sin, with which it is ever attended. And,

1. Sin is *the defilement of the soul*; sin is a filthy thing. The beauty, the glory of man, consists in his conformity to the holy and pure law of God, and in as far as he deviates from that, in so far is he defiled and polluted. Every sin hath a Satan in it, and robs the soul of its beauty, occasions a sort of loathsomeness, whereby, in the eyes of God, and even of itself, it becomes ugly and abominable; it is the abominable thing which God hates, "Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate," saith the Lord, Jer. xlv. 4. The natural state of man is, upon the account of this filthiness, compared to a wretched infant that is cast out "in all its natural pollutions," Ezek. xvi. and to every thing else that is filthy, to puddle, mire, and dirt, and to a menstruous cloth; but yet all of them are not sufficient to give a just idea of its filthiness.

2. Sin, as it is attended with *filth*, so it is attended with *guilt*. It makes the sinner guilty; it obliges him to undergo the penalty which God hath annexed to his law; it carries ever along with it a *title to the curse of God*. When the law of God is considered as that which represents his holiness and spotless purity, whereby it becomes the measure and standard of all beauty, glory, and purity to us; then sin, as it stands opposed to it in this respect, is looked upon as a stain, a blot, a defilement: but as the law of God carries on it the impression of his royal authority, the breach of it binds over to just punishment for the reparation of the honour of that contemned authority.

Thus we see what it is that all men are charged with. God here lays home to them a breach of the law, represents them as condemned and guilty, deformed and defiled creatures. "All men have sinned," every one has broken the holy, just, good, and spiritual law of the great Sovereign of the world; all are guilty of a contempt of his authority, all are defiled with that abominable thing which his soul hates. Lest any one should take occasion to clear himself, and say, O I am not the person

person spoken of, I never contemned God, I never defiled myself, and so I am not guilty of that which is charged upon mankind. Lest any should say, I am clean, God has put a bar upon this door, by extending the charge to all without exception.

And so I come, in the

Fourth place, to inquire into the import of this universal particle *all* in my text; and it imports,

1st, That persons *of all ages* are involved in the same common misery. Young and old have sinned. The suckling upon the breast, as well as the old man that is sloping into the grave. None needs envy another. The old man needs not envy the innocency of the infant of days, for the youngest carries as much sin into the world as renders it ugly, deformed, and guilty. Indeed there are who have not sinned at the rate that others have done. Children have not sinned “after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” Rom. v. 14. their age would not allow them; but sin enough they have derived to them from Adam, to damn, to defile them.

2^d, Persons *of all professions*, Jew and Gentile, whatever their religious profession be. This evil is not confined to those of one religion, but is extended to all: the apostle sums up all mankind, as to religion, under two heads, Jew and Gentile; and at large, in the foregoing part of this epistle, proves them both to be sinners.

3^d *All ranks* of persons, high and low, rich and poor. This is not an evil of which the prince can free himself more than the peasant. Those who may be shining in glistering apparel are upon this account vile and filthy as the toad they cannot endure to look upon: these who may condemn or absolve others, may themselves be under a sentence of condemnation; nay, it really is so with all who are not saved from their sins. Even these very men who have sometimes forgot themselves so far, as to advance themselves above the laws, are yet not only subject to God’s law, but lying under an obligation to punishment on account of their breaches of this holy, just, and good law.

4. Persons *in all generations* are guilty. It was not only some poor wretches in the old world which God swept off the face of the earth by a flood, that have sinned, but persons of all ages, ranks, and qualities, in all generations. There is not one exception among all the natural descendants of Adam, man nor woman, great nor small, rich nor poor, king nor beggar, all have sinned, from the greatest to the least. None can justly upbraid another with what he has done in this matter, since all are in the provocation: *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*

And this leads us to that which we did, in the next place, propose to discourse of to you, viz.

Fifth, The import of this *coming short of the glory of God.* And this takes in or implies,

1st, That man has fallen short of *that glory which he had by the conformity of his nature to God.* Man is said, 1 Cor. xi. 7. to be “the image and glory of God;” and indeed so was he in his first and best estate. O what of God was there in innocent Adam! A mind full of light; how wonderfully did it represent that God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all! A pure soul, the exact transcript of the divine purity! The rest of the creatures had in them some darker representations of the glory of God’s wisdom and power, but only man, of all the creatures in the lower world, was capable to represent the holiness, righteousness, and purity, and other rational perfections, of the ever-blessed Deity; and upon this account man was “the glory of God.” God, as it were, gloried in him as the masterpiece of the visible creation, in whom alone more of God was to be seen than in all the rest beside. This man has now lost; he has fallen short of the beauty and glory which made him “the glory of God.”

2^d, Man has lost the glory he had, as he was the *deputy of the great God in this lower world.* He was made lord of God’s hand-works upon earth; and all the creatures in it paid their homage to him, when they came and received their names from him in paradise: but now the
“crown

“crown is fallen from his head ;” he has come short of this glory ; the creatures refuse subjection to him.

3d, Man is come short of the glory he had *in the enjoyment of God in paradise*. It was man’s glory, honour, and happiness, to be allowed a more than ordinary familiarity with God. God and Adam conversed together in paradise. He was allowed the company of God : that made his state happy indeed. What could man want, while the all-sufficient God kept up so close, so blessed and comfortable a familiarity with him, and daily loaded him with his favours ? But this he has come short of.

4th, Man has come short of that glory *he had the prospect of*. God set him fairly on the way, and did furnish him sufficiently for a journey to eternal, unchangeable, never-fading glory ; but this he has come short of ; and this indeed follows natively upon the former. This is indeed much, but we conceive this is not all that the expression has in it ; nay, certainly there is more in it : this falling short, though it only seems to point at the negative, yet certainly it takes in the positive ; and we therefore say, that this expression, in the

5th place, implies not only man’s *loss of his original beauty and glory*, in a conformity to the image of God, but that he has fallen in the mire, and is defiled by sin. He who sometime a-day was the image and glory of God, is now more filthy than the ground he treads on, than the mire of the street, than the loathsome toad.

6th, Not only has he lost the *dominion he had*, but *he is become a slave to sin*. He who sometime a-day looked like a god in the world, is now debased down to hell. He to whom the creatures once veiled as to their sovereign, now daily stands in danger of his life by them, and lies open to the insults of the meanest of them.

7th, Not only has he lost the sweet and soul-ravishing communion he had with God, but now he is, as it were, *scarce capable to look toward him* ; the sight of God, which once was his life, is now to him as death.

8th, Not only has man forfeited his title to *future happiness*, but, which is worse, he is by sin entitled to *future, eternal, inconceivable misery and woe*. A dreadful coming short this is indeed. From how high a hope, into what an inconceivable abyss of misery and woe, is poor man fallen by sin! “The crown is fallen from his head.” He was a little hence all beauty, glory, excellency, and comeliness; but now, alas! we may groan out an *Ichabod* over him! where is the glory?

We come now, in the

Sixth place, to inquire into the *source and spring of all this misery and woe*. How and whence is it that all are involved in the guilt of sin; and that this sad and afflicting calamity flows?

1st, *From the guilt of Adam's first sin*. Adam, by the holy, wise, just, and good appointment of God, stood in the room of all his posterity. Had he stood, in him we all had stood, and retained the innocence and integrity of our natures, the favour, love, and kindness of heaven; but he *falling into sin*, in him *we all sinned*; and by the disobedience of this one man, we all were made sinners; as the apostle doth at large discourse, Rom. v. from the 12th verse, and downwards. This, this is the poisoned spring whence all our sin, all our sorrow and misery flows.

2d, This flows from the *natural depravity of the mind of man*, that is transmitted to us from our progenitors. “We are shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us.” We received a fatal wramp when first formed in the womb, as the Psalmist complains, Psal. li. 5. And indeed there is none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Our infected parents transfer to us the infection of sin. Sin runs in our blood, and our natures have a natural inclination to “evil, only to evil, and that continually,” Gen. vi. 5.

3d, This flows *from abounding temptations*. As our hearts are wicked, and set only on evil; so every thing, in this present disorder on account of sin, is suited to carry on the infection. The creatures, by reason of sin, *are made subject to vanity*. They are made subservient
to

to the lusts of men ; the devil and our corrupt hearts daily abuse them to this end ; and by these means it is that all men have sinned, and thereby *come short of the glory of God*.

The *application* is that which we principally designed in the choice of this subject ; and therefore we have but named things in the doctrinal part. And now we come to improve the whole.

That which we design chiefly in the improvement of this, is an *use of conviction*. Some days ago, we came to you proclaiming the grace, mercy, and love of God in Christ Jesus ; now we come to accuse you as guilty of sin. The design of our doing so is indeed the advancement of the glory of Christ, and in him of the grace and mercy of the Lord God. But our present work in itself is such, as doth not in its own nature look that way, though, by the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, it be made subservient thereunto.

“ You are all here present before the Lord, to hear what God the Lord will speak unto you ;” and, as Ehud said to Eglon, King of Moab, so we say to you, “ We have a message from God to you,” Judges iii. 20. A sad message, not much unlike to that which Ehud brought to Eglon, a message of death. We come this day to you, to implead you in God’s name as guilty of sin. The message is not to some particular gross offenders, but to every soul now “ present before the Lord ;” to the child, to the young man and maid, to those of riper years, and to them who are old, and stoop under the weight of many years.

“ In the name, and at the instance of the great, the terrible God, the King, the Lord of hosts,” whose name is dreadful among the Heathen, Mal. i. 14. “ that confirmeth the word of his servants, and performeth the counsel of his messengers,” Is. xlv. 26. we are to implead, impeach, and accuse every soul here present as guilty of sin. Hitherto we have spoken in the general, which, it may be, has been no better to you than Nathan’s parable to David. It may be some of you have been saying, that the soul that has sinned has deservedly
fallen

fallen short of the glory of God, and fallen under the wrath of God : but now what we said before in general, we come to say in particular to every one of you, as Nathan did to David, “ Thou art the man, thou art the woman, thou art the child, the young man, or the maid, who hast sinned, and thereby come short of the glory of God.”

Now, that we may be successful in this work, and bring you, if possible, to understand your state and condition, we shall,

First, Read and open, as it were, the charge and indictment, we do in God's name bring against you.

Secondly, Lead witnesses, whereby we shall prove it against you all in general.

Thirdly, Endeavour particularly by arguments to make our charge good, 1st, Against children and young men; 2d, Against these of a middle age; and 3d, Against old men and women. This we shall do, as it were, by taking you to the places, the companies, and occasions, where you have sinned, and incurred the guilt now charged on you.

Fourthly, Show what satisfaction our great Lord demands against such traitors.

Fifthly, What reason he has to require it. And then,

Sixthly, Endeavour to represent to you your misery upon this account.

First, The charge we lay against you, is not some petty, some small misdemeanour, that may be attoned for by a bare acknowledgement, by some pitiful mock, God have mercy upon me. No; the charge draws deep, it is no less crime than that of sin, sin against the great Sovereign of the world. Ye all have sinned. O! if ye knew what a world of evil is in that cursed thing, sin! When we say, Ye have sinned, you are ready to say, O! we know that well enough. Is this all ye have to say? When we heard of such a dreadful thing as a charge and indictment in the name of God against us, when we heard of leading witnesses, and all the other parts of a trial, we did apprehend there was some terrible thing a-coming, some dreadful unheard-of evil to be laid home

to our door ; but now we find there is nothing said against us, but only that we are sinners, and who will deny this ? who knows it not ? and this is but the common lot, “ God be merciful to us,” we are all sinners ; and there the repentance of most is done ; their sores are healed, and they can live, and it may be die, without any fear in this case : such light apprehensions have most part of sin.

These, these, it may be, are the apprehensions of not a few of you, upon hearing the charge : but if there be not blind minds, shut eyes, deaf ears, and dreadfully hard hearts amongst us, ere all be done, some of you will, it may be, change your minds, and think this a very dreadful and heavy charge. If God would now concur by his Spirit, and enable us to manage our work to purpose, if he would let out the convincing influences of his Spirit, the weight of this charge would press you so as to make your hearts fail and sink within you.

Sin is an ordinary word, a little word, and most men do apprehend that there is but little in it : but mistake it not ; there is much in it, more than angels or men can ever discover, or fully unfold. Yet that all this that we have said may not seem a groundless allegation, I shall, 1st, Set up to you some glasses, wherein you may get a view of sin’s ugly face ; or I shall, as Balak did to Balaam, take you to such places, where you may get a sight of its *formidable nature, power, and malignity*. 2^{dly}, I shall tell you of *some dreadful and monstrous evils* that are lodged in every sin, the least idle thought or word. And, 3^{dly}, I shall mention *some killing aggravations* that your sins are clothed with, that put an accent upon them, and enhance their guilt. And this will let you see the great evil of sin ; this will open your indictment.

1st, We shall give you *some prospects of sin*. It may be, many of you do think but very little of sin ; but here I desire you to come and look at it,

1. In *the glass of God’s law*. See the holy, the high and exalted God, exhibiting his mind and will in two tables, tables containing safe, good, holy, just, spiritual,
C . and

and every way advantageous rules, for that creature whom God has taken so distinguishing and particular a care of. Well, what shall we see of sin here? Here, O here, you may see sin breaking, nay dashing to pieces, these two tables, in a worse sense than Moses did, Exod. xxxii. 19. Every sin, the least sin, throws them both to the ground; for, as the apostle James tells us, "Who-soever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," James ii. 10. Is it a small thing to you to trample upon, to tread under foot, the holy, the righteous law of God, that is the perfect image and representation of all his holiness and spotless purity? but if yet ye will not see the cursed nature of sin, then we bid you, in the

2d place, take a view of it in the *nature of the great God*, the seat of all majesty, glory, beauty, and excellency; and if you look at it here, O how ugly will it appear! Nothing in all the world contrary and opposite to the nature of God, but sin. The meanest, the most apparently deformed creature in the world, the toad, the crawling insect, carries in its nature nothing really opposite to the nature of God; sin, only sin, stands in opposition to him. This he cannot dwell with: "Evil shall not dwell with him, nor sinners stand in his sight." Such is that abhorrence that God has at sin, that, when he speaks of it, his heart as it were rises against it, "Oh do not that abominable thing which I hate!" in that forecited Jer. xlv. 4. And if yet ye will not see its sinfulness, I will take you where you may see more of it. Go take a view of it,

3. In *the threatenings of the law*, and see there what estimate God puts on it, and what a thing it is. All the power of heaven, the anger, the fury, the vengeance of God, all are levelled at the head of sin. Take but one instance for all, in that 7th of Joshua; there a people accustomed to victory turn their back before the enemy, fall a prey to a people devoted to destruction; nay, moreover, God, in the 12th verse, calls all the people accursed, and tells, they cannot stand before the enemy, "neither will I be with you any more," says he. Why?
what

what is the matter? wherefore is the heat of all this anger? what meaneth this *vengeance*? The matter was, there was a *sin committed*; Achan had taken some of the spoil of the enemy. Thus you see, one sin makes God breathe out threatenings against a whole nation. In fine, look through the book of God, and there you shall see one *threatening* big with *temporal*, another with *eternal p'agues*; one full of *external*, another of *internal* and *spiritual* woes; and all as it were levelled at the head of sin. And is that a small matter which never fails to set out all the vengeance of Heaven against the person that is guilty of it? But yet this is not all; you may see more, if ye look at it,

4. In the judgements of God that are abroad in the world. Look we to one nation, there we shall see thousands falling before the avenging enemy, the sword glutted as it were with blood; men who a little before were possessed of wisdom, courage, and all those endowments which serve to enhance the worth of the sons of men, are here laid *heaps upon heaps*: Go we to another, there we shall see no fewer carried off by *sickness* and *diseases*, and all wearing out by time. Go to church-yards, and see what vast havock these do make; there you may see the rubbish of many generations laid *heaps upon heaps*. Well, see you nothing of sin in all this? What think you of all these lamentable evils, miseries, and woes? Why, see you nothing of sin in them all? Sure you are blind if you do not. I ask you, as Jehu did when he saw the dead sons of Ahab, 2 Kings x. 9. "Who slew all these?" Who brought all these sons of pride, who not long ago were strangely swelling it out in the light of warlike glory, down to the *sides of the pit*? who filled your church-yards with *heaps upon heaps*, fathers and sons, high and low, rich and poor, of all sexes, ranks, ages, and degrees? Surely *sin hath done this*; for 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," Rom. v. 12. But if till you will look upon sin as a small and light thing,

-we have yet another glass wherein you may have a further sight of it.

5. Enter the house of a *soul under trouble of conscience*; look at a Heman, and you shall hear him making a heavy moan in that 88th psalm; there you see a man that has a soul full of trouble, oppressed with all the waves and billows of the wrath of God, almost distracted with the terrors of God. Now, if you saw one in this case crying out in anguish of spirit, nay, it may be, *tearing himself, beating his breast*, ask him the reason of all this distress, he will tell you, *that it is sin that has done all this*. He has no rest in his bones for ills that he has done, Psal. xxxviii. 3. And if yet ye have not seen enough of the sinfulness and evil of sin, I shall give you another prospect of it,

6. In the *hateful, monstrous, and enormous crimes, that are committed in the world*. Some sins there are which bring along with them infamy and disgrace, even before men. Human nature, as corrupt as it is, *shrinks* at some sins, they carry in them such an evident contrariety to the faint remains of natural light. Sins there are, which, as the apostle says, 1 Cor. v. 1. "are not so much as named among the Gentiles." Now, if a man be guilty of any of these *crying abominations*, these *crimson sins*, then he becomes odious in the world. Call a man a murderer, an incestuous person, an abuser of his parents, or the like, every sober person will flee from, and shun as a pest, the company of such an one. But why? what is the matter? what is there so odious in these crimes, that every one flees from the person guilty of them? there is *sin in them*, and hence it is they are so *hateful*: and the only thing that distinguisheth these from others, is, that they have *different circumstantial aggravations*: for in the *nature of sin* they all do agree, the *least* and the *greatest*; the *least sin* strikes at the holy law of God, contemns the authority of the great and supreme Lawgiver, as well as the *greatest* doth. And if sin be so *odious* when you get a fuller view of it, as it were, in these large, these great and *crying provocations*, it is no less so when it is

is less *perceptible* in these sins which quadrate better with our vitiated and corrupted natures ; for indeed the difference among sins, as to *greater* and *less*, lies not so much in the nature of the sins, as in their different respects to our understanding, arising from the objects about which they are conversant. But, if after all these views of sin, your eyes are so blinded that you cannot see it, then come take a view of it,

7. In the *case of the damned*. Here, here you may have a strange, an heart-affecting view of sin's ugly face. See the poor wretches lying in bundles, boiling eternally in that stream of brimstone, roaring under the *intolerable*, and yet *eternal anguish* of their *spirits*. Take a survey of them in this lamentable posture. If you should see some hundreds of men, women, and children, all thrown alive into burning pitch or melted lead, would not this present you with a *sad scene of misery and woe* ? would not this be a dismal sight ? indeed it would be so. But all this is nothing to the unspeakable misery of the devils and damned, who have fallen into the *hands of the living and sin-revenging God*, and are laid in chains of massy and thick darkness, eternally depressed and sunk into the bottomless depth of the wrath of God, and choaked with the steam of that lake of fire and brimstone ; and have every *faculty of their soul*, every *joint of their body*, brim-full of the *fury of the eternal God* : behold, and wonder at this terrible and astonishing sight ; and in this take a view of sin. Were hell now opened, and saw you the damned in chains of darkness, and if you heard their dreadful yelling, and found the steam of the bottomless pit, ye would then in every sense get some discovery of sin. It is only sin that has *kindled that dreadful and inextinguishable fire of wrath*, and cast the damned into it ; and it is sin that *holds* them there, and *torments* them there. If you had but a just impression of these things, how hateful would sin be to you ? And if, after all that has been said, you still imagine that sin is not so bad as we would represent it, then come once more, and take a view of it,

8. In the *sufferings of Christ*. Here is a glass, O criminals !

minals ! wherein you may see your own *face*. You think it a little thing that you have sinned ; nay, it may be, you roll sin “ as a sweet morsel under your tongues.” But come here, and see what a thing it is which you thus dreadfully mistake ! Come see it *holding the sword* ; O strange ! nay more, *thrusting it into Christ’s side* ! Here, sinners, is a sight that made the earth to tremble, and the sun to hide his face, as we see, Matth. xxvii. 51. Luke xxiii. 45. In this glass you may see, (1.) *What God’s thoughts of sin are*. So highly opposite to his nature is it, that the bowels of affection he had to the Son of his love, whom he so highly honoured, when the voice came from the excellent glory, saying, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” were not able to hold up the hand of inexorable justice from *striking at him*, nay, *striking him dead*, for the sin of the elect world. Would not that be a great proof, think ye, of the aversion of a parent to any thing, if he would rather choose to slay his son, nay, his only son, his son whom he loved most tenderly, than it should escape a mark of his displeasure ? (2.) Here you may see more of the *pollution of sin than any where else*. Never was there any thing that gave so just apprehensions of the stain of sin, as the death of Christ. An *ingrained pollution* it must indeed be, if no less will *wash it out than the blood of God*. (3.) Here is a dreadful evidence of the *power of sin*. Never did this more appear, than when it blinded the eyes of the degenerate sons of men, so far that they could not discern “ the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, who was so full of grace and truth,” whose divine nature daily beamed, as it were, through that of his human, in miraculous operations, works, and words, which none but God could do, but God could speak. And no less was the power of sin seen, when it hurried men headlong into that heaven-daring pitch of impiety, to *imbrue their hands in the blood of God*. O sinners ! would you see what sin is ? look at it with its hands reeking in the gore and blood of God, and tell what you think of it.

But it is like, some of you may say, What is this to the purpose ? This is not the sin we are guilty of. We have
never

never imbrued our hands in the blood of God, and so herein we cannot see our crimes. This makes nothing to that which now you are doing, the unfolding the heinous nature of that crime you now implead us as guilty of before God. To this we answer,

(1.) Should we grant what is alledged as to your innocency in this matter, to be true, yet herein there is *much of the nature of your sin* to be seen, since it partakes of the common nature of sin, with that of the *murder of God*; and since it is every way *equal to*, if not that *very same*, against which God did evidence his hatred in so wonderful a manner, in the death of his only-begotten Son, whom “he spared not, but gave to the death, when he laid on him the iniquity of the elect world.” But,

(2.) We say, *that very sin* lies at your door, O sinners! and if you deny it, I would only ask you one question, Dare you hold up your faces, and in the sight of God say, that you did receive Jesus Christ the first time ever there was an offer of him made to you? If not, then you are guilty in that you *practically* say, that the putting him to death was *no crime*. You by your practice bear witness to, or assert the justice of the Jews quarrel, and bring the blood of God upon your head: and therefore in *their crimes* you may see *your own*. All the world, to whom the gospel-report comes, must either be *for* or *against* the Jews in their prosecution of him; and no otherwise can we give testimony against them, but by believing the gospel-report of him, that he was indeed the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. In so far as we refuse a *compliance with this*, in as far are we *guilty of the death of Christ*: for unbelief subscribes the Jews charge against the Son of God, and asserts him an impostor.

(3.) Either you are *believers* or *unbelievers*; if believers, then it was for your very sins that Christ was killed, it was for your iniquities he was bruised: “But 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 lost 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," saith the prophet in the name of all the elect, Isa. liii. 5. 6. If you be unbelievers, then you do not believe the witness that Christ gave of himself, that he is the Son of God ; and therefore do *practically* declare him an impostor, and worthy of death, and so may say of yourselves, with respect to the Jews cruelty, that when they condemned him, they had your consent to what they did.

Now, what think ye, O criminals ! when we have, in these *eight different glasses*, given you a prospect of the crime we implead you of ? Is it not a *fearful one* ? If you be not strangely stupified, sure you must own it so. But lest there should be any so blind, as not to discern what it is we accuse them of, we shall,

2dly, Proceed to mention *some great evils* that are all implied in the *least sin*, in every provocation. This charge which we intend against you is no mean thing. For,

1. It has *atheism* in it. An atheist, who denies the being of a God, is a *monster* in nature ; a creature so extremely degenerate, that some have doubted, whether there ever was, or could be, any of the sons of Adam so debauched as in *principle* to avouch this monstrous untruth. But there are practical atheists, such as the apostle mentions and characteriseth, Tit. i. 16. " who profess to know God, but in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient ;" or, as it is in the first language, " Children of unperuasion, or unperuadable, and to every good work reprobate." That there are such, none can deny, since every sinner is in *some sort such*, for every sin has atheism in it. In the 14th and 53d psalms, we have a description of the natural state of man ; and look to the spring of all the impieties, ver. 1. " The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God ;" and then a train of lamentable practical impieties follow ; " they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good." The Psalmist doth not there discourse of some profligate wretches among the Jews, or
of

of the Gentiles who knew not God, but of the whole race of Adam, Jew and Gentile, as the apostle proves, in the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses of this chapter, wherein our text lies, when he adduces testimonies from this psalm, to prove all and every one to have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And indeed the thing proves itself. What ! do not we deny his sovereignty, when we violate his laws ? Do not we deny and disgrace his holiness, when we cast our filth before his face ? And we disparage his wisdom, when we set up our own will as the rule and guide of our actions. We deny his sufficiency, when we profess that we find more in sin, or in the creature, than in him. In fine, *every sin is a denial of all God's attributes*, one way or other ; and therefore every sin has atheism in it : so that our charge against you runs very high, it amounts to no less than an impeachment for atheism : A crime, than which there is not, nor indeed can there be any more *odious* : for all other distempers naturally fall in here ; they all issue themselves into this infection : and hence is it that the atheist is generally so odious and hateful ; and yet even they who *hate the atheist* most, *want not atheism* ; and they who will be most forward to question this truth, *that all sinners are guilty of atheism*, are, it is like, most guilty. This, then, is one branch of the charge laid against you ; but it is not all. For,

2. We charge you all with *idolatry*. Sinners you are, and every sin hath idolatry in it. How can this be ? will you say, we never worshipped an idol all our life, we never bowed at the name of a strange god ? we bless God we were better taught than so ; we were not bred Papists nor Pagans, but reformed Christians, who renounce all idols, and plead for the worship of one God alone. Well, notwithstanding of all this, *idolaters you are*. What ! do you think that only the mere *gross act of idolatry* is reputed *such* by the holy God ? This certainly flows from your ignorance of *him*, and of his *law*. Did you understand *either*, you would never attempt your own justification. There is not only outward and gross idolatry, but there is a more secret and

inward sort of it. A set of men there were with whom the prophet Ezekiel had to do, who were as formal and punctual in their attendance upon duties, I mean the external duties of religion, as you are : externally in covenant with God they were, as you are : nor is it improbable that they had now abandoned all external idolatry; for the Jews, after the Babylonish captivity, in the time of which Ezekiel lived, never more followed idols as before. And yet hear the message these men have sent to them by the prophet, in the 14th chapter of his prophecies, "Son of man," says God to him, "these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face:" and so he proceeds in the sequel of the chapter, from the 3d verse and downwards, to threaten them with grievous and terrible punishments. Every one that sets up any thing in that room in his heart which is God's due, is an idolater; for idolatry is the transferring that love, esteem, confidence, trust, fear, reverence, or obedience, which is due to God, or any creature. Now, who is not guilty of this, when he serves sin? doth he not obey either his own will, or the devil, in opposition to the command of God, and thereby substitute either himself or Satan into God's room? Think, O think! upon this part of your charge, and tremble! But to proceed,

3. Every sin has *blasphemy* in it, it reproaches God. They are not only the blasphemers, who in reproachful speeches belch out against Heaven, and as the Psalmist expresses it, Psal. lxxiii. 10. "Set their mouth against the heaven, and with their tongue walk through the earth," sparing neither God nor man; but these also are blasphemers, who do in their actions reproach God, Numb. xv. 30. 31. "The soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people, because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment; that soul shall be utterly cut off: his iniquity shall be upon him." Is it a small thing to you, O sinners, that you have broken the command of God? It may be light and easy in your eyes, but see to it, whether

whether God's word or yours shall stand. You call it a light thing ; but God looks upon himself as reproached by it : and indeed he justly looks upon it as a reproach ; for every sin charges him, (1.) With *folly*. God, in giving laws to men to walk by, designed the manifestation of his wisdom, in making such laws as became the infinite wisdom of the supreme Governor of the world : but the sinner by every sin says practically, that God's laws are not wise ; his own will, which he follows in the commission of sin, he thinks better. (2.) It reproaches his *goodness*. The sinner says, by his practice, that neither God's laws nor himself are good, but that God has, either through *ignorance*, or *folly*, or *malice*, retrenched him of what might have conduced to his good ; that his laws are not calculate to the advantage and real good of his subjects. (3.) He hereby likewise reproaches the *righteousness and holiness of God*, in as far as these are stamped upon the law, which he not only *rejects*, but *tramples upon*, as one that " believes not God calls him a liar," 1 John v. 10. So he that obeys him not, accuses him either of *unrighteousness* or *folly*. Now, this branch of the charge rises higher than *avowed atheism* ; for the atheist entirely disowns God, and so entertains not such unsuitable thoughts of him as he doth who owns him, and yet accuses him, by his practice, of ignorance, folly, and impurity. But this is not all that is in the crime laid against you. For,

4. Every sin hath *robbery in it*. It is a rape committed, an endeavour to carry away some one or other of the *crown-jewels of heaven*. God has said, " He will not give his glory to another ;" and one darling part of this glory is that of his *absolute dominion*. Now, every sinner endeavours to rob God of this, and that to clothe either Satan or sin with it. The commanding power it would have taken from God, and given to itself, or some other, than which there can be no greater *robbery*. Again, the glory of God's sovereignty is due to him, in a punctual obedience to every one of his commands. He that obeys the command, gives God the glory of his *authority*, and owns him governor of the world ; and

this is a part of God's property; it is the revenue that he requires of the world; and the sinner, by every sin he commits, attempts to rob him of this glory, invades his property. We find God himself managing the charge of robbery against a people called by his name, Mal. iii. 8. 9. "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me: but ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." So I say to you, You have *robbed* God: but you will say, Wherein have we robbed him? I answer, In that which is far more valuable than "tithes and offerings;" you have robbed him, and in every sin do rob him, of that *obedience* which to him "is better than sacrifice." "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," 1 Sam. xv. 22. But this yet is not all; we charge you,

5. With *rebellion*. Every sinner is a *rebel* against God; he casts off the yoke of God, bursts the bonds of obedience, and takes up rebellious arms against God, the great sovereign of the world. *Rebellion* is a thing so odious, that the unjust imputation of it has been made frequently, like the wild beasts skins with which some primitive persecutors clothed the saints of the Most High, that thereby they might set upon them the dogs to tear them. Men have been termed rebels, and had this note of infamy put upon them, for disobeying the unlawful and impious commands of men; while disobedience to the commands of God has got a more mild and favourable name; while duty has been called rebellion; the highest acts of rebellion against the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth, such as drunkenness, swearing, persecution, have been horribly miscalled by the appropriation of soft names; the *drunkard* has been called a *good-fellow*, the *swearer* a *gentleman*, and the *persecutor* a *loyalist*. But God will take care to have these abuses rectified, and to have things called by their *right names*, and then sin, and only sin, will be found
to

to be *rebellion* ; and this we charge upon you. And that we have ground to assert every sin rebellion, you may soon see, if you consider, that, 1 Sam. xii. 14. 15. “ If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye, and also the King that reigneth over you, continue following the Lord your God. But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers.” Thus you see, *obeying* and *not rebelling*, *disobeying* and *rebelling*, are plainly the same thing in God’s account : God uses them so ; if you obey and rebel not, if you disobey and rebel. This then is one branch of the charge we now manage against you. In God’s name, we accuse you of rebellion, when we accuse you of sin ; for, as you have just now heard, rebellion and sin is in scripture-account, and therefore in God’s account, one and the same ; and how heinous this crime is, we find the Spirit of God telling us, in that 1 Sam. xv. 23. “ Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.” Once more,

6. We charge *murder* upon you. An hard charge, will you say, if it be well proven ; a charge which, if it be made good against us, we deserve by the law of God and man to die. Well, as difficult as you may think it, we shall make it good against every soul of you, and that after this manner. You have sinned, and every sinner is a *murderer*, and that the worst of murderers. Well might the wise man say, Eccl. ix. 18. “ One sinner destroyeth much good.” For, (1.) He murders his own soul by it. What is said of adultery is indeed applicable to every sin, Prov. xvi. 32. “ He that doth it destroyeth his own soul,” and so is guilty of that worst of wickedness, self-murder. He slays a soul, and not a body only, who commits sin. (2.) He is in disposition a murderer of God, who commits sin. This is plain, if you consider two scriptures : 1 John iii. 5. it is asserted, that hatred is murder, “ Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer ; and ye know that no murderer

derer hath eternal life." And Rom. viii. 7. it is said, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." So that the natural man, in the state wherein he is born, is a hater, an enemy of God, and therefore, in God's account, a murderer of God; for indeed he that hates one, forbears murdering only-for want either of opportunity, or power, or secrecy, or some such like advantage. Now, every sin is the product of that natural enmity, the fruit of which grows on the carnal mind; and therefore must partake of the nature of the root, must have enmity or hatred against God in it, and implies a judging him unworthy of a being. That principle of enmity which inclines and prompts man to sin, to tread upon God's law, would excite him to destroy God, were it possible; every sin aims at no less than the life of God. We say not that every or any sinner doth *intend* the destruction of God, but that it is the *aim* of every sin. A man, in every sin, aims at the advancement of his own will above that of God's: and, could the sinner attain his end, God would be destroyed; for God cannot survive his will. He can as soon outlive his being as his glory; and he that aims at the one, aims at the other also: and this is the case of every sinner. Now, I have made it good, that every sin has *murder* in it; and consequently that all who have sinned, as ye all have done, have committed murder, and that of the worst sort, self-murder, soul-murder, nay, and God-murder: and if the blood of the body of another shall be required at the hand that sheds it, what do you think will be the case of such as have shed the blood of a soul? And if it stand hard with such, what will become of the murderer of God? Sure, if simple murder be avenged, then self-murder, soul-murder, will be avenged seven times more; and if soul-murder be so evil, and bring complicated destruction upon the guilty, what, O sinners! think ye will be the case of these who shall be found *conspirators against the life of God*?

Now, can ye think the crime alledged against you small, after we have a little opened it to you? sure he
 who

who will, must be totally destitute of all sense of God, or of religion, nay, or reason. What is grievous and heavy, if the charge of *atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, robbery, rebellion, and murder*, be not so? And we have made it appear, that our plea, or rather God's plea against you, amounts to no less. But this is far from being all that we have to say in the justification of God, and for your condemnation. These sins have,

3dly, *Aggravations* as dreadful and guilt-enhancing, as they themselves are great and monstrous. You have sinned, and consequently are guilty of atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, robbery, rebellion, and murder; but not simply of these abominations as in themselves, but as they are attended with a great many fearful and killing aggravations, which add extremely to the score of the provocations, being as it were so many cyphers put behind the figures, which, though in themselves they be nothing, yet put behind, they swell the number to a prodigious greatness.

1. All these evils you have done, notwithstanding a great many notable helps you received against sin. Not to speak of what you had in Adam, perfect strength, perfect will, and perfect happiness, you have not only sinned in him against all these, but you who are here present have sinned against many notable means afforded you of God for your preservation from sin. (1.) You have sinned *in the face of all the dreadful threatenings of God's vengeance against it*. You have sinned under the very thunderings of Mount Sinai: and when the flames of hell have, out of the threatenings of God, been staring you in the face, even then you have dared to provoke the Most High, slighting all these formidable evidences of his anger. (2.) You have sinned *against dreadful examples or instances of the judgements of God against offenders*. You have, as it were, seen your companions turned into hell, and yet you have persisted in the crimes for which they were served so. Say now, who of you, in some one remarkable instance or other, has not seen the judgements of God against sin and sinners? Sure our land has of late afforded remarkable instances.

instances not a few. Have you not seen some, out of a fever of lust, fall into sickness, and out of this drop into the bottomless abyss of the scorching wrath of God? and, notwithstanding all this, you have sinned on, and have not guarded against sin. (3.) You have sinned *contrary to great and precious gospel-promises*; these great and precious promises, that are breasts full of light, full of life, consolation, and strength, full of spiritual supplies for strengthening poor men against the assaults of sin. (4.) You have sinned *against the glorious gospel-ordinances*, all of which are designed for the destruction and ruin of sin, and are the pipes through which the supplies contained in the promises are conveyed to the Lord's people. (5.) You have sinned *against all the strivings of the Spirit of God with you, in ordinances and providences*; and consequently have resisted the Holy Ghost in your sins. (6.) You have sinned *against that sovereign ordinance of God*, the antitype of the brazen serpent, Jesus Christ, who is lifted up for that very end, that he may save his people from their sins; and bids all the ends of the earth look unto him for that end, Isa. xlv. 22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The God who has been holding him forth to you, who has provided you in all these great and notable advantages, is the God you have sinned against, whom you have rebelled against, and treated unworthily in these horrid violations of his law, which we have enumerated to you above. But this is not the only aggravation of your sins, that you had helps against sin: But,

2. You have sinned *against the God of your mercies*, the God who has loaded you with his favours. O sad requital you have given to God for all the kindnesses he has done to you, since the morning of your day! May he not justly, nay, may we not in his name, lay that to your charge, which we find him with wonderful solemnity charging upon his people, Isa. i. 2. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Have not you been nourished and brought up under the care, and by the providence

providence of God? and has he not met with the same entertainment at your hand? Now, this is a dreadful aggravation of your guilt. For, (1.) It is not *one* mercy, or *two*, but *innumerable mercies*, innumerable kindnesses. Reckon, O sinners! what the mercies of God are, if ye can. Nay, if ye can count the stars in the heaven, or the sand of the sea-shore, you may. David says in that 71st Psalm, "That he knows not the number of God's salvation;" and who may not say with him in this? God every day preserves you from many thousands of inconveniences that would destroy you, and bestows upon you many thousands of mercies. He loads you with his benefits, and ye load yourselves with your sins against him. Ye turn the point of them all, as it were, against God, and make these very mercies he gives you weapons of unrighteousness to fight against him. As his favours, so your sins are more than the hairs of your head. Look round you, whatever you see, whatever you enjoy, clothes, food, or whatever contributes to the comfort of life, that you have from him; and this is the God, O sinners! against whom ye have sinned, who treats you thus, "in whom ye live, move, and have your being," as the apostle observes, Acts xvii. 28. (2.) As the mercies are *many* against which ye have sinned, so they are *great*. If any can be called so, these which you have at the hand of God may. What is great, if all that is needful for life and godliness be not? And no less does the provision that God has made amount unto; and no less has the Lord God given unto you. Has not "his divine power given to you all things that pertain to life and godliness?" 2 Pet. i. 3. Have not ye a gospel-dispensation, food and raiment? And what more is needful? And yet against these great mercies you have sinned. When God has fed you to the full, Jeshurun-like, you have waxed fat, and kicked against the God that has fed you all your life long, Deut. xxxii. 15. (3.) Ye have sinned notwithstanding of a long tract of these many and great undeserved kindnesses; and this extremely enhances your guilt. What! would he not be looked on as a very monster

monster in nature, who would kill the man that was putting his meat in his mouth? who would watch opportunities against one who had done him wonderful kindnesses? and this is exactly your case; you have sinned, and that against the God of your mercies. And therefore, (4.) Your sins are all acts of monstrous ingratitude, than which nothing worse can be laid to the charge of any man. It is a sin that makes a man worse than the beast of the field: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," Isa. i. 3. The dullest of beasts know who do them kindnesses, and fawn, as it were, upon those that feed them ordinarily; but ye, O sinners! have kicked and lift up the heel against the God that has fed you all your life long, and so are guilty of the most horrid ingratitude. And do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise! But this is not all that may be said for aggravating your wickedness in sinning against God. For,

3. You have done all this wickedness without any provocation. When subjects rebel against their sovereign, they have usually some shadow of excuse for the taking up arms against him; but ye have none. What have ye to alledge in your own defence, O criminals? What iniquity, what fault have ye found in God, that ye have gone backward and forsaken his ways? "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob," Is. xli. 21. What have ye to offer in your justification? Sure I am, the ordinary pretences which are upon such occasions made use of, to justify a subtraction of obedience from the kings of the earth, will do you no service. (1.) You cannot; you dare not quarrel God's claim to the sovereignty of the world. What will, what can make it his due, if creation, preservation, benefits, and the supereminent excellencies of his nature, qualifying him as it were for so great a post, do not give a just claim? And God has a right to the government of the world upon all these accounts. He made us, and not we ourselves: he is the mighty preserver of man; he loads us daily with his benefits; and there is none like

like him to be his competitor. (2.) You cannot alledge unjust laws. You cannot say that he has overstretched his prerogative, and with-holden any part of that which was your unquestionable due. No. Who dare implead the Most High of injustice? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Are not his laws most just always? and his judgements most righteous? Is he not a God of truth, and without iniquity? Sure he is. We boldly bid you a defiance to discover any thing unjust in that body of laws which God has given to the sons of men. Nor, (3.) Can ye alledge the rigour of his laws, that he is an austere one, and has gone to the utmost he might with you, exacted all that he possibly could. No; he has consulted your good in the frame of his laws, and has contrived them so, that every one who understands what he says, must own, that, had mankind been at the making them, they could not, by all their joint wit, have gone near to make them so exactly answer the design of the high God, his glory in the good of the creature, as he has done.

4. Nay further, your sins have this aggravation, that they are committed *without any prospect of advantage, to countervail the damage you sustain*. Could ye pretend, that ye can by your disobedience gain some great thing, if it did not excuse you, it would make you to be pitied, as being overborne by a very great temptation. But this cannot, dare not be alledged: no; you "spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which doth not profit." You can make no hand of it. You offend the God of your mercies without any provocation, and that for a very trifle. He has not stood with you upon the greatest, and ye scruple the least points with him; yea, for a very shadow of pleasure, ye stand not to offend him. Nay,

5. You sin, notwithstanding the *interposition of the most solemn vows to the contrary*; and therefore we might have made this one of the ingredients of sin, *perjury*. All of you who are now before the Lord stand solemnly engaged to fear, and obey, and serve the
 Lord,

Lord, all the days of your lives. When you were offered to God in baptism, then you came under the vows of God; and when you have given your presence in the public assemblies of God's people, since ye came to age, ye have solemnly owned and ratified these vows; and yet, notwithstanding all these, you have sinned against God, even your covenanted God; and therefore there is perjury in all your sins. You have despised the oath in breaking the covenant of your God.

6. When you have sinned, and continue to sin against God, yet *ye continue to profess fealty and subjection to him*, and thereby add fearful hypocrisy and mockery to your wickedness; like that profane people with whom the prophet Malachi had to do, who dealt traitorously with God, wearied him with their wickedness, robbed him of his due, and yet asserted their own innocence in all; and this, throughout the whole of that book, is charged upon them as an aggravation of their guilt. Their profession they still kept up, and challenged God to show wherein they had failed of their duty. Now, this is much your case; your very appearance here carries in it such a challenge. Would ye come here without scruple, and so boldly rush into God's presence, whom ye have offended, were ye not at this with it, that ye judge God either knows not, or will not be offended with what ye have done.

Now, you have heard your charge opened. It is not, as we have said before, some petty misdemeanour that is libelled against you, but crimes as black as hell, *atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, robbery, rebellion, and murder*, and that against the God of your mercies, over the belly of a great many notable preventing means of grace, in spite of the most solemn vows to the contrary, without any shadow of provocation, any prospect of real advantage; and all this, notwithstanding a great many professions to the contrary.

Here is the sum and substance of your indictment, enough to make heaven and earth astonished, that God does not in fury fall upon us, and make an utter end of us. If every one saw his own concernment in this matter,

matter, how would we be affected? it would make a strange work in this house.

This, O sinners! is your charge: what have ye to answer to it? Plead ye *guilty* or *not*? Sure I am, every soul in this house may say with Job, in that 9th chapter of his book, and 20th verse, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." If you plead guilty, and take with the charge, what means this security we see among you? "Is it not a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?" Is it an easy thing to suffer the punishment due to such crimes? Sure none can say it is.

But it may be, some of you may be ready to say, Indeed we cannot deny ourselves to be sinners. God help us, for we have all sinned; but indeed we never thought, nor can we yet think, that every sin hath in it all these monstrous evils you have mentioned. God forbid we were all of us atheists, idolaters, blasphemers, robbers, murderers, and perjured rebels, as you have made us. No: we have indeed sinned, but our consciences did never accuse us of any such monstrous impieties as these are. To those who shall dare to say, or think so, we answer, (1.) We do indeed believe, that many of your consciences did never accuse you of any such crimes: Many of you keep the eyes of conscience fast shut in ignorance. You fear to bring your deeds to the light of a well-informed conscience, lest they should be reprov'd. Others of you have sinned your consciences asleep, or rather you have abused them, so that they are either faint, that they cannot speak loud, or stupified, that they cannot speak at all. But all this will not prove your innocence as to the crimes alledged. Wherefore, (2.) Who has the juster estimate of sin, God or you? Who knows best what malignity, what evil there is in its nature? Surely God knows best what the honour of his own laws and authority is, and how far it is trampled upon by every sin. We are but of yesterday, and know nothing. (3.) Whose word, think ye, will stand, God's or yours? God has by his word represented no less

less to be in it than we have said to be in it, and therefore there is no less in it. God will reckon so, and deal with you not according to the judgement ye make of sin, but that which he makes. We have made it appear, from the word of God, that sin is such as we have represented it; and if ye think more mildly of it, be doing, and behold the issue.

Having thus opened to you your indictment, I shall now proceed,

SECONDLY, To lead witnesses against you to prove the charge, according to the method we laid down for the management of this business, in our entry upon the improvement.

But before we begin this work, we shall briefly obviate a difficulty that may be started against the whole of what we are to say under this head. To what purpose is it, may some say, to *lead witnesses* to prove a *charge* which is confessed? Who denies this, that they are sinners? every one will readily own so much; and therefore any thing that is said to prove such a thing seems perfectly lost. To this shortly we say, (1.) Though every body *acknowledges* that they are guilty; yet *few, very few*, believe to be true what they themselves are ready to say in this matter. We all own ourselves *guilty of sin*; but were it believed, would not every eye be full of *tears*? every heart full of fears? Would not our knees, Belshazzar-like, beat one against another, every face gather paleness, and every mouth be full of that inquiry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" Sure they would; and that it is not so, is a clear and unquestionable proof that we do not really believe what we say. (2.) Were our only design to justify God in any measures he has taken, or may take, to punish us, then indeed such an *acknowledgement* were sufficient to found a sentence of condemnation on, and to free God from any imputation of injustice in punishing them who *acknowledge the crime*: but our design is of another sort; we are to study to bring you to such a sense of your sin, as may put you to inquire for a relief. And therefore, (3.) We are to use all methods

ways which may in any measure *contribute* to the furtherance of this design; we are to essay all ways to *waken* you out of that security wherein you are like to *sleep on*, till you be entirely ruined, till there be no remedy or relief for you.

This prejudice being taken out of the way, we shall now proceed to *lead the witnesses* against you. We have laid the blackest of crimes to your charge, and we have the strongest evidence that you are guilty: for we can prove guilt upon you by witnesses, which may be compared with any, either as to capacity or integrity; witnesses who are faithful in this matter, and will not lie, according to the character given by the wise man, Prov. xiv. 5. "A faithful witness will not lie." Witnesses they are who cannot be suspected of partial counsel, who never would have advised you to sin, and who take no pleasure in accusing you; and therefore cannot be suspected of malice, or of any ill or invidious design against you, as were easy to make appear of every one of them whom we shall name.

Take heed, therefore, we beseech you, to their testimony. The gravity and consequence of the matter, the quality of the witnesses, being the greatest in heaven or earth, and your own concernment in the whole, do join in pleading for your attention. O criminals! as your crimes are great, so is the evidence we bring against you great. For,

1st, The *Lord is witness against you*. As he said of old to his people, in Jer. xxix. 23. so he says to you, Young and old of you, who are here present, you have sinned: "Even I know and am a witness, saith the Lord." God, who cannot lie, accuses you as guilty of sin: "And if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us," 1 John i. 10. Here is a witness against you, O sinners! to whose charge, I am sure, you have nothing to lay. Malice he purges himself of, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Could it be
any

any pleasure to him to ruin the work of his own hands! No sure.

2dly, *Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God, the Amen and Faithful Witness*, gives in evidence against you.—He came to bear witness to the truth; and this was one of the great truths to which he bare witness, That all have sinned, and therefore are under a sentence of condemnation, which can no otherwise be repealed, but by believing on the name of the only-begotten Son of God, John iii. 18. “He that believeth on him, is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” Christ’s very name bears witness to this truth. He is called “Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins,” Matth. i. 21.—And how could he save them from their sins, had they none?

3dly, Guilty you are, for the *Spirit of truth*, John xiv. 17, calls you so. It is one of the offices of this glorious person of the ever-blessed Trinity, to convince the world of sin, John xvi. 8. “And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin.” If this glorious witness would now speak, as sometimes he has done, we should then need no more witnesses. He would finish the evidence, and make it answer our design. Thus we see, that there are three in heaven that bear record, and set to their seal to this great truth, the Father, Son, and Spirit. Now, sure we cannot refuse what they bear testimony to. Any crime, however great, is sufficiently proven by the concurring testimonies of two men; and, “if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater,” 1 John v. 9. But,

4thly, *God’s deputy in your bosoms* is a witness of this great but sad truth, that ye have all sinned. Ye are witnesses against yourselves, and have actually given testimony against yourselves in this matter; and that (1.) In your baptism. When you were baptised, you did then own yourselves guilty; for as “the whole need not the physician, but the sick,” so the clean need not washing, but the defiled; and he who washes owns himself

himself defiled. (2.) Your attendance on gospel-ordinances is a testimony to this truth, that you have sinned; for they all level at the salvation of sinners. (3.) The very name whereby you are called is a testimony given to this truth. Christians you are called; and if any body should deny you to be so, you would take it very highly, and look upon it as a notable indignity done you. Well, if ye be Christians, that is, the people of Christ, then you are sinners; for he came to "save his people from their sins," Matth. i. 21. (4.) Is there any among you that ever prayed for pardon of sin? Sure, these who have not done so, deserve not the name of Christians; and these who have done so, whether young or old, rich or poor, have borne witness against themselves in this matter. And there is one day, when your consciences, that may now either be silent, or obliged to speak so slow that it can scarce well be heard, shall not only speak to make you hear it, but force you to speak this sad truth, so that others may hear it distinctly. But further,

5thly, *The scriptures* bear witness against you, that you have sinned. This is every where their voice. The book of God is full of this certain and sad truth. Look but forward to the 10th verse of this chapter, and there you shall see a cloud of testimonies to this purpose. "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no, not one." Among all the race of Adam, the scriptures of truth make not one exception; and therefore ye are all guilty; for "the scripture cannot be broken," John x. 35.

6thly, *The ministers of the gospel* bear witness against you, that you have sinned. This is our work, to be witnesses to the truths of God, of which this is one, that all have sinned; and to this truth we give testimony. (1.) In that the very design of our office proclaims this truth, and asserts the undoubted certainty of it. What the design of our office is, the apostle, in that

1 Tim. iv. 16. shortly tells us, it is to save ourselves and them who hear us. We, and ye who hear us, are sinners, because we need to be saved. An office set up for the saving of souls, is a standing testimony and witness to this truth, that all have sinned; and when a minister comes to any congregation, then it is one part of his business to bear witness for God, that all of them have sinned. (2.) We give a testimony to this truth, that ye have sinned, in as far as we do proclaim to you, in God's name, and by the warrant of his word, that ye have sinned, and thereby come short of the glory of God. (3.) We give a testimony to this great truth, when we preach Christ to you; for the whole gospel-revelation goes upon this supposition, that all have sinned. When we offer you a Saviour, we assert that you are lost; when we press you to employ a physician, we assert that you are sick; when, in Christ's stead, we intreat and beseech you to be reconciled to God, we declare you are enemies. In fine, when we proclaim to you remission of sins, we clearly give testimony against you, that ye are sinners, who stand in need of pardon. (4.) The issue of our work will prove you all sinners. One of two will infallibly be the issue of our work among you; either we will obtain your consent to the blessed gospel-contrivance for the salvation of sinners, or we shall have a refusal given us; and whatsoever way it go, we shall in the issue give in a testimony to this truth: if we obtain a favourable answer, then we must bear testimony, that you did receive Christ our Lord upon his own terms, and therefore were sinners; if you reject the counsel of God against yourselves, then we must bear witness, that you are guilty of the greatest sin which any of the sons of Adam can be guilty of, unbelief; which makes God a liar, as the apostle John has it, 1 John v. 10. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son; and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Moreover,

7thly, *The whole creation* asserts this truth, that all
have

have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ; and consequently that part of it which ye use, asserts no less of you in particular. The apostle, Rom. viii. 22. tells us, that “ the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” These creatures you daily use, they groan. If your ears were not deafened by sin, you might hear the groans of the ground you tread upon, of the food ye eat, and of the raiment ye put on. Well, what is the matter ? what occasions these groans ? The apostle tells us, in the 20th and 21st verse of that chapter, it is made subject to vanity, and to the bondage of corruption ; “ for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope ; because the creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Here the apostle asserts, (1.) That “ the creature is made subject to vanity ;” that is, is liable to be abused by men, to other ends than it was at first designed for : it is subject to this vanity, of falling short of the design of its creation, which was the glory of God, and of being abused to his dishonour through the corruption of man. (2.) He asserts, that it was not willingly made subject to it. O shame ! the brute creatures condemn man. Man was willingly subject to vanity, did willingly desert from the prosecution of that which was the design of his creation. The rest of the creatures are passive in it ; it is a sort of force put upon them. It is a violence done to the creatures, when they are so abused to the service of sin : it is contrary to their very natures ; for they still continue according to the laws which God set them in the beginning. (3.) The only thing that makes them continue in being, when they are so abused by man, is the appointment of God. He continues them in being, not for this end, to be abused to a subserviency to the lusts of men, though they make this use of the goodness of God ; but that, by the continued effects of it, and proofs of undeserved kindness, he may lead them to repentance. (4.) The apostle asserts, that the creation shall be a sharer with the sons of God, in their glorious delivery

from the bondage of corruption, that is, when the children of God, these who have received Christ, and by him power to become the sons of God, shall be fully freed from the remainders of the guilt, power, and pollution of sin, then the creature shall no more be used contrary to God's design in its creation, but shall, in the hand of the rational creature, again become an instrument for shewing forth the glory of God, as it was at first designed to be. And to shew that the condition of the creature requires this, (5.) He in the 22d verse asserts, that the whole creation groaneth, that is, complains of its hard usage, of its being abused by men's sin; and he extends this to the whole creation, that there may be no access for any who use the creatures to free themselves of that which the complaint runs against, to wit, sin. How can any free himself of sin, while all his enjoyments witness against him, that he has sinned. O sinners! the sun that shines upon you groans, that it must give light to a sinner, one who uses the light for an encouragement to sin against God. The ground ye tread upon groans with the weight of sinners. The food that feeds you complains, that it must be so horribly perverted as to serve the lusts of a sinner, as to furnish one with strength to sin against God. See Hab. ii. 11. James v. 3.

8thly, *The judgements of God* bear witness against you. As many rods as have ever been upon you, as many witnesses are there of this sad truth. The rod of God speaks; for we are commanded to hear the rod, Micah vi. 9. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." Every stroke that the hand of God lays upon us speaks; and the first thing it says, is, *Ye have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* For affliction doth not spring out of the ground, nor doth trouble arise out of the dust. And here we may boldly, with Eliphaz, Job. iv. 7. challenge you to give one instance of any innocent who ever suffered the least wrong or trouble. "Remember, I pray thee," says he to Job, "who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" as if he
had

had said, Search the records of ancient times ; rub up thy memory, and give me but one instance of any person who suffered, and was not a sinner. I defy thee to give me one instance. Indeed he was out in the application of that unquestionable truth : for he did thence endeavour to infer, that Job was a hypocrite. As to the application, we are not concerned in it ; but for the truth itself, that we own, and challenge you to instance any. Our blessed Lord indeed was free of personal failings, but not so of imputed ones ; for the Lord “ laid upon him the iniquities of us all, and he was wounded for our transgressions.” And therefore his sufferings are nowise inconsistent with this truth, that none suffer but sinners ; and therefore your sufferings are a proof, and do testify, that ye have sinned ; “ for God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,” Lam. iii. 33. He takes not pleasure in afflicting his own creatures ; but when he does it, it is for their sins. What God in his sovereignty may do, as to the punishing, or rather afflicting of an innocent creature, we shall not determine. Learned men have learnedly, I may say, played the fool, or trifled in debating this point, the determination whereof makes nothing to edification, were it possible to determine it satisfiably. If any should ask me, Can God punish or afflict an innocent creature ? I should answer, (1.) That questions about what God can do are dangerous, and may for most part be forborne. (2.) Punish an innocent creature he cannot, for that presupposeth a fault. (3.) God, in the first formation of his creatures, did set them such a law for their rule, as did lead them directly to the highest perfection their natures were capable of ; and they walking according to that rule, *i. e.* being innocent, it is hard to conceive how they could fall short, or in any measure swerve from the end. If it be still inquired, Whether God may not, in his absolute sovereignty, pass over this, which seems to be the fixed and settled order of his conduct towards the creatures, and afflict them, or suffer them to meet with inconveniences, while they hold close to the rule that God has set them ? If I say, any state the question thus : Then,

(4.) I shall only propose another question to the inquirer, Can there possibly fall within the compass of God's knowledge a design which will make it worthy of his infinite wisdom and goodness to do so, to break this law of nature, which is every way suited to his wisdom and goodness? If he say, there may, then he is obliged to produce it, which he will find hard enough to do: if he say not, then he determines the question in the negative, but dangerously enough; for who knows the infinitely wise designs which may fall within the compass of the thoughts of the omniscient God, whose ways and thoughts are as far above the thoughts of man, as the heavens is above the earth? But whatever be in this nice debate, wherein we shall not immix ourselves, the truth we have advanced is certain, that no instance can be given wherein God has afflicted those who have been absolutely free from sin, inherent or imputed: and therefore the rods of God are witnesses against you, that ye have sinned. Speak, O sinners! did you never meet with an affliction in body or mind, in your persons or families, in yourselves or in your relations, young or old? Who, or where is the man or woman that never had a cross? I believe that person is scarce to be found in the world who has no complaints, that is, who have no crosses. Well then, as many crosses as ye have had, as many witnesses are there in giving in testimony against you, that ye have sinned. For no sinning, no suffering.

9thly, In fine, to name no more witnesses, *Death, the king of terrors*, is a witness against you, and gives testimony against all, that they have sinned; for "the wages of sin is death," Rom. vi. 23. It is only sin that gives death a power over you. If any of you can plead exemption from death, then you may with some reason plead freedom from the charge we have laid against you; but if not, then in vain will all pretences, shifts, and evasions be. It may be, now we shall not, no not by the testimony of all the famous witnesses we have led against you, bring you to a conviction of sin: but when Death, the king of terrors, begins his evidence, he will convince you, ere he has done with you; for he will

will send you where ye shall be convinced not much to your comfort. Death is a serjeant to the great King ; and when he takes you, arrests you, cites you anon to appear before the bar that is in the higher house, how will your hearts fail you then ? O sinners ! the sight of the grim messenger Death, of the executioner Satan, of the place of torment hell, and the awful solemnity of the Judge of the quick and the dead, will supersede any further proof, and will awaken the most sleepy conscience, which will then be, not only witness, but judge, and even executioner, to those who shall not be able to plead an interest in Christ Jesus, who have never been convinced soundly of sin at the bar of the word.

Thus we have made good our charge against all and every one of you, by the testimony of a great many witnesses of unquestionable credit. It is therefore high time, O sinners ! for you to bethink yourselves what ye shall answer when ye are reprov'd.

Hitherto we have held in the general : we have charged sin upon you all, without fixing any particular sin upon any particular sort of persons. Now we come to that which, in the next place, we propos'd in the management of this charge against you ; and that is,

THIRDLY, To make good the charge, by dealing particularly with the conscience of several sorts of persons among you, to bring you, if possible, to a sense of your sin.

All who are in this house may be ranked, according to the apostle John's division, into *children*, *young men*, and *fathers* ; or into *children*, *those of a middle age*, and *old persons*. Under *young men and women* are comprehended all those, whether they have families or not, who are not come to declining years, who are yet in the flower of their strength and vigour. To each of them I would apply myself in a way of conviction, and endeavour to bring them to a sense of sin, and that even of particular sins.

But that I may proceed in this with the more clearness, I shall premise a few things, which may clear the way to what we design upon this head. And,

1st, There are two great designs which every man should continually aim at, usefulness here, and happiness hereafter. We come not into the world, as some foolishly apprehend, to spend or pass our time, and no more of it. No; God has cut us out our work. We are all obliged, in some one station or other, to lay out ourselves for the advancement of the glory of God in this world. Every one is furnished with endowments more or less. To some God has given an ample stock, many talents; to some fewer; and to some but one. All have received; and if all do not employ their endowments, supposing they appear very inconsiderable, they will find it hard to answer for the misimprovement. He who had but one talent, for his neglect of it had a dreadful doom pronounced against him, Matth. xxv. 30. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. We are not born to ourselves only, but to the world, and therefore we should design usefulness in it, and withal should take a due care of our own principal concern, the salvation of our souls. If he who provides not for his own family, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel, 1 Tim. v. 8. what must he be that provides not for his own soul?

2^{dly}, Whatever thoughts, words, or actions, have no usefulness or subserviency to one or other of these ends, are sinful: by the law of God and nature this holds true. If we do, speak, or think, any thing that has no tendency to promote either our temporal or eternal happiness, then in so doing we sin against God; we throw away these powers of speaking, thinking, and acting, upon that which God never designed them for; and this is a manifest abuse of a talent bestowed by God. The Lord complains of Jerusalem's indulging vain thoughts, Jer. iv. 14. "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

3^{dly}, Much of our fitness or unfitness for prosecuting these ends depends upon the right or wrong management of our youth. Idleness, viciousness, and folly,

in our childhood, has a tendency to incapacitate us in our riper years for prosecuting the designs of our being. Childhood and youth are, as it were, a mould wherein men are cast; and such usually do they continue to be, as they then have been formed; which lets us see how much depends upon the right management of children, of which the wise man was well aware; as we see, Prov. xxii. 6. "Train up a child," says he by the Spirit of God, "in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

4thly, These actions in children, which people overlook generally, and judge scarce culpable, yet are upon a double account evil; first, in that they flow from a bitter root, that cannot bring forth good fruit; I mean, that cursed bias and depravity of nature, which prompts to evil, that only, and that continually; and, next, because they have a tendency to incapacitate for the future. An ill habit, contracted when young, cannot soon be worn off: nay, unless grace do interpose, and that with more than ordinary influences, some vicious habits contracted in youth can by no pains or endeavours be laid aside. Had man's nature remained incorrupt, as it was in Adam, then certainly these follies and extravagancies, into which generally childhood and youth are precipitate, had not been known; there should not any of these vicious inclinations have been found, which are now the bane of youth and of childhood.

5thly, We premise this, that the law of God is exceeding broad and extensive, Psal. cxix. 96. "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad." Some people do strangely, in their deluded apprehensions, narrow the law of God. There is a general mistake here; few, very few, do believe how extensive it is; and therefore most part are clean and pure in their own eyes, though they be not washed from their iniquities. But David, a man according to God's own heart, a man instructed of God in the spiritual meaning of God's law, entertained other thoughts and apprehensions of the matter: he found it exceeding broad and extensive. For, (1.) It extends to

word and thoughts, as well as to actions. Many of you do, it may be, dream that if ye do no abominably wicked action, though ye live in a course of vain and idle thoughts and words, it is no matter: but deceive not yourselves in this matter, for God judges otherwise; indeed his word has told us, that he will bring every work into judgement, Eccl. xii. 14. "For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." But he has nowhere told us, that words and thoughts shall go free. Nay, upon the contrary, he has expressly told us, that we must give an account of idle words, Matth. xii. 36. 37. "But I say unto you," saith the Amen and faithful Witness, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgement; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." And in that forecited Jer. iv. 14. the removal of vain thoughts is indispensibly required, in order to the salvation of Jerusalem; which says plainly, that an indulged course of them would inevitably ruin it: for, as the Spirit of God tells us, Prov. xxiv. 9. "The thoughts of foolishness is sin." And indeed it is no wonder that they be reputed so by God, the searcher of the hearts, who knows the thoughts afar off; and be condemned by that word that is a discernor of the thoughts of the heart, since all evil flows from the thought, words and actions being but indications of the thoughts of the heart. And therefore, when Simon Magus is reprov'd by the apostle Peter, in that 8th of the Acts, for his wicked desire to buy the Holy Ghost, or rather the power of conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands, he is not rebuked for his words, though he spoke it, but for his thoughts, because it was there sin began. Acts viii. 20. "But Peter said to him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and pray God, if perhaps

perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." (2.) The law of God is broad, in that it extends to all sorts of actions ; not only to those which immediately respect God, and these which immediately respect our neighbour or ourselves ; but even to our natural actions, eating and drinking, and to our ploughing, or sowing, or the like, which cannot so easily be reduced to any of these other classes : for we are told by the Spirit of God, that " the ploughing of the wicked is sin," Prov. xxi. 4. (3.) The broadness of God's law is conspicuous, in its reaching all sorts of persons, young and old, rich and poor, high and low. All sorts of persons are bound to their duty by the law of God, children as well as others ; and a deviation from it is taken notice of, even with respect to children. We are told of their coming into the world in sin, of their being shapen in sin, of their being estranged from the womb, and going astray as soon as born, and of their dying for their sin. " Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," says the man who had made God his trust from his youth up, Psal. li. 5. : and in that 58th Psalm we are told, that the wicked go astray in infancy : " The wicked are estranged from the very womb ; they go astray as soon as they be born." And the apostle, in that 5th of the Romans, from the 12th verse, proves even infants to be sinners, by their sharing in these calamities which are the consequences of sin : but this could not be, unless the law of God did extend un to and even bind children as well as others. A sense of this extent of the law of God, even to children, made blessed Augustine, in that first book of his Confessions, cap. 7. bitterly lament and bewail the sins of his childhood, even those which are laughed at by most, such as untowardness, and unwillingness to receive what was good for him ; but even in that age, meaning his infancy, does he say, ' Was it not ill and sin to seek with tears what would have proven hurtful to me if it had been given ? to be angry with those who were nowise obliged to be under my command, because they would

not obey me? nay, that even my parents would not obey me. Was it not ill, that I endeavoured to strike even those who were every way my superiors, because they would not obey me in those things wherein they could not have given obedience, without hurt either to me or some other?" Thus we see this holy man looks upon these things as sins, which are commonly laughed at by others as innocent; and if God would give us such a discovery of the wickedness of our natures, and of the extent of the law, as was given to him, then we would think so too. But the truth of this might be proven at great length, were it requisite to say any more than what has already been alledged.

6thly, In speaking to every one of these three sorts of persons, we may have occasion to name many sins; and therefore we shall here at once prove all the particulars we shall name under any of these heads to be sin; because it would divert and detain us too long, to insist under every head, in adducing arguments to prove every one of the particulars we are about to mention to be sinful. Now, that they are all such, ye will not question, if ye carry along, with what has been already said, these three unquestionable scripture-truths: (1.) That whatever is done, thought, or said, by one whose heart is not renewed by grace, is sin. This is the plain meaning of that assertion of our Lord's, Matth. vii. 18. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Hence it is, that not only the thoughts of the wicked, but his ploughing, and his very sacrifice is sin, Prov. xxi. 7. (2.) Whatever respects not the glory of God as its end, is sin, 1 Cor. x. 31. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (3.) Whatever has no respect to Jesus Christ, as the only one in whom our persons or performances can be accepted, is sin, Col. iii. 17. "Whatever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." All the particulars we shall name, will be found cross to one or all of these three, and therefore sinful; though we shall
not

not always particularly insist in proving the sinfulness of every one of them, or in naming the particular commands of the decalogue of which they are a breach.

In the *7th* and *last* place, we premise, That those of a middle age, and of old age, are equally concerned in these sins which we are to lay to the charge of children, with the children themselves, because they were once such. Young men and old men were once children, and therefore guilty of the sins of childhood. Old men were once youths, and therefore guilty of the sins of youth-hood; and therefore ye are all, the oldest of you, obliged to take heed what we say to one or another; because those who are old have been young, and those who are young may be old.

The way being thus cleared, I shall now proceed to speak particularly to, and endeavour the conviction of the children of the congregation which are now present.

Children and young ones, who are this day hearing me, take heed: I have a message from God to you. That God who made the heavens and the earth who made you, and who feeds you daily, has sent me this day to you, to every one of you, as particularly as if I did name you, name and surname, to tell you sad and doleful news. The youngest of you all has *sinned, and come short of the glory of God*; that is, ye have done that for which God will certainly cast you, soul and body, into hell-fire, if ye get not your peace made with God, through Jesus Christ. You have done that for which God is so angry at you, that his heart will not pity you, his eye will not spare you, unless ye get Christ; but as soon as ever your breath goes out, and none of you can tell how soon that may be, he will, without mercy, turn you into hell, there to be tormented for ever and ever. If ye were not foolish, ye would never play more, nor be merry, till ye got your peace made with God. Now, to let you see that it is true that I tell you, I shall shew you what sins ye are guilty of before God.

I. Ye were born sinners, Psal. li. 5. Your parents were all sinners; and as your fathers were, so are ye sinners;

finners ; for “ who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? not one,” says God by the mouth of Job, chap. xiv. 4. When ye came into the world, God might then have sent every one of you to hell, because ye were then all finners ; and though God did not then send you into hell, yet he may do it, and ye cannot tell how soon. If ye take heed, ye may every day hear of some one or other dying, that was, not long before, as likely to live as you are, as young, as healthy as you are ; and if God shall now come, and call you away by death, what think you will become of you that are not yet reconciled to God ? Ye will all be sent to hell. But,

2. Tell me, I say, did you ever refuse to do what your parents, your fathers, or your mothers, have commanded you to do ? Do you never remember, that either your fathers, or your mothers, or your master, or, it may be, the minister from the pulpit, has told you, that you should do some things, read, pray, be good scholars, do what your father and mother enjoined you ? Well, and have not ye for all that refused to do it ? This is a sin against God ; and believe it, dear children, there are some, just such as yourselves, burning in hell for disobeying their parents ; and though they weep and cry, yet God will never let them out thence.

3. Did never any body reprove you for any thing that ye have done ? Did never your father or your mother tell you, that something, it may be, swearing, or lying, or forgetting your prayers, was a sin, and would bring you to hell, if ye did not amend ? Well, if they did, was not you angry with them ? would you not have been glad to get away from them that told you such things ? And did not your heart rise against them ? Well, this also is a great sin ; and if this be not pardoned, God will be sure to turn you into hell for it, Prov. xv. 10. “ Correction is grievous to him that forsaketh the way ; and he that hateth reproof shall die.”

4. Tell me, were you ever desirous to be avenged, or, in your own language, to have amends of some that you thought had done you ill ? Were not you vexed, thinking

ing how to get even with them? and would not ye have found in your hearts to have killed them, or to have done them some mischief? Well, this is a grievous sin; for God has forbid us to avenge ourselves, Rom. xii. 19.—

5. Tell me, did ye never give any body ill language? Did ye never miscall your comrades? when you were angry with your neighbour or companion, did ye not use opprobrious or reproaching names? I fear most of you cannot deny it. Well, this again is another sin. Our Lord has said, that whosoever shall call his brother a “fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire,” Matth. v. 22.

6. Were you never glad when you could get out, under your father, or mother, or master's eyes, that ye might take your will, and do these things that ye durst not do before them? Now, this is downright atheism: You did not believe that God is every where, otherwise you would not have presumed to do that before him which ye durst not do before your parents. See Psal. xiv. 1. compared with Rom. iii. 10. & 23.

7. Have not you been glad when the Lord's day was over, or at least when the preaching was done, that ye might get your liberty? Has it not been a burden to you, to sit so long in the church? Well, this is a great sin, which was one of the grounds of God's controversy with his own people, Mal. i. 13. Isa. xliii. 22. Amos viii. 5. It is to be weary of well-doing, against the express command of God, Gal. vi. 9.

8. Tell me, have you not been thinking of other things, when ye have been in church hearing sermon? have you not been thinking of your sport and pastime? or, it may be, speaking to one another in the time of worship? This is another sin whereof you have been guilty; and God counts them mockers of him, who draw near with their lips, when their hearts are far away from him, Isa. xxix. 13.

9. Do you pray to God morning and evening? I fear there shall many be found who neglect this: and tell me, dear children, what do you think will become of those
who

who pray not? God counts them forgetters of him; and he says, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," Mal. ix. 17.

10. Do ye lie or swear, and so take God's name in vain? Did you ever swear by the name of God in your ordinary talk? or did ye ever make a lie to excuse or hide a fault? These also are sins; and God has said, that liars and swearers shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, Rev. xxi. 8.

11. I will only put this one question more to you. Did you never go to your play, when ye should have been at your prayers? Now, take heed; ye know ye have done so. Well, what think ye will be the end of those who do so? Because ye will not seek God, he will not save you; he will reject you, when ye have most need of help.

Now, dear children, I have a great respect to you; fain would I have you saved from hell. It is because I desire your good, that I have been telling you your sins. I shall therefore, before I leave you, 1. Put some few questions to you for your awakening. 2. I shall give you a counsel or two. 3. I shall give you some encouragements to follow the advices given you.

1. Then, I would ask you some few questions; and I beg it of you to take heed how you hear them. And, (1.) Tell me, Did ye ever think of death? If you look at a grave when it is opened, there, instead of one that had life, that could speak, walk, and do all the other things which ye can do; now you see there is nothing but rotten bones, consumed stinking flesh, which the dogs will scarcely come near, and filthy gore. Well, ye will in a little time be just in that case yourselves. Ye must die. No doubt ye have heard of some of your companions, or some other children, who have died; and ye cannot tell but ye may die next. (2.) If ye do think of death, what do ye think will become of you, if these sins which ye have done, and of which I have now told you, be not forgiven? Then, without all doubt, you will go to hell. And, O! can ye tell what a place hell is? It is

a terrible place indeed. It may be, ye would think it a terrible thing if any should put your finger in the hot fire; and indeed it would be so. What then do ye think will be the pain which ye shall suffer, when God will cast you, soul and body, into hell-fire: and this will surely be your portion, if ye get not grace. (3.) If once ye be cast into hell, do ye think ever to get out again? I assure you, God has said ye shall not. Though ye weep till your hearts break, God will not hear you. Ye have done with mercy, if once ye die in your sins. God's eye will not spare; his heart will not pity you. Therefore, if ye would escape hell, I shall tell you,

2. What ye must do, by offering you two or three good counsels. (1.) Whenever ye go home this night, get into some quiet corner or other, and there betake you to God in prayer. Say with the poor distressed publican, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Say, Lord, thou hast promised a new heart to sinners like me; and I have need of it, for my heart is very bad: and say, Lord, give me Christ; save me from my sins for Christ's sake. Who knows but the Lord, who hears the lions and the ravens when they cry for food, may hear you? (2.) You that can read the Bible or the Catechism, read them; but take care, before ye read, that ye go and pray to God, that he may bless them to you, and make you understand what you read. (3.) Take care that ye never lie, swear, or break the Sabbath, or commit again these sins which we were telling you of a little while ago. (4.) Run out of the company of such as do lie, swear, or break the Sabbath; for God will destroy them that keep company with such: "A companion of fools shall be destroyed," Prov. xiii. 20. (5.) Wait on them who will instruct you, and follow the good advices they give you: "Walk with the wise, and ye shall be wise," Prov. xiii. 20. (6.) Be sure that ye pray to God so soon as ye have got on your clothes in the morning, and before ye cast them off at night. Now, if ye will follow these advices, I will,

3. Tell you some things to encourage you in so doing.

ing. (1.) God has made a promise, that they who begin soon to seek him shall come speed. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me," Prov. viii. 17. (2.) God has a great liking to such as begin to seek him early. He commends them highly; and has left upon record the names of some young converts; such as Abijah, in the house of a wicked Jeroboam, and good Josiah, whose early piety is much commended, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. "In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of his father David:" and this is left upon record for making others to begin early to seek God. (3.) Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, was willing to entertain, with the most tender affection, little children that were brought unto him; and when his disciples would have them kept away, he rebuked them, and then said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he took them up in his arms, and put his hands on them, and blessed them," Mark x. 14. 16. And I can assure you, he is no less kind now than he was then; for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Now, if he was so kind to children that were brought to him, what will he be to these who themselves do come to him? O! if ye knew how good he is, you would never be at rest till you got notice where he is to be found; and then ye would go to him; and I dare promise you welcome. (4.) That I may have done with you, I tell you for your encouragement, that if ye will begin early, and seek God, ye shall be amongst these children of whom the kingdom of heaven is. God will bless you, and all his people will bless you; yea, all generations shall call you blessed.

Thus far my love to your souls has led me. I would fain have you saved; and therefore, I "travail in birth till Christ be formed in you." O make glad my heart, make glad the heart of my great Master, make glad the hearts of all the people of God; and rejoice your parents hearts, in complying with these wholesome counsels, which I am sure your parents will desire, if they
be

be not worse than very beasts. In a word, seek God, and save your souls.

Now we have done with the first sort of persons with whom we undertook to deal. The tendernefs of their capacity has obliged us to digrefs from our method which we did lay down in the entry upon this use, and which, by the Lord's affiftance, we fhall clofely follow in what remains.

It may be, fome of thefe who are come to age, may look upon this as tedious and unpleafant which we have been upon, becaufe there has been nothing here but what they, it may be, knew before, and what, it may be, they judge parents might inform their children in. But we muft tell fuch, that the defign of preaching is not to gratify itching ears with new discoveries, but to reform hearts by the old, yet new truths of God, which will never wear old to them who are acquaint with the power of them; that children have fouls as well as they; that their fouls are no lefs precious than thofe of adult perfons; that we have the charge of the one as well as the other; that the Lord has fometimes been pleafed to reach the heart of children by fuch familiar applications; that we are obliged to be all things to all men, that fo we may win fome to Chrift. In fine, we muft tell fuch, that we are particularly obliged, by our Lord's command formerly quoted, to encourage children to come to him, and therefore we could not but endeavour to deal with them, and that in a way fuitable in fome meafure to their capacities: what is old to you, may be new to them; and a new drop of the influences of God's Spirit would even make thefe very truths, which formerly you have known, have a new and better relifh than formerly they had.

I fhall now proceed, in the *fecond* place, to you who have ftepped out of childhood into youth, or into middle age, and fhall endeavour to fix guilt upon you. Hitherto we have made it appear, that you are guilty: now we come to tell you, and to condefcend on fome particulars whereof you are guilty. We told, nay proved, that you were defiled: now, we fhall, as it were, point to the
very

very spot. We have made it appear that ye have sinned: now we shall take you to the places, as it were, where ye have sinned, that ye may get no way of shifting the challenge. And because now we find you in the house of God, we shall,

1. Examine you a little in reference to your conduct there. You have frequently come here; you have frequently presented yourselves before God as his people; but I fear, if your carriage in this matter be narrowly scanned, you shall be found sinners before the Lord in reference to this. I shall, in the name of that God in whose courts ye tread, put three questions to your consciences. (1.) What brings you ordinarily here? Come ye to sacrifice to the world's idol, custom, because they are ill-looked upon who stay away? or come ye to stop the mouth of a natural conscience, that would give you no rest if ye staid away? or come ye to see and be seen? or to gratify curiosity merely? I fear these be the designs on which not a few of you come; and if so, then you are found guilty before God, who requires you to come upon other designs, even to wait on him, that ye may see his power and glory in the sanctuary, as his people have seen him heretofore. (2.) What do ye here, when ye are come! Do ye hear the word of God merely as an idle tale? Do ye put truths by yourselves, and apply them to others? Do ye suffer your minds to roam up and down upon the mountains of vanity, looking at this or the other thing or person? Do you observe more the way of the truths being spoken, than the truth of God itself? Are you more intent in observing the instrument than in listening to the voice of God? Let your consciences speak, and I am sure a great many of these evils ye will find yourselves guilty of. (3.) I would pose you, as to the fruit of these approaches. What good get ye for your coming? Do ye get convictions, and shift them? Do ye get calls, and sit them? Do ye hear reproofs, and hate them? Do ye hear instructions, and forget them? Who of you can clear yourselves of these sins? sins done in the very presence of God, sins wherein his honour

honour and glory is in a more than ordinary manner concerned, because they do extremely reflect upon it.

2. We shall next follow you to your employments, and inquire a little what your carriage is there. I take it for granted, that all of you have some honest occupation or other. If there be any who have not, these persons, as they sin in wanting, because thereby they idle away God's talents; so they lie open to all sins. Now, such of you as have employments, I shall desire you to answer me a few questions in reference to your deportment in them. And, (1.) I would know if ye did consult God in the choice of them? Did ye make it your endeavour to understand what God was calling you to? God, either by giving a man special endowments, a peculiar genius, with other congruous circumstances, or by hedging up the way to all other employments, or some one such providential way or other, calls every one to a particular employment; and therefore, when we engage in any, we should endeavour to understand God's mind in it, what it is our duty to do; for we are commanded, in all our ways to acknowledge God, Prov. iii. 6. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Now, did ye in this step of your way acknowledge God, I mean in the choice of your employments? I fear, few dare say that they bowed their knee to God to crave his direction. Well, then, here your iniquities have found you out. (2.) Do ye set God before you in following your employments? Do ye make it your business to know how ye may glorify God in them? Whatever we do, we are obliged to do it to the glory of God. Let conscience now speak, and it will tell many of you, that to this very day ye never had a thought of promoting the glory of God by your employments. So that here you are found guilty, not of some one sin only, but of a tract of sin, and that even from the morning of your day continued till now. (3.) Do ye depend upon God for a blessing upon the work of your hands? Who of you dare say, that however ye do use means diligently, yet it is to God ye look for the blessing? And are ye earnest

earnest in dealing with God, that he may succeed the works of your hands, and make you prosper in them? (4.) To whom do ye attribute the success of them? When the Lord succeeds the work of your hands, do ye heartily bless God for it? Dare ye say, that this leads you to praise the God of your mercies, and to walk humbly before him, who deals kindly even with the unthankful and sinners, and has given a proof of this, in giving you success in these employments? (5.) When ye are successful in them, what use make ye of your success? Does it engage you to the ways of God, and make you walk more humbly? or are ye lifted up, and forget yourselves, and forget the Lord? And do ye spend upon the service of sin what the Lord has graciously given to you? Sure, if ye conscientiously put these questions home to your own hearts, they will discover very much sin. But,

3. We shall, in the *next* place, take a view of you in your converse in the world, and there see whether we can find you guilty of sin or not. And with respect to your converse in the world, I would pose you upon a few things. And,

(1.) I put the question to you, What company do ye make choice of? Do ye chuse the company of them that fear God, or the company of irreligious persons? I am sure, if many of you deal impartially with your own hearts in this matter, ye will find guilt. Your consciences can tell, that you have the greatest intimacy with persons who have no religion, persons who have no fear of God before their eyes; not regarding what the wise man long ago observed, that "he that walks with the wise shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed," Prov. xiii. 20. And such are all irreligious men in God's account. I would not be understood to extend this too far, as some, through a mistake dangerous enough, do, as if thereby we were forbid civil or neighbourly converse with persons that are not religious; for this is not only lawful, but a duty; we have not only scripture-commands to this purpose, but the very law of nature obliges us to it; and we are sure,
God

God did never by any positive precept enjoin us any thing contrary to this. Nay, upon the contrary, we see plainly, that a walk according to the law of nature in this matter is highly congruous to religion. If such persons do visit us, we may visit them again, and carry it friendly. This is one part of that courtesies that the apostle Peter enjoins us, 1 Pet. iii. 8. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." And whereas the refusal of civil converse, in inquiring after one another's health, visiting at some times, and the like acts of kindness, is looked upon by some as a piece of strictness, it is quite otherwise; for the very contrary is determined to be a piece of perfection, by our great Lord and Master, who is the best judge, Matth. v. 47. 48. "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The plain meaning of which is this, A Christian should be a man every way beyond others, and should have something peculiar in the whole of his conduct; but if ye deal only civilly and neighbourly with those of your own persuasion, with those who in every thing do jump with you, wherein do ye go beyond the publicans and sinners, the most signally impious wretches that the world can shew again? Even thieves and robbers will keep some correspondence and civility towards those of their own sort; but Christian perfection calls for more enlargement of soul, and requires that we carry obligingly to all, and perform, as occasion calls, all the duties of love, which comprehend certainly these of civil converse and neighbourliness, as the apostle puts beyond all question, 1 Cor. x. 27. "If any of them that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake." Thus we see Christians are allowed to converse civilly with those who are unbelievers. And indeed not to do so, has a tendency to bring the way of God into contempt, and to make religion to be evil spoken of, and is contrary

I

to

to the very spirit of the gospel, and to these many express commands which we have, of adorning the gospel, and of conversing, so as thereby we may leave a testimony upon the consciences of men. Nay, it is to bear witness against God's goodness, and to rub shame upon our religion, as if it did narrow our souls, and make us defective in those duties which it obliges us to abound in. But though what we have said doth condemn the unchristian rigidity of some, yet it will not justify the unwarrantable choice of persons who have no religion, for our intimates, or for our ordinary and daily companions. No; we are obliged to guard against this. If we do this, we are out of our duty, and therefore have no reason to promise to ourselves God's protection. A person that walks, that ordinarily converses with such men, has reason to fear that the Lord may leave him to become like to them; and this intimacy, I fear, is what most of you are guilty of.

(2.) I would ask you, What company do ye delight most in? This is a great indication of the frame of the heart. A man that takes most pleasure in the company of irreligious persons, surely sins in it. Some, when they are in the company of the godly, carry it as if they thought themselves in fetters; and whenever they get out of it, to their own companions again, their minds are at ease, and they find satisfaction; as a man doth that is loosed out of the stocks. Are there none here whose consciences can tell them that they are of this number? Let such look to the first psalm, and first verse, and there they will see how far otherwise they ought to carry it.

(3.) I would further put the question to you, What converse do ye delight in? Some, it may be, like well enough the company of persons that are religious; but it is not for their religious converse, but because they are affable, discreet, learned, judicious, or have some other such qualifications as these. If any of you say ye love the company of religious persons, is it for the religion of their converse? I fear few can say it; and therefore few can say they are clean in this matter. I shall

shall not undertake to discourse of all the sins of converse; it would be almost endless. Only I would, with respect to your converse, desire you every night to put a question or two to your own hearts, and thereby you will discover much sin. [1.] Say, Tell me now, O my soul, what have I been doing in company? Have I bridled my tongue? Have I kept it from vain, idle, and fruitless discourse, this day, in company with others? James i. 26. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain;" and consequently all he doth is sin. [2.] Have I endeavoured to be edifying in my discourse? Eph. iv. 29. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." [3.] Have I spoken evil of no body? Tit. iii. 2. "Put them in mind to speak evil of no man; for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient," &c. 1 Pet. ii. 1. "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." One that would observe the ordinary converse of most part of people, would be ready to think, that either they never read or heard these laws, or that they never observed what they heard. Look to yourselves here, and observe your own ways, and O what sin will appear in them! These three questions will discover almost innumerable sins every day; and if one day have so many, what will many days have? Nay, how many sins in some months or years will you be guilty of? But,

(4.) If we proceed to consider you as you are related to others, we will be sure to make further discoveries of sin in your carriage. All of you stand some one or more ways related to others: ye are either masters or servants, parents or children, husbands or wives: now, every one of these relations have peculiar duties belonging to them, and lay those who contract such relations under peculiar obligations to walk according to the rules prescribed them of God; and therefore we

E

may,

may and do sin, in walking contrary to these divine prescriptions. We shall not attempt to mention the particular sins you may be guilty of in your several relations; this were a work that would almost be endless: therefore we shall only pitch upon some generals, which may discover to your consciences that ye sin in all of them. [1.] I say most of you do sin in contracting these relations. How few masters dare say, that in the choice of their servants they went to God for counsel? And how few masters can say, that ever they acknowledged God in the choice of their servants. Nay, it may be, when ye have been anxiously desirous to have good servants, even then ye have not been at the pains to consult God; not minding that gracious direction that is given by the Spirit of God, Phil. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Nay, is it not to be feared, that, in the choice of husbands and wives, few do inquire the mind of God? Now, I am sure, if ye deal impartially with your own hearts, ye will find, that here ye have sinned, and have not acknowledged God in your ways. [2.] Do ye seek direction of God, how to carry in your relations? I fear the consciences of many of you can tell, that ye never are at pains to inquire in reference to the duties called for at your hands. Most are quick-fighted enough in observing the advantages or disadvantages that redound to their temporal concerns by these relations, but have never a serious thought of the duties called for at their hand; and therefore herein ye may all in more or less find yourselves guilty. [3.] Do ye make it your aim to promote the spiritual advantage of your relations? Servants, do ye pray for your masters? Masters, do ye pray for your servants, that they may be acquainted with God's ways? If not, surely ye sin; for prayers are to be made for all, but in a special manner for those in whom we have so peculiar concernment. Nay, we fear, which is yet more sad, that there are not a few husbands and wives, parents and children, who pray not for one another. How sad is it to think, that there

There should, in these relations, be so much care for the outward man, and so little for the inward? The parent will toil himself night and day before the child want bread, and, it may be, so will the child do for the parent; and yet, it may be, never one of them spent an hour in wrestling with God about one another's eternal salvation. Are there no consciences here this day accusing any of sins in this matter? Sure I am, there are here who have ground sufficient for accusation.

(5.) We shall follow you into your closets, and there a little inquire what ye do. [1.] Whether take ye most time in the mourning for adorning your souls, or for adorning your bodies? I fear the soul gets the least part of your time; nay, it may be, some of you will go abroad to your employments, and never bow a knee to God. Sure here is sin enough to sink you lower than the grave. [2.] If you do pray in secret, what leads you to it? Is it conscience of duty? Is it custom, or some such principle as this? I fear few can say, that when they go to prayer, they do it from a sincere respect to their duty; and therefore, I fear, but few can justify themselves as to their design in the duty. [3.] When you do pray, is it a burden to you? Are ye soon weary of it, and glad when it is over and by hand, as it were? I fear most of your consciences can tell, that it is indeed so, that ye say of the service of God, what a burden is it to you? [4.] Once more, I would ask you, what good get you by your prayers? Can ye ever say, that you were heard? Can ye ever say, ye received grace for enabling you to the conscientious discharge of any duty? Most part, I fear, can say no more of their prayers, but that they prayed; or rather have said words without any sense, either of the advantage of doing so, or of the need they stand in of the things they ask of God in prayer: doth not conscience tell, that it is so with many of you?

(6.) And *lastly*, I would come a little nearer for the discovery of your sinfulness. I have a question or two to put to you, in reference to your thoughts. And, [1.] I ask you, What thoughts are most numerous?

Whether spend ye most thoughts about your souls, or about your bodies? about God, or about the world? about other things that contribute nothing to your happiness, or about that which tends to the eternal security of your souls? Here, if ye look in, you will find crowds of sins. [2.] What thoughts take ye most delight in? If these be carnal and earthly, then such is your mind; and “to be carnally minded is death,” Rom. viii. 6. [3.] What thoughts do ye allow yourselves in? and to what sort of them do ye give way? If these be not such as make for the glory of God, then here ye are found guilty before God.

Now, we have done with you of a middle age. In what we have said for your conviction, we have rather mentioned such things as are unquestionably sinful, than endeavoured to restrict ourselves to those sins that are peculiarly incident to your age. This we have willingly thinned, because it would have obliged us to spend almost as many sermons as there are different ways of life to which persons of this age do betake themselves. Before I proceed to the third sort of persons, I shall put a few questions to you. (1.) Though ye had been guilty of no more sins, save these which we charged not long ago upon children, would not these have been sufficient to have ruined you? (2.) What will your case be then, who have, over and above all these which we have now laid to your charge, and referred to your own consciences for proof of what we have said? (3.) When generals make you guilty of so many sins, what will particulars do? When ye are found guilty so many ways in your thoughts or words; for example, what will be your case, when you are brought to particulars, if ye may sin by speaking idly, by speaking ill of others, what will it amount to when every particular idle word shall be charged upon you? (4.) If every sin deserves the wrath of God, what will be the case of those who shall step into eternity laden with all these innumerable evils? How many hells will their one hell have in it?

Think, and think seriously, upon these things, and I believe ye will find it hard to rest satisfied, till ye understand

stand how such vast debts may be discharged, and how ye shall answer when reproved for so many and so great offences. Think on these things, I say, and dwell upon the thoughts of them, till ye be made to see your own misery, and then the news of a Saviour will be welcome.

I shall now proceed, in the *third* place, to speak to you who are old men. Ye whose faces speak your age, and tell that ye are quickly to be gone, we are now particularly to address ourselves to you, and to make good our charge of sin against you, from incontestable evidences and proofs. Give ear therefore, old men and old women; though you be passing off the stage, and, it may be, are within a few removes of eternity, yet ye have not perhaps duly considered your own state and condition: we must tell you, in God's name, ye have sinned, and come short of his glory. And, for proof of this,

1. We need go no further than your very faces. What has consumed your youthful beauty? What has turned that smoothness, which in the days of your youth was, it may be, your own delight, and that of others, into these many wrinkles which now every one sees, and ye may feel? Has not sin, or God upon the account of sin, done it? "Thou hast filled me with wrinkles," says Job, "which is a witness against me, and my leanness rising up in me, beareth witness to my face," Job xvi. 8. If ye be not sinners, tell me, I pray, whence are the unsteady hands, the dim eyes, the mouldered teeth, that paleness of the visage, that approaches near to the colour of that mould into which a little hence ye are to be turned? Are not all these things proofs of your guilt, and witnesses against you?

2. Have ye not passed through childhood and youth? and have not ye the sins done in these ages to count for? What, how many, and how grievous they are, ye may in some measure understand from what has been discoursed on this head some days past. Now sure, if your consciences have been awake all the while, you might understand your concernment in these things, and how deeply guilty ye are, though ye had no more to account

for but these: It is accounted by the Spirit of God, to be one of the great miseries of the wicked, that they shall lie down in their graves with their bones full of the sins of their youth: "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust," Job xx. 11. These, though there were no more, will rot your bones, gnaw your hearts, and make you lose the repose which many times ye propose to yourselves in the grave.

3. Ye have had much time, and have, no doubt, lost much time. Many precious hours, and days, and years, are spent and gone, and nothing, or nothing to purpose, done in them. And for evincing this, I shall put a few questions to you about the improvement of your time. (1.) What have ye done for God in it? The great business ye came into the world for, the great design of your creation, was the advancement of the glory of God: "The Lord hath made all things for himself, and even the wicked for the day of evil," Prov. xvi. 4. Now, are there not old men and old women here, who have lived all their days, and dare not say, that to this very day they ever had a serious thought of advancing the glory of God? To such we say, Ye have hitherto done nothing but sinned; your whole life has been nothing but one continued tract of sin. As many thoughts, as many words, as many actions, so many sins. (2.) What have ye done for the church of God? Every one is obliged to do something or other for the church, Psal. cxxii. 6. 7. 8. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee: because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good." Now, are there not old men and old women here, who never shed one tear for the church of God, who never were concerned for its welfare. I fear there are not a few here, even old people, who have seen many changes, but never had any concern for the church of God. If their private worldly concerns went well with them, it was all a matter to them what became of religion;

religion; let it sink or swim, it was all one to them. Such are grievous sinners before the Lord. (3.) What have ye done for your souls? The Lord has given every one of us a great work to do. We have our salvation to work out with fear and trembling. He has given us a day to do it in; and that day is to be followed with an evening wherein none can work. Now, what of this work is byhand? Your day is almost spent: is it not the twilight with many of you already? I fear, I fear, there are here old men, over whom the shadows of the everlasting evening are just ready to be stretched forth, who have their work yet to begin. O sad and mournful condition! A great work to begin! a work that hath cost many waking nights, and sore toil and labour for many years; and this ye have to begin now, when your day is almost gone, when your sun is setting, is, as it were, going in over the hill, and ready immediately to dump down, and leave you in eternal night? This case were enough even to rend a heart of stone, and to force tears from a rock, if duly considered. O! what sin, what folly, what misery, is there here!

4. You have seen many providences, both such as were of a more public nature, and concerned the state of the church of God in general, and such as concerned yourselves more particularly. Now, here I again inquire, (1.) What observations have ye made? The providences of God deserve to have a peculiar mark put upon them. "Remember that thou magnify his works which men behold," Job xxxvi. 24. is a command of God that extends to all: and it is a grievous sin, for which we find a professing people heavily threatened, that they did not regard the Lord's doings: "Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that they continue until night till wine inflame them: and the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands," Isa. v. 11. 12. Now, are there not many providences lost, and therefore as many sins? (2.) What experiences have ye got? Many

providences afford many experiences ; and they who have managed them to advantage, have reaped notable advantages by them, for their confirmation in the ways of God ; and if ye have not done so, ye have as many sins as ye have lost experiences. (3.) Where have they left you ? nearer or further off from God than they found you ? Every providence, mercy, or judgement, that has not brought you nearer to God, has carried you further from him ; and consequently therein ye have sinned. O what multitudes of sins are here !

5. As you are guilty by committing sins of your own, so you have contracted much guilt by seeing other men sin, when you have not been suitably exercised therewith. That we should be exercised with other mens sins, the scripture makes mention expressly. Now, that I may let you see how many ways ye have sinned here, I pose you upon it. (1.) You have seen many sins committed ; what testimonies have ye given against them ? Every one that sees God dishonoured, should give a testimony for him, either by reprovng sin, according to the direction of the apostle, Eph. v. 11. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them : " or, by withdrawing from the society of such, according to the command of the Spirit of God, who bids us "go from the presence of a foolish man, when we perceive not in him the lips of knowledge," Prov. xiv. 7. For sometimes any other reproof, than by withdrawing, may be improper ; for the wise man forbids us to "reprove a scorner, lest he hate us," Prov. ix. 8. : or, if this cannot be got done, without the neglect of moral duties, there is yet another way we may give a testimony against sin ; and that is, by a circumspect walk, evidencing a regard to God, a belief of his threatenings, and the advantage of religion. Thus Noah reprov'd or condemned the old world, Heb. x. 7. Now speak, old sinners, what testimonies of this neglected, as many sins ye stand guilty of before the Lord. (2.) Ye have seen many sins ; how many tears have ye shed ? I fear there are here old men and old women,

women, who never sighed, who never groaned or cried for all the abominations that they have seen committed in our land. It is our duty to mourn for the sins of others. There is a mark of preservation ordered to be put upon the foreheads of them that mourn for the sins of the land wherein they live, Ezek. ix. 4. "And the Lord said unto him, (the man that had the writer's ink-horn by his side), Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." And in the following verse, the destroying angel is commanded to spare neither old nor young, save only those who have that mark upon them. I fear there are few mourners here, among those who have seen many and monstrous sins. I shall not now speak of the national abominations which you have seen: but I am sure there are few of you come to age, who have not heard many horrid oaths sworn: you have seen horrid villanies committed; many dreadful provocations. Now, dare ye say with the Psalmist, in that 119th Psalm, ver. 53, "Horror hath taken hold of me, because transgressors keep not thy law." It may be, old hardened sinners think little of this sin; yet God is brought in, as it were, wondering at it, in Jer. xxxvi. 24. when the roll containing Jeremiah's prophecies was burnt, it is noted as a wonderful, a monstrous wickedness, that they were not concerned, that they did not mourn: "Yet," says God, "they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the King nor any of his servants, that heard all these words." I fear, even those who speak against sins of others, are guilty of them, by not mourning over them. (3.) You have seen many sins; and how many prayers have ye put up for the pardon of them? There is an express command to this purpose, 1 John v. 16. "If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." It may be, ye have condemned others, and cried out upon them for their sins, while in the mean time ye are partakers with

them, because of your not praying for them, according to this command.

6. I say to you, ye are great sinners, for ye have had many mercies, and I fear have abused mercies. If I should begin here to recount particular mercies, I might know where to begin, but scarce where to make an end. I shall only inquire at you, (1.) Do ye yet know the God of your mercies? Hos. ii. 8. I fear many of you dare not say it. (2.) What improvement have ye made of them? Has the goodness of God led you to repentance, as it should do? Rom. ii. 4. (3.) Once more, I ask you, have ye returned to the Lord, according to the mercies received? Put but these three questions home to your own consciences, and I believe they will discover many sins which ye never yet thought of.

7. Old sinners, ye have undergone many changes; ye are far decayed. Then let me ask you, (1.) Are your souls renewed, as your outward man perishes? I fear, I fear, there are few among you who are bringing forth fruit in old age, who, when others fade, are fat and full of sap. (2.) Has your love to sin decayed? If this change were to be observed, it were a great blessing; but I fear, that however strength may be failed, so far that ye cannot fulfil your lusts as formerly, yet the old love to them remains.

8. Old sinners, ye have seen much of the world; and here I ask you, are ye not guilty. (1.) By neglecting many discoveries of its vanity, which might have been of great use to you, if duly observed? (2.) By retaining the same love to it, after many discoveries of its uncertainty and emptiness.

9. Once more, and I have done with you. Old sinners, you have lived long, and death is at the door. God has given you much time to provide for it; and I fear ye are guilty, extremely guilty, by not improving time. And for discovering your sin here, I shall lay a few questions before you, and I plead that ye may lay them home to your own consciences. (1.) Are ye still content to die? It is the indispensable duty of all, to be ever content to comply with the will of God in this matter;

matter; and, upon a call, to be ready cheerfully to comply with the will of God as to death, the time and manner of it. Now, old sinners, are ye content? It may be, some of you will forwardly enough answer, that ye are content: but if ye say so, I ask you, (2.) Are ye ready to die? I fear some are content to die, who are not ready: some may, in a fit of discontent at the world, upon the back of some notable disappointment, be so well content to die, that they will lay hands upon themselves, who are yet very far from being ready to die. If ye pretend that ye are, then, for discovering the truth of what ye say, I inquire, (3.) Are your sins dying? A person whose sins are lively, he is never ready to die. (4.) Are ye in Jesus Christ? Those who are out of him are never ready to die. It is only these who are ready to "die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13. who are ready indeed to die. (5.) Is your pardon sealed? Death will try you; and if your pardon be not sealed, ye will find that ye are scarce ready to die. (6.) I put this one question more to you: Have you provided your lodgings? It is high time, when men's houses are falling, to be looking out for new lodgings. This tabernacle is ready to be dissolved: have ye a building of God, not made with hands, secured to yourselves? God has given you time and means for doing all this; and if ye have not done it, then you have sinned against the Lord, and against your own souls.

Now, old sinners, if ye lay not to heart this warning, and lay not yourselves in the dust before God for your sins, then this new warning, among many others, will be a dreadful aggravation of your guilt. Consider your case in time, before it be too late. Are there not many who were not born for many years after you, and who, it may be, are dead many years ago, and having wrought their work, have got a blessed immortality? yet, it may be to this day ye know not what shall become of your souls. Think, old sinners, is it not a wonder that God has given you this warning, after making light of so many: and will it not be a cutting reflection, if ye sit a warning near to the twelfth hour?

Now, children, young men, and fathers, old and young, I have, by an appeal to your own consciences, made good my charge against you, and fixed a great many particular sins upon you. I shall now proceed,

FOURTHLY, To shew *what satisfaction that sovereign King*, at whose instance, and in whose name, I have impleaded you, *requires of all and every one of you*. His justice, at any rate, must be satisfied. It is not congruous to reason, it is not congruous to the holiness, justice, and wisdom of the Lawgiver, that sin should escape unpunished, and therefore it is impossible it should pass without some signal and suitable mark of God's displeasure. He has declared positively in his word, he has confirmed it in his providence, that "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished," Prov. ix. 21. If angels and men should lay their hands and heads together, unite their wit and their power, they shall not preserve one sin from the marks of God's displeasure. Some signal and evident token of it will reach sin, wherever it is. There needs no proof of this, after what Christ has met with. And ye must lay your account with it, that this punishment will not be some petty inconsiderable one. It must be in some measure suited to the crimes ye stand impleaded of. It must, on the one hand, hold some proportion to the holiness and purity of that law you have broken; to the majesty and authority of that God whose authority ye have trampled upon; yea, it must hold some proportion to the several aggravations of your respective sins. Lay your account with it, sinners, escape you cannot his hands, who is every where: "Whither will ye go from his Spirit? whither will ye flee from his presence? If ye ascend up into heaven, he is there; if ye make your bed in hell, behold; he is there; if ye take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall his hand lead thee, and his right-hand shall hold thee. If ye say, Surely the darkness shall cover you, even the night shall be light about you; for the darkness hideth not from him, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to him,"

him," Pſal. cxxxix. 7.—12. There is no darkneſs nor ſhadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves, Job xxxiv. 22. from his eye, or ſecure themſelves againſt the inquiry God will make, or the ſtrokes that his almighty arm will inflict. Punished then finners muſt be. And if ye aſk, what ſatisfaction will he have of ſuch finners? I anſwer,

1ſt, He will have you puniſhed in your eſtates, by a forfeiture of all. You invaded God's poſſeſſion; he will caſt you out of yours. This is the ordinary puniſhment of rebellion; and we have proven you guilty of rebellion of the worſt ſort. Man, when God made him, was maſter of a fair eſtate. The ſons of men now may value themſelves upon ſome petty tenements which many of them hold by no good right, as we ſhall ſee anon; but none of them can vie poſſeſſions with Adam in innocency. He had a paradise replenished with all the rarities of innocent, of incorrupted nature, all the delicacies which the earth did yield, before it loſt its ſtrength by that curſe which man's diſobedience brought it under, while it was impregnated by the bleſſing of God; and as he had this in poſſeſſion, ſo he had heaven in expectation, a noble, and ſeemingly unfailing, proſpect of a paradise above. This was Adam's eſtate; and this ſhould have been the eſtate of his poſterity, his deſcendants: but all is forfeited by ſin. Had Adam ſtood, he had then tranſmitted to us a goodly heritage, and none ſhould have had reaſon to complain of his poſſeſſion: but now we have by ſin forfeited all; we have no eſtate, no heritage. O finners! by your ſin ye have loſt the right to all your enjoyments here, and all proſpect of any comfortable being hereafter. Adam, when he ſinned, was baniſhed out of paradise, and that was guarded againſt him.

But ye will ſay, We are not forfeited; for we enjoy houſes, lands, meat, and clothing, and a great many other ſuch things: how can ye then ſay, that we loſt all? by what means get we theſe things? I anſwer, (1.) A rebel ſentenced to die is by the king allowed food, raiment, and other neceſſaries, for the ſuſtenance

of nature, till the time of the execution come: just so God, for holy ends not now to be inquired into, having reprimanded man for a while, suffers him to enjoy some such things, till he see meet to put the sentence of death in execution, and then the forfeiture will take place. (2.) We say, ye have no right to any enjoyment, save that just now mentioned. The grant whereby innocent man held all his possessions was the covenant of works: this was the ground of his security as to what he possessed, and the foundation of his hope as to what he further expected. Now, this covenant being broken by your sin, ye have no more right to any enjoyment. (3.) As ye have already lost the right and title, so ye have lost the sweetness of all your enjoyments. Ye toil and sweat, but ye are not satisfied: "What profit have ye of all your labour under the sun?" It is not able to give you satisfaction. This we have at great length made appear in our lectures upon Ecclesiastes. (4.) To conclude, in a very little ye will be entirely deprived of all. The day of the execution of the sentence draws on, when God will snatch all your enjoyments out of your hands. Now, indeed, some have more, and some have less, according to the pleasure of the great Judge, who has allowed every one their portion, till the day of execution come, and then all will go.

2dly, God, at whose instance ye have been impeached of sin, will have satisfaction in the death of the offenders. God threatened death to Adam in paradise: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," or "dying thou shalt die," Gen. ii. 17.; and "the soul that sinneth shall die," saith the Lord by the prophet, Ezek. xviii. 20.; "for the wages of sin is death." This is not to be limited to a natural death; no, but is of a huge extent. It takes in a threefold death, a death spiritual, natural, eternal. Man in innocency had a threefold life, either in possession or prospect, (1.) A *spiritual life*, which consisted in the union of his soul to God, in a measure suited to his present condition, and in the fitness of all his faculties and powers for acting and doing what was well-pleasing unto God. (2.) A *natural life*, which

which consisted in the union of soul and body. That lovely pair, his innocent soul and pure body, were matched together, and linked to one another, by a thought surpassing art; so that they had a most near alliance, being compacted into one person by a tie so strong, as to occasion a notable sympathy; and yet so secret, that no eye could ever see, no mind ever discover, this imperceptible chain. (3.) Man had then a fair prospect of *eternal life*, in a full and close union to God, never to admit of any interruption, or of any such interposition, as was between man and him in this lower world. But now upon his sin, he lost all by virtue of the primitive threatening of death to the soul that sins. Answerably hereunto, God will have you punished with a threefold death. O sinners! his heart will not pity you, his eye will not spare you. You are already condemned to die: "He that believeth not," that is, every sinner by nature, "is condemned already," says the Spirit of God. Nay more, ye are not only condemned already, O sinners! but moreover the execution is begun; the fire of God's wrath is already kindled against you; there are some drops begun to fall, before the shower come that will entirely destroy you. [1.] You are *spiritually dead*. I speak to all of you who are not savingly changed by grace, being begotten again from the dead, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You are dead in trespasses and sins, utterly unmeet to entertain communion and fellowship with God. As a dead man cannot speak, act, or exercise any vital power; so neither can ye act any thing that is spiritually good, or well-pleasing to God. This is a heavy punishment, though as yet ye be not sensible of it. [2.] Natural death, that consists in the separation of the soul from the body, is already begun. Every disease that seizes upon our bodies is like the "posts that run to meet another, to tell the King of Babylon that his city was taken at one end," Jer. li. 31. Every disease makes a breach in our walls, and tells that all will in a little fall down flat. Your very life is nothing else but a succession of dying: every day and hour wears away part of it; and so far as it

is

is already spent, so far are ye already dead and buried. Diseases and natural decays do lay close siege, as it were, to your bodies, routing their guards, battering the walls of your flesh, and forcing your souls to quit the out-works, and retire into the heart: and every minute, ye have reason to fear that ye may be taken in, and become a prey to death. In one word, O sinners! ye are the mark at which justice shoots its arrows. Do not ye see sometimes the arrow flee over your head, and slay some great person, your superior? Sometimes it lights at your feet, and kills a child or a servant, or those who are inferior; sometimes it passeth by your left-hand, and kills an enemy, at whose death possibly ye rejoice; and anon it strikes the friend of your right-hand; and possibly the very next arrow may strike you dead, be ye young or old, eternally dead, and hurry you into hell.

3dly, Your death will not do all; this punishment reaches your honours. Rebels are wont to have their honours torn: and so God has determined with respect to you, O sinners! Man was in his first estate advanced to a high dignity, he was the friend as well as subject of God; and he was his deputy in this lower world, as the Psalmist tells us: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea," Psal. viii. 5.—8. Thus was he crowned with glory and honour: but now, O sinners! the sentence is past against all the race of sinful Adam: thus saith the Lord, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown from the head of sinners. The crown is fallen indeed, from your head. Now, tell me, O sinners! do not you already feel the direful effects of this part of your punishment? These beasts which were once man's subjects, are now turned his enemies, because he is God's enemy. Do not the very flies insult you, and make sometimes your life uneasy? Do not the wild beasts of the field terrify you? Are not some of them daily making inroads upon you, devouring your cattle, carrying

rying away your substance? And even these which are most serviceable, and seem to retain something of their respect to man, sometime their Lord, do they not rebel? Doth not the horse sometimes throw his rider, the ox gore his owner? Thus man has lost his honour; nay, now he who once did reign is become sin's slave, and thereby falls under the lashes of sin and Satan's slaves. This, O sinners! is a part of your punishment.

4thly, This will not yet satisfy justice. God pursues the quarrel to posterity: "I am a jealous God," says he, in a threatening annexed to the third command, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children." Rebels children suffer with the fathers in all nations; and shall not rebellion against God be as severely punished as that which is against an earthly sovereign? If an Achan steal a Babylonish garment, and sin against the God of Israel, then he and his whole family shall fall, man, wife, and child; nay, and the very household-stuff, his ox and his asses. God will pursue the quarrel to a dreadful length. You may see this terrible tragedy described by God, in Joshua vii. 24. God will spare nothing that sinners have used. Because sinners have trode upon this earth, it must undergo the fire at the last day, before it can be freed from the bondage of corruption. O sinners, ye transmit a sad legacy to your wretched posterity! a legacy of which the distressed church, Lam. v. 7. heavily complains: "Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquities."

5thly, Once more; God pursues his quarrel yet further. He will have your names eternally ruined. "The memory of the wicked shall rot," Prov. x. 7. After he has killed your bodies and souls, and children; and ruined your estates, then he will kill your names, that there shall no remembrance of you be upon the earth, unless it be the stench of a rotten name. Thus will the Lord deal with you, O sinners! The whirlwind of the Lord, that goes forth with fury, will blow away all your enjoyments, turn you out of all your possessions. The Lord will banish you his presence. That
almighty

almighty arm that stretched out the heavens, will tear your souls from your bodies, and throw you headlong into perdition: the weight of infinite wrath will sink you down into the bottomless pit; and omnipotence will dig a grave for your memory, wherein it will eternally rot. For the greatness of your iniquity ye may expect this: "This is thy lot, the portion of thy measure from me, saith the Lord, because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood," Jer. xiii. 25. This is the satisfaction God requires: and think on it; this way will he be glorified in your ruin, if ye continue in your sins.

I have at some length proved you all to be offenders, that God demands a reparation; and what that reparation is, which he doth demand of his injured honour, I have at some length made appear; I now proceed, according to the method proposed,

FIFTHLY, *To demonstrate the reasonableness of this demand.* I have shewn your ways to be most unequal; now I come to shew, that God's ways are most equal, and that he acts very reasonably in demanding so high: and this will appear to the conviction of the most obstinate sinner, if the considerations we offer for clearing this be duly weighed. And,

1st, Let it be considered, *That sin deserves such a punishment*; and therefore it is very just to inflict it. Nay, I might perhaps run this a little higher, and assert, that therefore it would be unjust to require any less; any more easy punishment. That sin deserves it, is very plain, if we consider,

I. *Against whom it strikes.* This is the way of measuring offences agreed to all the world over, that the measure should be taken from the consideration of those against whom they strike. This we may observe in the laws of God, which enjoin that offences shall be punished according to the quality and condition of the offenders and the offended. The daughter of the high-priest, if she committed uncleanness, was to be burned without mercy, Lev. xxi. 9.; so was not every one who was guilty in that way. Again, he that
curseth

curseth his father and mother is adjudged to die, Lev. xx. 9.; so was not he that curseth his equal. The same measure is kept in our laws: if one kills his equal, then he dies; but there doth not thereby redound any injury to his posterity; but if a man kills the king, or makes any attempt against the government, then life, lands, name, and all goes. Now, if we consider in this case the quality of the offender, a poor mean worm, that dwells in cottages of clay, that has his foundation in the dust, that is crushed before the moth, that holds all of God; and then, on the other hand, consider him who is offended by every sin, not a prince or some great man, who is but flesh and blood at the best, but “the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, he who is a great God, and a great King, above all the earth: behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing; and Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.” To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? There is no proportion here. Now, if it deserve so severe a punishment that is committed against man, what must it not deserve that is committed against this God? As it were injurious to compare God to man; so it is injurious to compare the demerit of any offence committed against man, and the demerit of that which is committed against the great God.

2. Consider *the damage that sin doth*; and then we will see what sin deserves: we will see that the terrible punishment we have been discoursing of, is nothing too severe. If we consider man with respect to the creatures that are under him, the inanimate part of the creation, and the brutes; he was appointed to be their mouth, by which they should pay homage to their Creator; he was to be their treasurer, to pay in a revenue of glory for them to their Creator and Governor; but man by sin puts himself out of all capacity
for

for this ; he lays an ill example before his fellow-creatures. But all this is nothing, when compared with the injury he doth to God by every sin. This, if thoroughly and well understood, would for ever clear the justice of God in punishing sin with eternal punishment. True it is, indeed, what Elihu says, “ If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him ? or if thy transgression be multiplied, what dost thou unto him ? ” Job xxxv. 6 ; that is to say, God lies beyond our reach ; we cannot by our sins detract from, as neither can we by our holiness add to his happiness : but this is no proof that we do him no injury. A rebel clapt up in prison, or in the hand of the king’s guards, is not able to reach the prince’s person, nor render him dissatisfied ; yet he may then injure him, and doth it, when he unjustly reflects upon his government. Just so is it with sinners : indeed they cannot scale the walls of heaven, they are not able to climb over the eternal ramparts, which raise the fence of the Almighty’s sacred throne, and there stab his person ; but yet they injure him in his name and honour, and even in his life, by every sin : it is intended murder ; and this is death by the laws of God and man. That among men it is not always punished so, is only because it is not always discovered ; for when it is discovered by words, or overt though ineffectual actions, it is punished. Every sin spits upon God’s holiness, tramples upon his authority, brands his wisdom with folly, denies his goodness, and braves, and gives a defiance to his power : what punishment then can be too great for this ? Now sure,

3. Sin deserves it, if we consider *the obligations that are by every sin trampled upon*. Every one will own, that the sins of children against their parents, of servants against their masters, of subjects against their lord, and the wives against their husbands, are sins of a black hue, a crimson dye, and deserve therefore a very severe punishment ; and accordingly are so punished in all nations : but all these obligations are none to what we all lie under to God ; so that there is
more

more perfidy, falsehood, and treachery, in all our sins against God, than in any of those: therefore it is but just that there should be a proportion kept betwixt the offences and the punishment.

4. That sin deserves such a punishment, is the *judgement of God*; and we know that his judgement is always according to truth. It is not the mistaken notion of a man, who in the most momentous truths may trip; but it is the judgement of the only wise God, who is a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed. I think we need not go so far back at present for a proof of this as the penal sanction of the law, so long as we have the death of Christ, as an evidence of it, nearer hand. If an infinite person, standing in the sinner's room, must, for his sins, have such a load of wrath laid upon him, what less must the punishment of the sinner himself be than eternal wrath? None can pretend to believe the truth of the gospel, and question the justice of God in punishing sinners eternally; for is it not ridiculous to admire divine severity in the eternal punishment of wicked men, and not to attend to infinite justice punishing severely his own beloved Son? What wonder is it that wicked men should be for ever tormented for their own sins, if the most righteous Son of God suffered for the sins of others? He that, without a reproach to his goodness, could endure his most dear Son to suffer so long as one hour, will much better endure unjust sinners to be tormented with eternal punishment.

5. That sin deserves such a punishment, is not only the judgement of God, but *of men too*. The common reason of mankind speaks its justice. This appears by the sentiments the heathens had of this matter. They had not a revelation to guide them, and therefore had wild fancies about the manner of these punishments, which they judged to be eternal; but that there were such punishments, and that they were just, they had no doubt. Hence it was that their poets did condemn Tantalus to such a place, where he should have rivers just washing up to his lip, and yet should not to be able to drink of them; and so remain eternally under the violence of thirst,
with

with this gnawing aggravation, that he had waters just at his very lip. But we may yet have a more clear proof of the judgements of men in all nations, in their sanctions of human laws. Do not all of them for crimes, condemn to perpetual imprisonment, or to death? The one is an eternal punishment of loss of life, and all its concomitant advantages; and this punishment is inflicted without respect to a future life; as appears in this, that such laws are execute upon them, of whom none has reason to think that they shall have any share in the advantages of a future life. And that perpetual imprisonment is not eternal imprisonment, is not because that it is thought unjust, but because neither the law-makers, who put it into execution, nor they who break it, live to eternity.

6. That sin deserves eternal punishment, appears from the *acknowledgement of the punished*. This is a very strong argument; for although they who are yet wallowing in their sins, and are lulled fast asleep in the lap of carnal security, will not acknowledge so much; yet if we inquire at those whom God has awakened, and to whom he has given a discovery of the exceeding sinfulness of their sin, whether with a prospect of mercy or not, they will all with one mouth acknowledge that sin deserves eternal wrath. Those whom the Lord deals with, in order to their conversion, will all subscribe to the justice of God, should he damn them eternally. I do not say that they will be content to be damned; but they will own that God were most just should he deal so by them. And not only is it so with them, but even with those who are sunk to the utmost in black despair. If we listen to a Spira, who has laid aside all hopes of mercy, we shall hear him crying out in the anguish of his soul one day, “I am sealed up to eternal wrath: I tell you I deserve it; my own conscience condemns me, what needeth any other judge?” and another day, again, we may hear him crying out, “Though there were not another damned, yet God is just in making me an example to others; and I cannot justly complain. There is no punishment so great but
I

I have justly deserved it." These considerations do sufficiently evince, that sin deserves eternal punishment; and therefore God has good reason to demand it.

2d'y, Our great Lord and Master has great reason to punish you with such a punishment, not only because your offences *deserve it*, but because *he, in the institution and promulgation of his laws, did actually declare that he would so punish the transgressors of it*. Sin and eternal punishment were then linked together. With the same very breath that God said to Adam, thou shalt keep my commandments, he also said to him, "In the day that thou breakest them, thou shalt surely die." That the annihilation of his soul should be there intended, is contrary to scripture, and has no ground in reason; and if only temporal death is meant, then this would be implied, to say, Thou shalt be rewarded with eternal life if thou sin; which were ridiculous to imagine. That therefore which is intended is certainly eternal death. And God having annexed this penalty to the violation of his law, there is great reason that it should be punctually executed. For,

1. *The honour of his wisdom requires it*. To what purpose should this penalty be annexed, if it were not on design that it should be put in execution? or at least it would reflect upon his wisdom, if it might not with great reason be put in execution.

2. *Justice to his honour*, as he is the righteous Judge of the earth, calls for the execution of this law. What, I pray, is the business of one placed in that high station, if not to see laws executed, to see the compliers with them rewarded, and the offenders condignly punished?

3. *Justice to the law* requires the punishment of sinners: for if the law in one part may be neglected, why not in all? The threatening, as well as the precept, has upon it the impress of the supreme authority; and therefore, as by the violation of the precept, so by the non-execution of the penalty, the honour of the law suffers. If the penalty be required, then the honour of the precept is repaired; but if the penalty be neglected,

glected, then the law is entirely affronted, and there is no reparation ; than which there can be nothing more unreasonable.

4. *Justice to on-lookers.* To neglect the punishment of offenders, is of dangerous influence to beholders ; it betrays them into one of two or three dangerous mistakes ; it has a tendency either to make them entertain light apprehensions of sin, or else to make them call in question, either the knowledge, power, or wisdom of God, and his zeal for his own glory : therefore justice to them requires that the penal sanction of the law be vigorously put in execution.

5. *Justice to God's faithfulness.* The honour of the divine veracity requires it. God engaged his faithful word for the accomplishment of the threatening ; therefore, either the truth of God must lie open to suspicion, or else the punishment must be inflicted upon you.

6. To add no more considerations under this head ; by annexing *eternal punishment* to the commission of sin, all the divine attributes were engaged to see it execute. Of the justice, wisdom, and sovereignty of God, it has already been made appear ; and it might with equal facility be evinced, as to the unchangeableness of God, his goodness, power, and knowledge ; therefore he has reason to demand so high a satisfaction.

3dly, Sin not only deserves that heavy and eternal punishment we have been discoursing of, and not only has God adjudged, by an irreverfible appointment, that it should be fo punished ; but we fay, moreover, that *God has juft reason to inflict it*, becaufe this appointment of God, linking fin and punishment together, is moft juft and equal. This puts it beyond all rational doubt, that God has reason to treat you as he will do. Now, the juftice of this penal fanktion, I fhall open to you in feveral confiderations. And,

1. This is plain from that which we have at great length difcourfed of already, in reference to the demerit of fin. We have proved, by many incontestible evidences, that fin deserves the highest punishment that can be inflicted. Now, juft authority can never be but juft,

just, in punishing a crime, or annexing a penalty to it, that is proportioned to its own nature; and this is plainly the case here.

2. *God has made this sanction*; therefore it is just. This, I think, needs no proof, the Judge of all the earth cannot do wrong, he is a God of truth, and without iniquity. Our ways may be unequal, his can never be so; for were God unrighteous, "how could he then judge the world?" says the apostle, Rom. iii. 6. His will is the measure of justice to us: "He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can say to him, What dost thou?" Dan. iv. 35. If once we quit the will of God for the standard and measure of justice, then we wander and lose ourselves, and are never like to find any other thing that can with any shadow of reason pretend to the place.

3. This appointment of God is most just, because it was made *in way of a contract*. There was a covenant between God and Adam. God did propose the whole matter to him; and the substance of it was this, Do, and live; Sin, and die. Man was content, and that upon deliberation, with the terms; and therefore the justice of God is clear in this matter.

4. God did *warn man before-hand of this punishment*; and therefore he is very just in the matter; which will appear very considerable, if we observe, that as man is unquestionably obliged to obey God, so God has an unquestionable right to command; and that not only upon account of his supereminent excellency, but on account of his creation, preservation, and innumerable benefits; therefore he commanding to man what is just and equal, may do it upon what penalty he pleases, without any shadow of injustice; as I shall make appear by this plain and familiar instance: I suppose the lord of a manor to have placed or made a precipice in some part of his land, and that he forbids his servant to go there, and tells him, if he do, he will be sure to fall there and be killed: Who would say that he were guilty of that servant's death, if the servant

should go there? And I say, God can with as little justice be charged with the death of sinners, or with severity, since he gives them fair warning. They chuse damnation, and their destruction is of themselves. This was perfectly the case of man at first; and that afterwards he fell under a fatal inability to abstain from sin, no more clears him, or makes God faulty, than it would clear the servant formerly mentioned, or make his master blame-worthy, if the way to that precipice lay stooping downward, and the servant should, upon the beginning of the descent, run with so full a career, that he were not able to halt till he had broke his neck. This, I suppose, would not reflect upon the master, that he did not remove that precipice, or alter the way. And this is the case between God and man.

5. Consider the *influence that this penal sanction has upon them that are saved*; and wherein we may see that God was most just in appointing it. It is the means to bring them to heaven. It moves ministers to preach: "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men," 1 Cor. v. 11. And it moves the hearers to accept of salvation, as appears from the frequent use our Lord makes of this argument. And in the original constitution of the law, it was designed as a mean, not only for the reparation of its violated honour, but also to deter men from breaking the law: therefore God is most just in the whole of his conduct in this matter; since the greater the penalty was, the more likely a mean it was to hold men in the way.

6. I thought to have further cleared the equity of this appointment of God, whereby sin is ordained thus to be punished, from the consideration of the necessity thereof, *in order to the government of the world*. If men have yet such boldness to sin, notwithstanding the severity of these punishments, what would they have done, if there had been only some light temporary punishment to be inflicted? This consideration would lead me too far from the subject in hand; therefore I but name it, and proceed to the

SIXTH and LAST general, which I proposed for the improvement

provement of this doctrine. I have unfolded, at some length, the crime charged upon you. I have proved, both in general and in particular, that ye have all sinned, and thereby *come short of the glory of God*. I have shewed what the satisfaction is which justice requires. I have likewise made appear, and have given you some account, how reasonable it is that justice should carry its demands so high. It remains now, that we shortly *represent your misery* from the whole. But here indeed I am at a loss how to begin; and if once I begin, shall find myself at no less a strait where to end. Sinners, I have proved you; and miserable I shall now endeavour to represent you, upon this account.

1st, If a *vast loss* can make you miserable, then indeed ye shall be so. Your loss can be imagined by none, but those who enjoy the advantages you lose, or those who are already in the place of torment, and have their eyes opened to see their own condition. It is such a loss, that you cannot from one place have a full prospect of it, I mean of that little portion of it which may be known without feeling: and therefore we shall give you some different views of it, as it were from distinct places, at each of which ye may see some, and but some small part of it.

1. I say your loss shall be great; for ye shall *lose the world, with all its comforts, delights, and satisfactions*. Are ye now possessed of a competent estate, a flourishing family, health of body, content of mind, and a fair stock of reputation? Ye shall lose all these things; and will not this be a vast loss to you? Are not these the things that bound your desires, and terminate all your wishes and inquiries? I fear they are so to most of you. They who have their portion only in this life, seek no more but these things. All the question with such is, "Who will shew us any good?" any worldly good; and if they lose these things, then indeed they lose all. They may say their gods are taken away; and what have they more? Whatever is desireable to the eyes, or pleasant to any of your senses, ye shall at once for ever and eternally be deprived of. And is not this a vast loss?

Since it must be so in many of your eyes, ye shall lose that which ye valued above heaven and Christ. It may be, some of you cleave so fast to a present world, that neither the promises nor the threats of the gospel can induce you to quit your hold : yet, notwithstanding of all your endeavours to keep them, ye shall lose them all. Death will part you and them : and O how great will this loss be to you who have no more !

2. When God punishes you, ye will sustain *the loss of the gospel*, which now ye enjoy : and this will appear to be a vast loss then. The gospel has in it treasures for the poor, eyes for the blind, feet for the lame, understanding for the simple, peace for rebels, pardons for condemned malefactors, a title to heaven for the heirs of hell, life for the dead, happiness for the miserable : and to lose all these, what loss can be comparable to this ? This loss, when it is now spoken of, may appear small to you : but the day is coming, when ye will learn to put a high value upon it, after ye have lost it.

3. Ye will sustain a vast loss ; for infallibly *ye lose heaven*, if ye continue in your sins : and who can tell what a loss that is ? Who can sound the depth of these “ rivers of pleasure that are at God’s right-hand for evermore.” Who can weigh that “ far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ?” Who can take the dimensions of that vast “ inheritance of the saints in light ?” Who can declare the sweetness of the fruits of that paradise of pleasure ? What eye can discern or let in just apprehensions of that bliss-giving sight, which the saints enjoy above, where there are no clouds to obscure the face of their sky ? Well, whatever there is of these things, all these ye lose. O immense loss indeed !

We only name these things, designing now to hasten to another subject. Would ye know how great a loss ye sustain in the first instance mentioned ? We may send you to those who are wallowing in the delights of the sons of men, and who are glutting themselves with a present world. They will tell you strange things of your loss by the removal of worldly comforts. If ye would understand how great your loss is by the re-

removal

moval of the gospel, go to those who have got a heart to embrace it, and they will give you a surprising account of their enjoyments by it. But who can tell what heaven is? they only who have been there; and even scarce they; for surely they feel, they enjoy more than what can be expressed. Now, all these things ye lose. But need I say more? Ye lose God; ye lose your own souls; and if ye lose your own souls, and gain a world, what profit have ye? yea, ye sustain a vast loss: what must then your loss be, when ye not only lose your own souls, but lose with it all that is in this world, all that is good and comfortable in that which is to come?

2dly, As ye sustain a great loss, so ye must suffer a *vast torment*. The former particular, viz. the punishment of loss, I did only touch at, because I had occasion, in the doctrinal part, to discourse a little of it: but here, when I come to speak of the punishment of sense, I shall be a little more large, yet so as not to exceed the bounds of this day's discourse. O sinners! miserable are ye, if huge, vast, and intolerable torment can make you so. A view of your misery upon this account, I shall give you in a very few particulars.

1. If ye would understand what your case is eternally to be, ye must consider *what of you it is that is to be eternally tormented*. Our Lord tells us of both soul and body as being destroyed in hell, Matth. x. 28. "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." And this gives us to understand what is to be the subject of these torments sinners are to sustain. It is not a finger or a toe; it is not a tooth or a joint: no; but it is the whole man, soul and body, that are to be tormented. And how will ye be able to endure this? If a drop of scalding water fall upon your hand, ye are ready to cry out of intolerable pain: but how will ye then bear it, when a full shower of brimstone, a deluge of burning wrath, will fall upon the whole man? Ye are not now able to hold your finger to the fire; how will you then endure, when soul

and body shall be cast alive into devouring fire and everlasting burnings? If now the trouble of one part of the body occasion so terrible disorder, what will your case be, when every faculty of your souls, every member, every joint, sinew, and artery of your body, shall be brim-full of wrath?

2. Consider, *who is the contriver of these torments.* There have been some very exquisite torments contrived by the wit of men, the naming of which, if ye understood their nature, were enough to fill your hearts with horror: but all these fall as far short of the torments ye are to endure, as the wisdom of man falls short of that of God, who is “wise, and will bring evil,” Isa. xxxi. 2. Infinite wisdom has contrived that evil, these torments, which are to be the eternal portion of all impenitent sinners. If man can find out a rack, a gridiron, a furnace, heated seven times, for tormenting such as he has a mind to punish; what shall we conceive to be the inventions of infinite wisdom, when it is set on work to contrive a punishment for sinners? Wisdom, infinite wisdom, well knows the frame both of soul and body; it knows what faculty of the one or the other are of most exquisite sense, and what torments can work upon them. God shews himself wise, not only in bringing evil upon sinners, but in contriving it, so that it shall surpass what creatures can inflict.

3. Consider, *who is the inflicter of these torments;* and this will give us a strange prospect of the misery of those who fall under them. It is God, by his own immediate hand. And from this the apostle represents the misery of such who shall fall under this punishment: “For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, and I will recompense, saith the Lord: and again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” Heb. x. 30. 31. Should God but give a commission to some creature to torment us, if it were but to a flea to leap into the eye, and there to abide, how great would this torment be! But much more terrible would your case be, if God should set his wisdom a-work, to find out
and

and invent what mixture of torments from creatures would be most exquisite, and then inflict these upon you: this could not but make your case miserable; since the nature of man is capable to receive comfort or disquietment from every creature; and God knows, not only our frame and make, but that of all the other creatures; and therefore understands what might contribute most to our disquiet and torment. Should God deal thus, it would make very exquisite torments indeed; but all this were nothing to his own immediate hand and power. His little finger is more terrible than the united power of all the creatures. As there is no searching out of his understanding, so there is no searching out of his power who is the inflicter, the author of the eternal torments of sinners, “who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,” 2 Thess. i. 9. But of this more anon.

4. Consider, *what it is that engages infinite power, and sets on infinite wisdom*; and this will give you yet a more terrible representation of your misery. If it were only justice, ye might expect that there might possibly be some abatement made; but it is anger, fury, the height of fury, that sets wisdom a-work to contrive, and power on work to effect your misery; and therefore miserable ye must of necessity be, beyond thought or expression. A remarkable scripture to this purpose we have in Nahum i. 2.—6. “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers. Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence; yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who

can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." This is a scripture so very remarkable, that we cannot pass it, without offering you a few observations for clearing it a little. And, (1.) Here ye may see the certainty of sinners being punished. If ever ye escape who continue in your sins, it must either be, because God will not, or because he is not able to punish you: but here ye see, that he is both able and willing, ver. 2. "The Lord is great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked." By no means will he let them go who continue in their impenitency. (2.) Ye see what the punishment of the wicked is: "He will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." It is expressed by vengeance and by wrath. It is a punishment that is the effect of wrath and revenge, and is to be continued by wrath that is kept in reserve for that purpose. (3.) Ye have that which is the inflicter of this punishment; it is the great power of God. (4.) Here ye have that which sets this power on work to punish the wicked: it is jealousy; "Now, jealousy is the rage of a man," Prov. vi. 34.; and jealousy in God is the rage of God. (5.) Here you see the awful effects of this rage of God: "The Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth." The expressions being doubled, intends the signification, and shows the certainty of it. (6.) To represent, if possible, the terribleness of this revenge, in a yet more lively manner, it is added, "The Lord revengeth, and is furious." (7.) The terribleness of this appearance of God against sinners, is further declared by a description of God's power, described in its effects upon the inanimate creatures; as if he had said, Look how terrible the case of sinners is like to be, when God begins to take vengeance on them, and to revenge himself by that power, which by a rebuke drieth up the sea and the rivers, that makes Bashan and Carmel to languish, that melts the hills, and makes the earth to quake. The power of God was put forth in a very remarkable manner, in creating the world; but it is exerted in a more remarkable manner,
in

in punishing the wicked : herein is his power, even the glory of his power, manifested ; for ye are to be punished “ with everlasting destruction from the glory of his power.” The power of man produces greater effects, when anger and fury make him strain, as it were, every sinew and nerve, than when he is cool, and in a sedate composed frame : a Samson in such a case pulled down the pillars of the house. What shall we then conceive will be the effects of God’s power, when the heat of anger and fierce indignation and fury excites and acts it ? May I not conclude this consideration with that of the prophet in the 6th verse, “ Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger ? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.”

3dly, As your loss is great, and the punishment ye are to undergo great, so *both these will come upon you in one day* ; and this is a terrible aggravation of your misery. In a moment all the enjoyments of earth, all the gospel-privileges, and all the hopes of future bliss, which impenitent sinners have, will vanish ; and then, even then, at that very instant, will God appear, with his face full of frowns, his heart full of fury, his hand full of power, and all directed towards sinners. It is remarkable, in the sentence at the last day, that with the same breath, at the very same instant, they are bid depart God’s presence, Matth. xxv. 41. they are likewise sent into everlasting burnings.

4thly, As both will come at once, so they both will come *suddenly and surprisngly*. This extremely increases your misery. Sudden destruction, and surprisng destruction, is, on that very account, double destruction. It may be said, that your damnation lingereth not, 2 Pet. ii. 4. As Christ comes quickly, Rev. xxii. 20. so he comes “ in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel,” 2 Thes. i. 8. It is sudden, because it comes at a time when it is not expected. Many of you possibly may be putting the evil day far away ; and yet ye cannot tell how near it may be to some of you. Who

can tell but some who this day are here in God's presence, may be in the pit before the next Sabbath? But whether it be so or not, we are sure it is not long to the time when all of you who remain impenitent shall be sent down to the sides of the pit. It is sudden also, because usually this ruin comes when the quite contrary is expected; when "they say, peace, peace, then sudden destruction," Thef. v. 3. When the fool was singing a requiem to his own soul for many years, then that very night all this misery comes upon him, Luke xii. 20. And this was a great aggravation of his misery. A blow given when the contrary is expected, is doubly stunning.

5thly, As all these things, all the losses, all the torments we have been speaking of, come suddenly and at once, so *they all are inevitable*. Impenitent sinners cannot by any means escape them. For,

1. God has engaged that sinners shall be punished. He will not at all acquit the wicked. He has passed his word upon it, he "swears in his wrath, that impenitent sinners shall not enter into his rest," Heb. iii. 18. Therefore they may expect that he will be as good as his word.

2. God cannot change: there is no "variableness nor shadow of turning with him," Jam. i. 17. He continues unalterably the same: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed," Mal. iii. 6. There is the clear side of the cloud to his own people: and, upon the other hand, it may be inferred, "I am the Lord, I change not;" therefore ye who have continued impenitent shall be turned into hell.

3. Ye are not able to ward off the blow. The apostle observes, "That the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man," 1 Cor. i. 25. The weakest effort of God against man is enough utterly to ruin him: "Lo, at the rebuke of his countenance we perish," Psal. lxxx. 16. He can look upon one "that is proud, and abase him;" and his eye can cast about rage and destruction, Job xl. 11.—13.

If a look can ruin us, much more the breath of his nostrils: "By the breath of his nostrils we are consumed, and by the blast of him we perish," Job iv. 9. Now, if ye be not able to stand against his look, his breath, the blast of his nostrils, far less against his finger, which ruined Egypt by divers plagues; and yet much less against his fist, Ezek. xxii. 13. Whose heart can endure, whose hands can be strong, in the day when those hands that measure the waters in the hollow of them, that span the heavens, comprehend the dust of the earth, and take up the isles as a very little thing, shall begin to crush, and squeeze, and grip him? far less is any able to withstand, when God lays on the weight of his wrath, which presseth them hard, as it did Heman; or when he runs upon them, like a mighty giant, with his full force, as a man doth upon his enemy, Job xvi. 14. In this case, neither ye yourselves nor any creature can help you; therefore your misery is inevitable.

6thly, As your misery is inevitable, so *it is eternal*. It is not for a day, or a year, or a month, or an age, nay, nor for millions of ages; but for ever. It is everlasting destruction, everlasting burnings, ye are to dwell with; the worm dies not, the fire goeth not out; the smoke of your torments shall ascend for ever and ever. If one *ever* will not do it, ye shall have more of them. Here indeed is misery, exquisite misery; and ye would do well to think on your escape.

We have now, for eight Lord's days, insisted upon this subject; and may we not conclude with the prophet, "Who hath believed our report?" Who among you all, who have been our close hearers upon this subject, are yet convinced of sin? I fear, very few, if any. If there be but one soul among you all, that is awakened to see its sin and misery, the news we are next to bring will be welcome to such; and we hope the Lord will grant them that which they long for.

But to the generality, who are yet fast asleep, and who are as insensible as ever, we shall say a few words. And, (1.) We say to you, Have ye not

heard what we have charged you with? and what answer ye to all? I am sure ye can answer nothing that is of weight. And if ye be not able to answer a man like yourselves, think how mute ye will be, when ye come before our great Lord and Master, seated upon the great white throne. (2.) What mean ye, O sleepers? Is it now time to be sleeping, when ye cannot tell but the next moment ye shall sink irrecoverably into the immense ocean of the eternal and intolerable wrath of God? (3.) We cannot tell but this your stupidity may provoke God to that degree against you, that ye shall never have a warning more. How terrible will your case be, if he shall say, Never fruit grow upon these barren and unfruitful sinners any more; or if this day he shall give death a commission, Go to yonder obstinate sinners, whom I by my servants have long been dealing with, in order to bring them to a conviction of their danger, arrest them, bring them immediately to me, and I shall awaken them, but not to their advantage. How will your hearts ache, your ears tingle, and your spirits fail, when ye hear the dreadful sentence pronounced! Matth. xxv. 41. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now, if ye would evince this, awake in time, and flee to Jesus Christ: hasten your escape, before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you.

END OF PART FIRST.

THE

THE

GREAT CONCERN OF SALVATION.

PART II.

MAN'S RECOVERY BY FAITH IN CHRIST ; OR, THE CONVINCED SINNER'S CASE AND CURE.

Acts xvi. 29. 30. 31.—*Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and fell down before Paul and Silas ; and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

WHEN we began to discourse to you from Rom. iii. 13. we observed, that there are three questions in which man is principally concerned, *What have I done ? What shall I do to be saved ? What shall I render to the Lord ?* He who knows how to answer these satisfyingly, cannot miss happiness, if he practise according to knowledge.

To the first we have returned answer at some length. We have shewn you, what ye have done, and what are the consequents of it : “ Ye have sinned, and so come short of the glory of God.” Now we shall proceed to the second question, *What shall we do to be saved ?* And as the ground of what we are to say upon this head, we have chosen the words read, in which both the question and answer are distinctly laid down.

In the text and context, we have the account of the
conversion

conversion of the keeper of the prison at Philippi, a city in Macedonia. In which there occur several things very considerable.

1. The person who was converted deserves to have a special mark put upon him. He is a heathen, one of the ruder sort, who was taught blindly to obey what he was put to, without ever inquiring whether right or wrong. He had, but the night before, put the apostle's feet in the stocks, and laid them in chains. When God designs to erect trophies to his grace, he is not wont to single out the moral, the wise, and polished sort of sinners, lest they should glory in themselves; but he pitches upon a Mary Magdalen that has seven devils dwelling in her,—a persecuting Saul,—a rude jailor,—“that no flesh may glory in his presence, 1 Cor. i. 26.—29.

2. The place where he is converted, is a prison, a place where ministers were not wont to come, but when they were brought there, that they might be kept from endeavouring the conversion of sinners. When God has a mind to have a sinner, he will not want means to accomplish his design. He can make a place that is designed to be a mean of suppressing the gospel, subservient to its propagation.

3. The exercise of the apostles under their confinement deserves a remark. A prison is not able to keep them from praising God. Sometimes they have been made to sing in a prison, who have been mourning when at liberty. God dispenses the largest, the richest comforts, when his people need them most. He can sweeten a stinking dungeon with the favour of his sweet ointments. He can soften hard chains, by lining them, as it were, with rich supplies of grace. He can relax the closeness of a prison, with his free Spirit, who brings liberty wherever he is. Their hearts are thankful for mercies that they enjoy; and God chuses that time to give them new ones: a strong proof that it is indeed a good thing to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Praise for old mercies brings new mercy with it. The liberal man lives by liberal devices.

4. The

4. The occasion of the jailor's conversion is an earthquake, which shook the prison, opened the doors, and made the chains fall off. A strange sort of earthquake, indeed, that loosed the prisoner's bonds. When the Lord designs to awaken a sinner, if less will not do it, a miracle shall be wrought.

5. It is worthy our observation, that the first influence of this providence was like to have proven fatal and ruining to the man whose salvation was designed. The first appearances of God for the salvation of sinners may have a very strange influence. They may be so far from bringing the sinners, whose salvation is designed, nearer, that they may seem to put them further off. The jailor would have killed himself.

6. Their frame and deportment under this dispensation is no less remarkable. Though the earth be shaken, their hearts are not so, but are in a blessed rest and repose. They know that God who shook the earth was their God, and gave it a commission not to wrong but to help them. This keeps the Christian calm under shaking providences; the seas may rage, and beat high, but the rock whereon he rests remains firm, and cannot be shaken. And a further proof of their frame we have in their regard to the jailor's safety. Some would have thought it a happy occasion to make an escape; but they take care of the keeper's life, though it should be to the endangering of their own. They do good to enemies, and love them that hate them.

7. Their words to the jailor are remarkable: "Do thyself no harm." They seasonably step in for preventing of sin; they represent the sin so as it might appear the more hateful; they remove the temptation. Herein they leave us an example: if we would prevent the ruins of others, we must step in seasonably. Had they delayed a little longer, the man had been gone past all remedy. If we would discover sin so as to make it appear sinful, we must represent it under those forms which are most likely to engage sinners to renounce it: "Do thyself no harm." Self-preservation is the prime dictate

dictate of nature. For one to destroy himself, is to act cross to the very foundation of reason, which leads to the use of all means that have a tendency to self-preservation. And then they remove the temptation. Those who would effectually dissuade sinners from sin, must let them see that all the grounds they go upon are mistakes. The man supposed they had been gone, and that he would be punished for them; and to evite this imaginary danger, he would have really ruined himself. Thus sinners, to evite imaginary evils, run upon real ones: and to gain imaginary advantages, they lose the true gain. And therefore ministers or others, in dealing with them, should study to undeceive them in this matter: "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here."

Here some may inquire, how they saw him, when it was now night, and he did not see them? To this I answer, there might be either moon-light, or a candle in the uttermost room, whereby they might see what was done there; but yet he could not see into the remote corners of the innermost prison where they lay in chains.

8. We are to observe the influence that this check, this seasonable advice, that carried a reproof in its bosom, had upon the man; it convinced him, it put him into this trembling humble posture we find him in. Here I might observe many very considerable truths. Grace usually begins to work, when sinners have gone to a height, to an excess of sin. While the man is practising a bloody crime, and had murdered himself in design, then grace chuses to lay hold on him. When Saul was grown mad in his persecution, carrying it even to a foreign country, grace takes the opportunity. It doth not bespeak sinners in their lucid intervals; but, to shew its power, it reaches them when at their worst. Again, how mighty a change can a word work, when the Spirit of God concurs? He whom the earthquake did not deter from sinning, is overcome with a word: a word makes him that put their feet in the stocks fall down at their feet. One word opens the
man's

man's eyes to see what he never saw before, it fills his heart with concern about salvation, a thing he had not minded before; and the fears of that wrath that he little thought of, when he was just going to throw himself fearlessly in its hand by self-murder, now make him tremble, and fall down, and cry out, *What must I do to be saved?* It makes him pay reverence to them to whom he paid none before. He calls them Sirs, a term of honour and respect. A great change indeed! Here are a multitude of wonders. The terrors of God make a stout heart to shake. An unconcerned persecutor lays salvation to heart: and much concern in the heart discovers itself by its effects; it breaks out in the trembling of the body, and the anxious question in the text.

9. Here it is worth our while to inquire, what he was convinced of? That the man is convinced of danger, is plain; that it was not the danger of being punished for letting away the prisoners, is no less plain; he was now eased of any fears he had of this sort. In one word, he was convinced of his sin and misery. This is plain from the apostle's direction. It were blasphemy to think that they mistook his case: and the event puts it beyond all doubt, that they were not mistaken; for the cure is no sooner applied than it takes effect. The direction quieted the man's mind; and this makes it plain, that it was sin and misery that was now in his view; it was the curse of the law that was pursuing him. We need not spend time in inquiring what sins he was convinced of. That the sin of self-murder was the first, seems probable from what has been already discoursed. When the candle of the Lord fills the bosom of a sinner with light, the first sin that is seen is usually some great sin, and for most part the sin that was last committed. This sin was just now committed; and a monstrous one it was: but though this might be the first, we have no reason to think that it was this only; nay, we have reason to think, that the Lord gave the man a broad sight of all his other impieties. When the Lord lights a candle in a sinner's bosom, though
some

some one great sin occurs first, yet he quickly turns to others, and looks through the ugly heart that was never seen before, and sees it full of sins. The Lord tells sinners sometimes all that ever they did, by telling them one sin; and thus no doubt it was with the jailor. In the

10. And last place, the posture the poor man is in, when he puts the melancholy question, *What must I do to be saved?* deserves our notice; he is fallen upon his face; not to worship: this the apostle would not have permitted, as they did not upon other occasions; but either it is only a civil respect he pays them, after the fashion of supplicants in the eastern countries; or his trembling legs were not able to support his body; or partly the one, and partly the other, occasioned this posture.

The next thing that falls under our consideration, is the answer which the apostles give to the jailor's question, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* This contains the substance of the gospel; and it is this part of the words we principally design to insist on. I shall refer the explication of them, till such time as I have done with what is designed from the question; because I do not incline to burden you with too tedious an explication of the words.

From the question itself, then, according to the account just now given of its meaning, we shall lay before you, and discourse of this one doctrinal proposition.

DOCT.—“A sinner that is awakened, and soundly convinced of sin, and of misery, its necessary consequent and companion, will lay salvation seriously to heart; or will with concern put the question, *What must I do to be saved?*”

This we see is the first fruit of conviction in the jailor, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* This was the immediate result of conviction in the awakened converts,

verts, Acts ii. 37. And thus it will be with all who are indeed awakened and convinced of sin, unless there be some such concomitant circumstances as hinder it necessarily, of which anon.

In discoursing this doctrine, we shall,

I. *Premise a few things*, for clearing the doctrine.

II. *Inquire what this salvation is*, which awakened sinners seek after.

III. We shall endeavour *to give some account of this concern about salvation*, which is the result of conviction.

IV. We shall show, *why it is that convinced sinners do lay salvation to heart*. Now, of each of these in order.

I. We begin with the first ; and for clearing our doctrine, we offer to your consideration *a few propositions*.

First, Conviction is that sight of sin and misery which sinners get, when the Spirit of God presents them to the soul's view, in their nature, and their necessary connection with one another, together with the sinner's interest and concernment in them ; and that in so clear a light, that he cannot but take notice of them. *1st*, We say the Spirit of God sets sin and misery in their own nature before the sinner's eyes, in a clear light. There is no man who has not some apprehensions of sin and misery ; every one discourses of these things. Education, the dispensation of the word, and converse, have begot some notions, of sin in every body's mind : but for any clear discoveries of sin in its nature, few have them. The thoughts of men about sin, are, for the most part, like the thoughts of a man who never saw a toad with a full light : if any man should tell him how loathsome a creature it were ; and withal, in the twilight shew him one, when he could not distinguish it from a piece of curious jet lying by it, he would not be much affected with the account, nor would his thoughts of its deformity and ugliness answer the thing itself : but if the sun should dart down a beam of its light

light upon the loathsome creature, the man would see it, and it may be then his flesh would begin to shrink, and it would fill him with aversion. Just so is it with unconvinced sinners: they see sin, but it is only in the twilight of reason, education, or the external dispensation of the word; therefore they are not affected with it, nor do they see any peculiar deformity in it, until the Spirit of God let in a ray of supernatural light, and then this very quickly fills the soul with a view of its exceeding sinfulness, which makes the heart begin to shrink at it, and entertain it with aversion. The case is just the same with respect to that misery that is the consequent and companion of sin. Till once the Lord make bare his arm in the sinners view, and cast in some drops of wrath into his soul, with a certification that these are but drops, he will never be duly affected with it. *2dly*, The Spirit of God in conviction, not only presents sin and misery to the soul in their own nature, but likewise in their connection. God has linked sin and hell together. It always was so, but sinners do not always think so. Groundless apprehensions of God, as if he were all mercy, his patience in forbearing the execution of such as deserve double destruction, the subtle reasonings of Satan, the world, and deceitful lusts, either beget a persuasion, that sin and wrath may be separate, or else a suspicion that it is not certain that they are so linked together as the word says, and ministers aver. But the Spirit of God presents the two, in their dependence and connection, in such a light to the sinner's mind, that he cannot but believe that there is no parting them. *3dly*, The Spirit of God discovers to the sinner how deeply he is concerned in sin, and consequently in that woe that is linked to it. He not only lets him see the toad crawling at a distance, but upon his very clothes. He not only tells him that a certain man has sinned, as Nathan did in the parable, but applies the parable, and says, "Thou art the man." He not only lets the sinner see hell and sin linked together, but also lets them see the one end of the chain,

sin,

sin, fastened to himself: and all this he discovers with such clearness as obliges the sinner to notice it.

Secondly, We premise this, *That there are different degrees of conviction*, and that both as to its clearness, extent, and continuance. Upon some persons, some faint rays break in, and open their eyes somewhat above nature's power, letting them see a little more clearly. Upon others there come in full beams, discovering all distinctly, like the sun shining in his strength. Again, some discover only a few; others get under their view many sins; the light that shines upon some, is only like a flash of lightning, that fills the house with surprising light, and is presently gone again; or like the warm blinks of the sun before a shower, which are presently gone, and the sky filled with dark clouds. So various are convictions, as to their degrees of clearness, extent, and continuance. Those convictions which are only faint, and reach only to a few sins, we are not here speaking of, when we speak of a sinner that is thoroughly awakened or convinced.

Thirdly, *The issues and consequences of conviction* are no less various. Those fainter discoveries of sin, which many meet with in the dispensation of the word, or by awakening providences, usually carry people the length of some faint desires after deliverance; or if they rise higher, it seldom goes further than good resolutions, and there they die. The great flashes of light, which dart into the minds of some, very often miscarry, and turn to nothing. It is much with the persons who fall under them, as it is with a man that is awakened by a flash of lightning that darts into his bed: the noise of a thunder-clap, that comes along with it, may make the man start up before he is well awaked; and the light unexpectedly discovering many things, occasions a great confusion in his mind; but presently the noise is over, and the light gone, and then the natural temper of his body, the softness and ease of the bed he lies in, do invite him afresh to sleep; and though by the light that came in, he might see the room full of enemies, he is easily persuaded that all was but illusions of fancy,

fancy, and therefore he lays himself down again, and falls fast asleep. Thus it is with many: they hear the thunderings of the law in the preaching of the word; and sometimes the Spirit of God lets in a beam of light into the heart with them, that fills all the soul with fear, discovering the deadly foes that are lodged and secretly entertained there; this makes sinners start up, and it may be cry out; they are awakened out of their security, and raise themselves out of their beds. Now, one would think those persons in a great forwardness, and very well; but ere ever ye are aware, they are fast asleep again, "They return with the dog to the vomit, and with the sow that was washed, to the wallowing in the mire;" they fall in their own sins. Why, what is the matter? No degree of conviction can change the heart; and convictions of short continuance do rather fright than soundly awaken: therefore, when the natural inclinations of the heart presses on to a little more sleep; and Satan joining issue with this frame of the carnal mind, contributes his part, and endeavours to lay the soul asleep again, it cannot chuse but fall asleep; for the flash of light is gone, and the voice of the minister, or providence, by the noise of those solicitations, are banished his mind: and here ends the religion of a great many, who at communions, and some other occasions, appear to be something.

Fourthly, When we speak of a person's being soundly and deeply convinced, and of abiding convictions, we do not mean that there is any one degree of conviction that all come to who are saved; nor do we mean, that there is any degree of conviction which is always followed with faith: for those who are most deeply convinced, may one way or other miscarry and be lost. They may fall into despair, or they may fall in with false remedies; or they may wear out from under convictions, as some have done, and then turned openly profane. Nor do we intend that every one who believes, before he do so, must lie a long time under conviction; for we see the contrary in the jailor, who presently believes and rejoices, and so was very soon out from

from under his convictions. In fine, we only speak of deep and sound conviction, in opposition to those fainter ones, which seldom raise the persons that have them above the sluggard's desires, or some ineffectual resolutions: and when we speak of abiding conviction, it is in opposition to those flashes, which are presently gone, and have no other influences than to make half-awakened sinners start up, and cry out of their fears, but presently their fears are hushed, and they lie down, and fall as fast asleep as ever.

Fifthly, Our doctrine must only be understood of *those who are yet in time*; for damned sinners are indeed sufficiently awakened, yet cannot be said to put this inquiry, because they are abundantly convinced, that salvation is not to be expected. And the same is to be said as to those who have split upon the rock of despair, who, though they be not yet in hell, do judge, notwithstanding, their escape impossible. Our doctrine is not to be understood of those persons.

Sixthly, We say not in our doctrine, that convictions, however deep, or distinct, or abiding, issue in salvation, but in a serious concern about it. A person may be concerned, and put inquiries about that which he may never attain. He may ask, *What shall I do to be saved?* who shall never be saved. The young man in the gospel asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" yet, for any thing the scripture makes appear, he did never inherit it. These things being laid down for clearing the doctrine, we now proceed to the

II. Thing proposed, which was, to inquire *what that salvation is* which awakened sinners are concerned about, and which they seek after. Salvation, as every one knows, signifies a delivery from some one thing or other that is looked upon as dangerous, evil, and hurtful. None are capable of salvation, save those who are either under some such evil, or who are in danger of it; and then they may be said to be saved, when they are freed from it, or from the danger of it; when they are delivered from distresses, or when their safety is provided for. This is the plain import of the word. But
as

as it is used by convinced sinners, it takes in more: it not only respects deliverance from evil, but also the enjoyment of God and of good. It is frequently so used in scripture: salvation there is put, not only for deliverance from hell, but for the title to heaven; and hence believers are styled "heirs of salvation," Heb. i. 14.; where the apostle, speaking of the angels, says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" In one word, this salvation, that awakened sinners seek after, takes in freedom from sin, and a title to life; and hence the question in the text takes in other two.

First, What shall I do that I may get pardon of sin? The sinner sees that it is sin that draws hell upon him; therefore, unless this be pardoned, he despairs utterly of freedom from hell and wrath. The one he sees impossible to be attained, unless he can first get the other. As sin draws on hell, so pardon is linked to salvation from hell; or rather, salvation from wrath is linked to pardon. This we see plainly enough in the carriage of those convinced sinners, Micah vi. 6. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, and calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" This is the genuine language of a convinced sinner. Pardon he would have at any rate.

Secondly, The other question that is implied in the text, is that of the young man that came to Christ, Mark x. 17. "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Though pardon of sin, or freedom from wrath, be that which first occurs to an awakened sinner as the object of his desires; yet it is not all that he desires. Salvation would be very incomplete, if eternal life came not in to boot: for man might be forgiven, and yet be turned into nothing, or not admitted into the enjoyment of God. A rebel may be pardoned, and never be made a favourite. That this, as well

as the other, will be much upon the thoughts of a solidly convinced sinner, appears from several considerations.

1st, When God himself condescends to direct such, he makes something more than pardon necessary to them, Hof. xiv. 2. There the remnant of the Jews, whom the Lord has a mind to do good to, are told what they must seek from him when they return, and what was necessary in order to their happiness; not only must they have their iniquities pardoned, but they must have gracious acceptance with God, or admission into his favour. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Gracious acceptance with God is full as necessary, in order to the content of an awakened sinner, as pardon of sin.

2^{dly}, Awakened sinners, in all ages, have by their practice evidently discovered, that pardon alone did not seem sufficient to satisfy them. They have ever been seeking after some righteousness, wherein they might appear before God, and upon which they might found their title and claim to eternal life, as being sensible that pardon of sin alone could not do it. The Jews, who expected pardon from the mercy of God, yet "went about to establish a righteousness of their own, being ignorant of the righteousness of God," Rom. x. iii.

3^{dly}, In one word, a convinced sinner is one that is persuaded of a future state, and that the things of this world cannot make him happy: therefore he certainly means the same by this question, *What shall I do to be saved?* that we mean when we inquire, *What shall make us happy.* That every awakened sinner is convinced of a future state, is unquestionable, since the wrath he would so fain be freed from is chiefly in a future state: nor is it less plain, that it is complete happiness he aims at, and that all his trouble arises from the apprehensions of the inconsistency between his happiness and unpardoned guilt. That which only remains to be made appear, is, that pardon of sin alone cannot secure him of eternal happiness: and this is easily proven; for

there are two things which pardon doth not, and yet without them both it is impossible that man should be happy. (1.) Pardon of sin gives man no title, no claim, to eternal life and happiness. Innocence in Adam did not give him a title to heaven; can any, then, think that pardon now can give us a title? Eternal life was to be the reward of a course of obedience; nor had innocent Adam any pretensions to it, till such time as he had fulfilled a course of perfect obedience; far less, then, could fallen man have any pretensions to it, if only his sins were pardoned. (2.) Pardon of sin doth not make man meet for "the inheritance of the saints in light," for converse and intercourse with God. A convinced sinner will see, that there is no possibility of access for him to the enjoyment of God, unless there be an entire change wrought upon his nature; for how can two of so very different natures have any mutual complacency in one another? God can have none in the sinful nature of man; nor can the sinful nature of man have any in the holy nature of God: and it is what none can say, that pardon changes the nature of the person that is pardoned.

Now, to sum up what we have said under this head, when an awakened sinner puts the question, *What must I do to be saved?* he just means, How shall I obtain happiness? And this has these three in it: [1.] How shall I get my sins pardoned? [2.] How shall I get a title to eternal life? [3.] How shall I be made meet to be a sharer of the "inheritance of the saints in light?" Unless the mind be fully satisfied as to these three inquiries, it can never think itself secure or happy. That which comes, in the

III. Place, to be inquired into, is the *nature of this concern*, which is the genuine issue and necessary result of sound conviction. The nature and effects of this we shall unfold to you in the following particulars. And,

First, To lay salvation to heart, or to be concerned about it seriously, imports dissatisfaction with all other enjoyments, so long as the soul is in the dark about this. The man may possibly be possessed of great things in the world,

world, he may have all going there with him according to wish ; but if once he begin to take salvation to heart, he will find content of mind in none of these things. If such a one cast his eye upon his enjoyments, his riches, his honours, his pleasures, he will be sure to conclude, as Haman did upon another account, Esther v. 13. " Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I am at an uncertainty about salvation." These things cannot satisfy. What are they to a dying man? One that apprehends himself just ready to be swallowed up of the wrath of God, can relish no sweetness in any of these things, till once he be rid of the fears of that. Thus we see it is with the jailor ; he, who but a little before was so anxious about the prisoners, that he was ready to have made himself away for fear of their escape, turns now unconcerned about these things ; and we hear not, that, while all the doors were open, he made any provision for their security ; nor did he receive any satisfaction from understanding that they were all safe. This dissatisfaction is not such a discontent as some fall into who are no ways awakened, which leads them to fret, grudge, and repine, because their lot in a present world is not such as they would have it ; no, but it is such a dissatisfaction as flows from a solid persuasion that these things cannot afford happiness, or avert impending and threatened misery, which is so terrible in the eyes of the alarmed sinner.

Secondly, This concern about salvation imports *thoughtfulness about the threatened evils, and the means of preventing them.* When the soul has once got a view of sin and misery in their native colours, and sees misery threatening it, then this arrests the thoughts ; the mind can ply itself to no other thing with pleasure, but only to the ways and means of escape. If other thoughts intrude, they are presently rejected with contempt, as impertinent. The man indeed doth not deny it to be his duty to be concerned about other things ; but he thinks it not present duty, nay, he thinks it impertinent for him in his present condition. He is like one that lives in a besieged city : the enemy has made a breach

in the walls, and threatens a sudden irruption. In which case, the man knows very well he is obliged to attend to the duties of his ordinary calling and station; yet, in the present exigence, he doth not judge it pertinent to look that way; for if the enemy once enter at the breach, and sack the city, then he for ever loses the advantage of any thing that he gains by his other endeavours; therefore he rather turns his thoughts and contrivances to the reparation of the breach, or the pacifying of the enemy, if he find the place not tenable against him. Just so is it in the case of an awakened sinner: he knows, that if the wrath of God overtake him, he is for ever ruined; therefore his thoughts are wholly bent upon this, how he may be delivered from the wrath to come. Thus we the Psalmist employed under fears of impending hazard, Psal. xiii. 2. "How long (says he) shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" The apprehensions he was under of danger, put him upon many contrivances how he might rid himself of it. This is always the nature of concern; it arrests the thoughts, and keeps men fixed upon that about which the soul is concerned.

Thirdly, This concern has in it always *earnestness of desire after salvation*. Desire is ever implied in concern of mind; if a man be concerned how to avert a threatened evil, he desires freedom from it; if he be concerned how to obtain any good he wants, or retain what already he is possessed of, the soul ever immixes its concern with desire. This flows from the very nature of man's soul; for desire is nothing else but the cleaving of the rational soul to that which appears congruous, useful, and necessary to its happiness: so one that is awakened, and sees his hazard, will certainly desire salvation. Hence it is, that we find Christ the Saviour, among the other titles which are given to him in scripture, obtain that famous one, "The desire of all nations," Hag. ii. 6. 7. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will

will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." A Saviour will be desired by such of all nations as are awakened to see their need of him.

Fourthly, This concern about salvation imports *a commotion in the affections*. A soul full of thoughts about wrath threatened or felt, will have its affections employed about it, according to the account the judgement gives of it. If wrath be in any measure felt, it will fill the soul with grief and sorrow; if it be looked upon as approaching, it will make the man shake with fear; if it be represented as ruining and destructive to the soul, it will raise the highest hatred and aversion; if there be any apparent possibility of escape, it will excite hope in the soul. In one word, in a soul that lays salvation seriously to heart, every one of these passions will take their turn, according as occasion calls for them, or the present exercise of the mind requires and excites them. Were we discoursing of this concern about salvation only as it rests in the mind, we should hold here; but here we are considering it, not only as it is in its own nature, but as it doth manifest itself in its effects; and therefore,

Fifthly, We say, where the soul is thus uneasy for want of salvation, thoughtful about it, and going forth in desires after it, this inward temper and frame of the mind will discover itself in words and language. Words are the indications of the thoughts of the mind; and where the mind is swallowed up of concern about any thing, so as to have all its thoughts ingrossed by it, then of necessity the words must intimate so much. A man indeed may be concerned about something of less importance, and this not hold; but when salvation is laid to heart, then the tongue will be employed as well as the mind. It is storied, that the father's hazard made the tongue-tacked child speak; much more would its own hazard have done so. Our Lord says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," Matth. xii. 34.; and indeed where there is very much concern this way, it will not easily be retained; it will be

like a fire that cannot endure to be pent up close in a room, but must have a vent. Thus we see it was with the jailor. That which lay nearest the heart takes the start in discourse : *Sirs*, says he, *what must I do to be saved?*

Sixthly, This inward frame of soul, this concern of mind, *leads to the use of means*. As the tongue will be employed in inquiring, and the mind in contriving, so the rest of the man will be employed in following after, and using the means that are suited to give relief. Thus we see it was with the jailor ; he presently comes to the apostles, and seeks after direction and help from them. No doubt he had heard of them what the possessed damsel, in the 17th verse of this chapter, cries out, that they were “ the servants of the living God,” who made it their work, “ to shew men the way of salvation ;” and this makes him address himself to them, as the readiest expedient, the best means to get rid of his fears, and to be solved of the important scruple that now lay so near his heart.

Seventhly, Not only will this concern drive to the use of means, but it will *stir up to diligence in the use of them*. It will fire the soul with such activity, as will carry it over that natural sluggishness that is in the heart of man, as the natural and genuine fruit of the depraved nature. The unconcerned man, the man that is half awakened, will say with the sluggard, “ There is a lion in the way, and I shall be slain in the streets.” He will have a thousand trifling difficulties that will retard him, and keep him back ; but when one lays salvation to heart, he will soon get over all these, and fall close to the diligent use of means, in spite of all difficulties. Thus it was with the jailor : *He sprang in, and came trembling, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* He wanted not his own grounds to fear the success of his attempt. What ! might he think, will these men, whom I used so hardly but the night before, deal so kindly by me, as to help me in this miserable pinch ? And will that God, whom I have provoked to be my enemy, tender me any relief ? But wrath pursued him so close at the heels, that he durst not stay on any of these accounts, but
hazards

hazards the issue, be what it will. An awakened sinner is ever brought to the leper's resolution, 2 Kings vii. 3. 4. He sees an inevitable necessity of dying, if he sit still in his present condition, or if he join himself to his old friends; and therefore he will rather chuse to venture all upon the mercy of God, and his servants, whom he takes for his enemies, as knowing that there he has a peradventure for life, whereas he has not that same any where else.

Eighthly, This concern will discover itself, *by putting the soul in an active and waiting posture*, ready to receive any injunction, and to comply with it without delay. One that comes thus to be concerned about salvation, will not stand to dispute the terms proposed, but will greedily wait for, and readily accept of them, if practicable, if possible. Thus we see it is with the poor man in our text. He comes not to make, but accept terms. *Sirs*, says he, *what must I do to be saved?* as if he had said, I am resolved to scruple nothing ye shall enjoin me; tell me but what I shall do, and here am I ready to accept of any proposal that ye shall, in God's name, make unto me.

Thus we have unfolded unto you the nature of this concern which a solidly convinced sinner will have about salvation, and that from the text. I shall now proceed,

IV. To inquire, *Why it is that a solidly awakened sinner does thus lay salvation to heart above all things*. An account of this matter, we conceive, may be given in two or three propositions.

First, A *strong desire of self-preservation* is inlaid in the mind of man, and so closely woven in with his very frame and make, that there is no getting rid of it. Man may as soon cease to be, as cease to desire his own preservation: "No man yet hated his own flesh, but cherisheth it," says the apostle, Eph. v. 29. If that hold in the laxer sense, when a man's near relation is called his own flesh, it must hold much more when it is taken in the most strict and close sense, for a man's self.

Secondly, The necessary consequence of this desire of self-preservation, is an *utter abhorrence unto every thing*-

that is contrary to nature, or that appears destructive of it ; and every thing appears more or less terrible, as it is more or less hurtful to nature. These things which threaten us with utter ruin, cannot but fill the mind with terrible horror. Hence it is that death is called the king of terrors, because it threatens nature, not with some alterations of less importance, but with entire dissolution. Death of all things is the most opposite to nature ; and every other thing is more or less terrible, as it has more or less of death in it.

Thirdly, An awakened soul, a solidly convinced sinner, sees, by that light that God has let into his soul, *the wrath of God, the second death, ready to lay hold upon him, and ruin him eternally* ; therefore cannot but have the greatest aversion possible to it. What will put a man to flight, if not the sight of inevitable death behind him ? Then, if ever, will a man flee, when he sees himself brought to that lamentable pinch, that he must either flee or die.

Fourthly, Hence it inevitably follows, that such a man who sees himself in danger of utter ruin, in the case he is in, will, nay, of necessity must, lay himself out to the utmost, or be concerned above all for salvation from threatened ruin or misery. That principle of self-preservation, and that abhorrence of what is hurtful to nature, which are the springs of all a man's actions, cannot but carry the whole man, and all the powers of the man, to its assistance, when it sees that the whole is endangered.

Having thus shortly discussed what belongs to the explication of this truth, we proceed now to make some practical improvement of it. And among many uses that might be made of it, we shall only make one, and that is of trial.

Is it so, that a soundly convinced sinner will lay salvation to heart above all things else ? Then here is a touch-stone whereby ye may try whether or not ye be indeed convinced of sin, and whether soundly or not ; and, in the name of God, we obtest you to put this to trial. For,

First,

First, Unless ye know whether ye be convinced of sin or not, ye cannot know whether ye have got good of all that we have discoursed to you formerly. This we know, that ye are either better or worsed by it; for "as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, saith the Lord, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Isa. lv. 10. 11. We have spent many sermons on this design of conviction; and now ye are concerned to try, and we are concerned to try, what has been the fruit of them. If ye be not yet convinced of sin, then ye have lost the advantage of all that has been said on this head.

Secondly, Try this fairly, we obtest you; for if ye be not convinced, ye are like to lose the advantage of all that is to be said from the text we are now entering upon. We shall, if the Lord will, from this scripture, hold forth and make offer of Christ Jesus our Lord, as the only Saviour of lost sinners: and if ye be not convinced soundly of sin, ye are like to lose the advantage of such offers; for none will welcome or entertain them, save only such as are convinced of sin.

Thirdly, Try, for the Lord's sake, *whether ye be convinced of sin or not;* for not a few wofully deceive themselves in this matter. They take that general and unconcerned acknowledgement of sin, which every one is led to by custom, education, or some such way, for that solid conviction which is necessary in order to our cordial acceptance of the gospel; and this deceit is of most dangerous consequence, because it lies near the foundation, and a crack there must of necessity be fatal and ruining.

That ye may be at a point in this matter, we shall again run over the several parts of that description we gave of this concern about salvation, which we would now have you to try yourselves by.

But before we enter upon this trial, there is one sort of persons we would set by, as not concerned in it; and that is, such as are openly profane, drunkards, swearers, liars, whoremongers, thieves, and the like. It were gross folly to make a trial of such who have their mark upon their foreheads. Those monsters are so far from being concerned about salvation, that they seem concerned to make their own damnation sure; in as far as they take the plainest, the surest, and straightest course to ruin their own souls. As their damnation lingers not, so it will be just, because they run upon a seen evil. They deserve scarce compassion, who can tell that he "who doth such things is guilty of death," and yet not only do, "but take pleasure in them that do them." To endeavour to make a discovery of such persons, by an application of narrow and searching marks, were as if we did busy ourselves in separating huge stones from corn by a fine sieve, when it were much more easily done with the hand. These we set aside in the entry, because their sins go before them into judgement. But besides these notorious sinners, there are others who are no less strangers to solid conviction than they, upon whom nevertheless it is something more hard to prove it. And therefore, for the discovery of such, we shall now proceed to deal a little more closely with your consciences; and since your concernment in this matter is so great, as we just now did shew it to be, we obtest you to be serious in this matter, which is, past all peradventure, to turn either to your eternal advantage, or to your eternal disadvantage.

Ye all do profess yourselves convinced of sin. But now, if it be so, I demand of you, in God's name, have ye ever to this day been *concerned about salvation*, or, laid it to heart above all things? If ye have not, then to this day ye have never been soundly convinced of sin, whatever your pretences are: and so ye are found liars in this matter, and deceivers of your own souls. If ye say ye have been, or are seriously concerned about salvation, then,

1st, I pose your consciences, and I demand ye may pose

pose them with this question, Can ye be satisfied with other things, while ye are at an utter uncertainty about salvation? If so, if ye can be well pleased, and have rest in your mind, and live contentedly at an uncertainty about salvation, provided ye be in health of body, and your worldly concerns thrive, then we say, ye have never yet been concerned about salvation, and therefore are yet strangers to that sound conviction, without which none will be content to accept of Christ.

2dly, I pose you in God's name upon it; what thoughts do ye spend upon this subject? Persons who can spend whole days, and nights, and weeks, and never have a serious thought about salvation, they certainly are not laying it to heart. But that I may bring this second question yet a little closer to the conscience, I shall break it into one or two others; and, 1. I pose you on it, what thoughts do ye chuse? Persons may sometimes be oppressed with thoughts that they entertain the uttermost aversion to; or they may be forced from the thoughts they would for ever desire to dwell upon. A man that is thoroughly awakened, may, by the impetuous violence of temptation, or the inevitable occasions of life, be obliged, as it were, sometimes to intermit thoughts of salvation, and entertain thoughts about other things: but when he has leave to make choice, then he will chuse to think of salvation. Now, if you chuse ordinarily to think of other things than of salvation, then there is no such force upon you, it discovers you unconcerned about salvation, and consequently strangers to that solid conviction that issues always in such a serious concern as we have been speaking of. 2. I further pose you, whether or not do the thoughts about salvation frequently press in upon you, when ye are busied about the ordinary occasions of life, when employed in your ordinary occupations, when ye are working or conversing? If such thoughts are never wont to visit you even then, it is a sad sign that ye do not lay salvation seriously to heart; for certainly that which the mind is much concerned about, will frequently drive the thoughts that way. 3. I put this.

this one question more to you, what thoughts are those on which your own time is spent? All your time, ye may think, is your own time: but there is a certain portion of time which may be called so upon a peculiar account; such are those seasons wherein we are neither engaged in business or in diversion, as when we walk alone in the fields, when we separate ourselves in order to rest at night, when we are undressing ourselves; or when we are waking upon our beds in the night-time, or before we engage in company in the morning. Now, it is in reference to such seasons as these that we inquire into your thoughts. If these seasons be not employed in thoughts about salvation, it is a sad sign that ye are not in earnest about it indeed.

3dly, I put this question to you, what are your desires? Man is a desiring creature: he is sensible of self-insufficiency, and therefore is ever desiring and longing after some one thing or other that is suited to his need, or at least which he thinks to be so. Now, what is it that ye desire? Is it salvation? Is it Christ? It may be, ye never have a desire after salvation, but when ye are laid upon a sick-bed, and fall under fears of death; and even then, where there is one desire for eternal salvation, there are many for freedom from death, for some longer life. Dying David, speaking of that covenant whereby salvation was insured to him, could call it all his desire: "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. If your souls do not frequently go out in desires after God, after salvation, it is a shrewd evidence that ye are not concerned about salvation, and consequently that ye are not yet convinced of sin.

4thly, Are your hearts ever affected about salvation? When there is a concern about any thing in the soul of man, it never fails to set the heart a-work, and to fill the affections. Now, surely if ye be in any good degree concerned about salvation, ye will be affected.

I. Have

1. Have ye never any fears of falling short of salvation? "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short," says the apostle, Heb. iv. 1. A heart weighted, and really concerned about salvation, will see many grounds to fear that possibly it may lose salvation at last. The falls of others, the difficulties and opposition in the way to salvation, and its own felt weakness, will ever occasion fear in the heart about this. What one is very concerned to have, he is always feared to lose.

2. Do ye never take any thing of the anger of God in the threatenings? Those that are concerned about salvation, get such a taste of God's displeasure, as is wont to fill their hearts with grief and sorrow. If ye know nothing of this, it looks very ill, and speaks you not duly concerned about salvation.

3. Do ye never find any thing of shame for sin rising in your heart? If none of these affections be moved, it is a sad but sure evidence that ye are not concerned about salvation, and consequently that ye are not yet solidly convinced of sin.

5thly, Whither runs your discourse commonly? Do ye never speak of salvation? We told you formerly, that when the heart is much concerned about salvation, the mouth will sometimes be employed in speaking about it. Now, where runs your talk commonly? Is there never a word of salvation in your discourse? It is a sad sign that ye never yet were convinced of sin, that ye never yet laid salvation to heart. Do not think that it will clear you, to tell that ye must conform your discourse to the temper of those with whom ye converse: for I say, 1. Do ye never converse with any body that would be willing to entertain discourse about salvation? If it be so, then I am sure it is choice and not necessity makes it so: this therefore is a further proof of your unconcernedness about salvation, ye slight the converse of such as may help you. 2. Are ye never in a company where ye may lead the discourse? If ye be a master of a family, a parent, or any superior, I am sure amongst your inferiors ye may have the leading

leading of the discourse: nay, though ye be servants, ye may some time or other have as fair a pretence to prescribe to others the subject of discourse, as they have to prescribe to you. 3. If ye shift the evidence of all this, I shall put here a question or two to you, which will, if faithfully applied, make a discovery of you in this matter. And, (1.) Do ye not weary of the company, and of the discourse, that has no respect to salvation? (2.) Is it not a restraint upon you, when ye are kept from discoursing of salvation? If ye be really concerned about it, I am sure it will be so sometimes with you. But I proceed; and, in the

6th Place, I put the question to you, what diligence is there in using the means of salvation? No man that understands either scripture or reason, can think the man concerned about salvation that useth not the means of salvation. Now, because I judge that here we may meet with not a few of you, I shall descend to particulars, and deal plainly with you about this matter. The means of salvation are of three sorts, secret, private, and public. Now, I will put some questions to you in reference to each of them.

I begin with those which we call *secret*; and of them I shall only name secret reading of the scriptures, and prayer, Lev. xviii. 5. Rom. x. 13.; and in reference to those I shall put two or three questions to you. And, 1. Are ye neglecters of secret prayer? Can ye rise in the morning, and go to your work, and never bow a knee to God? To such we dare say confidently, ye were never yet concerned about your soul's salvation. 2. Are ye ever concerned to know what success ye have in your prayers? Most part deal, I fear, by their prayers, as some unnatural parents do by their children; they lay them down to others, and never inquire what becomes of them, whether they die or live: which argues that they are not in earnest in them. We ever find the saints recorded in scripture in earnest about the acceptance and success of their prayers. 3. Are all your secret prayers confined to stated times, it may be morning and evening? Or are you frequently breathing
out

out your desires in ejaculations? If ye neglect these, it is a sad sign ye are not concerned about salvation. Ejaculations, I may say, are the genuine effect of concern about salvation. Here I do not approve of those common forms that people use, to the great scandal of religion and offence of God, God save us, The Lord deliver us, upon every turn. These surely argue want of concern about salvation, and want of due respect to God. Persons duly concerned about salvation will speak of God with more fear and dread, than is commonly in these expressions, which, as they are used, are certainly a palpable breach of the third command. But when I speak of ejaculations, I mean thereby, affectionate and reverend desires sent up to God about salvation: and I believe there shall scarce be found any really concerned about salvation, who are utter strangers to them. 4. Do ye neglect the reading of the word of God, or do ye not? Such of you as will not be at pains to learn to read the word of God, I can scarce think you in earnest concerned about salvation, since ye neglect so necessary a mean: at least I think ye have need to be very sure of the grounds ye lean upon, if ye conclude yourselves really concerned about it, while ye neglect this duty. When people are not at pains to read, or take not care to get the scripture read to them in secret; if through age they be incapable, it is a sad sign of want of concern about salvation. I would desire you to consider seriously that one command given by God to his church of old, "He gave them his laws and his statutes, which if a man do, he shall even live in them," Lev. xviii. 5. And he gives them a peremptory command how to use them, Deut. xi. 18.—20. "Ye shall lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes; and ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; and thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates." Every
where

where they were to have the law of God along with them. How they can be concerned duly about salvation, who neglect the use of that which God commands, and commands so peremptorily, I do not well understand. 5. Do ye take heed to what ye read? Do ye learn to do all the words of the Lord? or do ye endeavour to understand what ye read? In a word, are ye affected with what ye read, or are ye not? If ye be not, then it is evidence enough, that ye are not concerned seriously about salvation: so that ye are not solidly convinced of sin. If ye either neglect the use of these means of salvation, or prove unconcerned as to the success of your use of them, it is undoubtedly sure that yet ye have not laid salvation to heart. I do not indeed say, but even the children of God may be more remiss at some times than at other times, but entirely to neglect, or prove unconcerned, they cannot nor indeed can any that is laying salvation to heart. But,

I come, in the *second* place, to inquire into your diligence in your *families*. And here I shall say only two things. 1. This concern about salvation will make those who have families careful in the performance of family-duties, and those who are members of families careful in attendance upon them. When once a man is serious about salvation, he will be sure to set about those duties which may any way contribute to his safety and establishment. 2. When a person is once concerned about salvation, then there will some regard be had to the success of such duties, that is, such an one will take care to know whether he is better or worse by the duties he follows. Now, bring these two home to your consciences: and let me ask you, what conscience ye make of performing or of attending to these duties? If ye either neglect them, or turn indifferent as to the success of them, past all peradventure, ye are in a dangerous condition. A man that sees himself in a state of misery, and thinks seriously of salvation, will not be content to trifle in these duties which have so immediate, so remarkable, an influence upon his
eternal

eternal condition. If he neglects them, then he lies open to the fury of God, which, according to the prophet Jeremiah's prayer, will fall upon the "heathen, and the families that call not upon the name of God," Pſal. lxxix. 6. Jer. x. 25. If he prove remiſs, he falls under the woe denounced againſt the deceiver, Mal. i. 14. "Curſed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and ſacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing." And he thinks his caſe hard enough already, without the addition of that new wrath.

The *laſt* ſort of means of ſalvation are ſuch as are called *public*. A concern about ſalvation will diſcover itſelf in reference to theſe many ways; of which we ſhall only name two or three. 1. It will make us lay hold upon every opportunity of this ſort. A man that is in great danger, and knows himſelf to be ſo, will be ſure to frequent thoſe places which promiſe his ſafety. 2. It will be a ſatisfaction and matter of joy to him that there are any ſuch opportunities, and that his caſe is not entirely deſperate and hopeleſs. 3. When he comes to them, he will ſtill have ſalvation in his eye, and will greedily look what aſpect every thing he hears and ſees has upon his own ſalvation. 4. He will not be ſatisfied with any thing, unleſs he ſee how he may be ſaved. Now, is this your carriage when ye pretend to be concerned about ſalvation? Do ye with ſatisfaction embrace every opportunity of the ordinances? Do ye "joy when they ſay to you, Let us go up to the houſe of God?" Do ye keep your eye fixed upon ſalvation? Or, are ye more intent upon other things? This is a good way to know whether ye be concerned about ſalvation or not. Now, to conclude this mark, I ſay, that if ye do neglect, or careleſsly uſe the means of ſalvation, whether private, ſecret, or public, it diſcovers your unconcernedneſs about ſalvation. A man that has fallen into the ſea, and is in hazard of drowning, will haſte towards every thing that may contribute to his ſafety; and when he comes near the ſhore, he will not ſpend time in obſerving the form of the ſhore, but its uſefulneſs to him: So a man that ſees himſelf
in

in danger of sinking in the wrath of God; will look to all the means of salvation; and that which his eye will fix principally upon, will certainly be their usefulness to himself. That duty, and that way and manner of performing it, that levels most directly at his salvation, will please him best. I shall, in the

7th and last place, put this one question more home to you for trial. Will small and inconsiderable difficulties make you lay aside thoughts of salvation, or the use of the means? If so, it is a sad sign that ye are not yet arrived at that concern which is the fruit of sound conviction. One that is soundly convinced of sin, and is thence induced to lay salvation to heart, will not stop at any thing he meets with in his way: for he can see no lion in the way, that is so terrible as that wrath of God he sees pursuing him; nor can he hear of any enjoyment, to make him turn back again, that is so valuable as that salvation he seeks after. All hindrances that ye can meet with in the way to heaven, I mean such as are proposed for rational inducements to persuade you to give over, may be reduced to one of two. The tempter must either say, Desist and quit thoughts of salvation; for ye will run a great hazard if ye step one step further; or if ye will desist, ye shall have this advantage or the other. But a solidly convinced sinner has two questions that are enough for ever to confound and silence such proposals. (1.) Ye tell me, that if I hold on, I shall meet with such a hazard; I must be undervalued, reproached, opposed, and, in fine, meet with all the ill treatment that the devil, the world, and sin can give me? But now, Satan, I have one question to propose to you here: Are all these, taken together, as ill as damnation? if not, then I will hold on. But whereas, O tempter, (2.) Ye say, that I shall get this pleasure, or the other, if I desist and quit the way that I have espoused, I ask you, Is that pleasure as good as eternal salvation? or will it make damnation tolerable? These two questions make a soul, that is really concerned about salvation, hold on in the diligent use of means. A man, if ever he run, will then run, when

when he has happiness in his eye, and misery pursuing him; and thus it is with every sinner that is thoroughly awakened, and lays salvation to heart; therefore it is no wonder such an one refuse to be discouraged, or give over, whatever he meets with in the way. But now, are there not among you, not a few who will be startled at the least difficulty, and quit thoughts of the means of salvation, for very trifles? This is a sad evidence that ye are not indeed solidly convinced of sin.

Now, I have shortly run through these particulars; and, in the conclusion, I inquire of every one of you,

1st, Have ye applied these marks to your own consciences, as we went through them? or, have you carelessly heard them, as if ye had no concernment in them? To such of you as have not applied them, I say only, in so many words, (1.) If ye will not judge yourselves, ye shall surely be condemned of the Lord. When persons will not try their case, it is a sure sign that matters are not right with them. (2.) We may safely enough determine, that ye are unconcerned about salvation, and fast asleep in your sins, nay, dead in them. (3.) Ye will come to such a sensible determination of your estate, ere it be long, as will force you to think upon these things with seriousness, but not with satisfaction. But to such as have been applying these marks as we went along, in the

2^d place, I propose this question, do ye find upon trial that ye have indeed been laying salvation to heart above all things, or that yet ye are not in earnest about it? I beg it of you, nay, I obtest you, to deal impartially with your own souls; and I am sure ye may come to understand how it is with you. This question, if fairly applied, will divide you into two sorts. 1. Such as are not laying salvation to heart, and so have not been convinced of sin. 2. Such as are really concerned about salvation, and are with the jailor, saying, *What must I do to be saved?*

I shall conclude this doctrine in a short address to these two sorts of persons; and then proceed to the apostle's answer to the jailor's question.

I begin with the *first*. Such of you as are not convinced of sin, and therefore do not lay salvation to heart. Are there any such miserable wretches here, after all that has been said? No doubt there are; and I fear that the most part are such. To you I say,

1. Whence is it that ye are not convinced of your sin and misery, which has been so plainly, and at so great length, inculcate upon you? Surely it must be upon one of three accounts; either, *first*, Ye have not heeded what has been said; or, *secondly*, Ye have not believed it; or, *thirdly*, Ye have some one false defence or other, unto which ye lean. Now, because this is a matter of no small moment both to you and us, we shall here discourse a little of these three. It is of great moment to you to be undeceived here, because a deceit here will ruin you eternally; and it is of great moment to us, because, unless we get you undeceived in this matter, we lose all our pains in holding forth Christ, and the way of salvation by him. Persons who are not convinced of sin, will, past all peradventure, make light of Christ, and refuse him.

(1.) Then, I shall speak a word to such as have not taken heed to, or regarded what has been said for their conviction. I make no doubt but there are some such here, whose hearts have been, with the fool's eyes, in the corners of the earth, and who have scarce been thinking all the while what they were hearing. Your consciences can tell you whether this has been your practice; and if it has, then I say, 1. It is indeed no wonder that ye do not lay salvation to heart, that ye are not convinced of sin; since ye will not hear what will serve for conviction, and is designed that way.

2. "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise?" Has God condescended so far to you, that he has sent his servants to you, and ye will not be at the pains to give them a hearing? How do ye think would your master or your ruler take it, should ye deal thus by him? If when he were speaking to you, either himself or by his servants, ye were turning away your ear from him; would he not resent it highly? And

has

Has God any reason to bear with an indignity at your hand, that your master would not suffer? 3. Ye have reason to admire that he has not turned you before now into hell. This would effectually have convinced you, and repaired the lesed honour, the injured glory of God. 4. I say to you, ye have lost an opportunity; and none can assure you that ever ye shall have the like again. God may give over striving with you, and never more attempt your conviction: and wo to you when he departs from you. 5. I say, ye have slighted God's command, which enjoins you to "take heed how ye hear, and what ye hear," Mark iv. 24. Luke viii. 18. It is not for nothing that our Lord enjoins both to observe the matter and manner of hearing: as he gave those commands, so he will take care that they be not slighted. He will avenge himself of those who despise his authority in them. And therefore I say, 6. If ye refuse a little longer to hear, then it is like, nay, it is certain, he will speak to you himself, and make you take heed, if not to what you hear, yet to what ye shall feel, to your eternal disquietment: he will speak to you in wrath, and vex you in his hot displeasure. A remarkable scripture to this purpose we have, Ezek. xiv. 7. "For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and sets up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me, I the Lord will answer him by myself!" A set of people there was in this prophet's days, who were his hearers; and they came under pretence of hearing or inquiring into the mind of God: but they were but mocking God, as ye have done, and did not regard what was said to them by the prophet. Well, the Lord will no more deal with them by the prophet, but will take them into his own immediate hand, and deal with them by himself. The words in the first language run thus: "I the Lord; it shall be answered to him in me. I will not let any answer him but myself." As if he had said, My servants are too mild to deal with
such

such wretches as mock me ; I will not answer them any more with words ; I will give over speaking to them, and will answer them by deeds, and that not of mercy, but of judgement. Now, think on it in time, how terrible your condition is like to be, if God shall say to you, I have spoken to these wretches, and laid their sin before them, by my servants ; but their hearts have been so taken up with their idols, that they have not heeded them : I will therefore speak to them by terrible deeds, “ I will set my face against them, and will make them a sign and a proverb ; and I will cut them off from the midst of my people ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord,” as it follows in ver. 8. of that forecited chapter. I leave you to think upon these things, and proceed,

(2.) To speak to such as therefore are not convinced, because they did not believe what they have heard upon this head. I make no doubt that there are not a few such here ; nay, I may say, that all who are not convinced, and awakened to a serious consideration of their state and condition, owe their security and unconcernedness to this woful unbelief, that is a sin pregnant with all other sins, that alone has in it whatever is hateful to God, or destructive to the soul of man. To such as have heard, but do not believe, we say, 1. Ye have not refused our testimony, but the testimony of God, who cannot lie : and he that believeth not the record of God, hath made him a liar ; than which none can charge a greater impiety upon the holy God, who values himself upon this, that he cannot lie, which is peculiar to God only ; for however there be of the creatures that do not lie, yet of none of them can it be said, that they cannot lie ; this is God's sole prerogative. 2. Ye have shut your eyes upon clear light. Your sin and misery have been set before you in the clearest light, the light of God's word. The matter has not been minced, but ye have been plainly and freely dealt with upon this head : therefore ye need to look well to yourselves, that God strike you not judicially blind. This he is frequently wont to do to those who resist clear light ; he leaves them to Satan, the god of this world, to blind their

their eyes, and gives them up to "strong delusions to believe lies, that they may all be damned that believe not." 3. We did call in heaven and hell, the Creator and the whole creation, as witnesses of that certain and sad truth, that man has "sinned and come short of the glory of God." I know not one witness more but *sense*; and since no less is like to do, take care that sense of misery do not convince you of its truth. Hell will make you, even the most incredulous of you, believe, and tremble too, as the devils and damned do.

(3.) I come now to discourse those who therefore are not convinced of sin, or induced to lay salvation to heart, notwithstanding the pains taken on them, because they have defended themselves against the force of the truths proposed, by some shifts, which upon occasion they use for quieting, or keeping quiet their consciences. Of this sort I fear there are many, too many here present; and therefore I shall deal more particularly and closely with such. We have laid before you all your sin and misery; but few are yet awakened; few say with the jailor in the text, *What must I do to be saved?* Whence is it so? Has not sin been laid open to your view? Has not the sad but certain truth, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," been plainly demonstrated from many incontestible evidences? Nay more, has not the particular concernment of every one of us in this truth been plainly unfolded? Yes, no doubt: but whence is it, then, that the most part are so secure? that there is so little fear of hell, wrath, and damnation, amongst us? Are there none here who have reason to fear it? No doubt, there are many, too many such amongst us: but here it lies, when the truth is pressed home upon the conscience, we have a strange way of putting divine truths away from us. Now, I shall lay open the nakedness of these fences, behind which most of us screen ourselves from convictions.

1. When sin and misery are discovered, some there are, amongst the hearers of the gospel, who take with the charge. If we say to them, as Nathan did to David,

in the application of the parable, Thou art the man, thou art the woman, that has sinned, that art in danger of the eternal wrath of God. O! then, answers the sinner, it is very true what ye tell; I have sinned; and God be merciful to us, we are all sinners; I hope God will be merciful to me. And there the wound is skinned over as soon as made, and the person is healed. This is the refuge to which many of you betake yourselves. But we shall pursue you to the horns of God's altar, and fetch you down thence. Ye say, God is merciful. I say, (1.) It is very true, he is so. The Lord has long since proclaimed his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious; and he delights in such as hope in his mercy," Psal. cxlvii. 11. But, (2.) Notwithstanding of the mercy of God, there are but few that shall be saved, Luke xiii. 23. Now, who has told you, that ye shall be among that few? Ye say, ye hope to be among that few who shall find mercy; and I fear ye shall not. Now, whether are your hopes or my fears best grounded? I can give some account of my fears; but I doubt if ye can give any of your hopes. I say, I fear that many of you be damned; for, as I said before, there are but few that shall be saved; and these few are all penitent sinners, who have been convinced of sin and misery, and have laid salvation to heart above all things, and have accepted of Christ upon the gospel-terms. Now, it is obvious that there are but very few of you of this sort; and our Lord has said positively, "That he who believeth not, shall not see life, but shall be damned." Now, where are the grounds of your hopes? Ye say, God is merciful; and I answer, he is just also; and his justice has as fair a plea against you, as his mercy has for you. Ye say, he has saved some sinners, and therefore hope he will have mercy upon you. I answer, he has damned more than he has had mercy upon; and therefore he may deal so with you too. O but, say ye, I cannot think that God will be so cruel as to damn me. I answer, what more cruelty will it be to damn you, than to damn the heathen world? What more cruelty to damn you, than to damn the ge-

generality of unbelievers, which make the far greater part of the hearers of the gospel? In fine, is it cruelty to damn you, who have innumerable sins, when it was none, God thought it none, to send so many angels into hell for one sin? Is it cruelty to punish you, who have neglected the means of salvation, when others have been damned that never had them? Who would say the prince were cruel, or wanted mercy, who caused execute the threatened punishment against obstinate offenders? Now, where are all your hopes from the mercy of God? I tell you, there are thousands this day in hell, who have been ruined by such presumptuous hopes of mercy; and I fear there are many more who shall be so, ere all be done.

2. Others, again, when beat from this defence, betake themselves to another not one whit better: O, say they, we are in no danger, for we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I answer, (1.) It is very true, they who do believe are indeed out of all hazard. But I say, (2.) Are ye sure ye believe? Many have been mistaken; and are ye sure that ye are in the right. The foolish virgins thought themselves believers, and, it may be, went a further length than ye can pretend to have gone; as ye may see, if ye look to the parable, Matth. xxv. 1. They had professions, they had lamps; upon the bridegroom's call, they awake, and endeavour to trim their lamps to make them shine; they are convinced of the want of oil, and endeavour to get it; and yet were eternally shut out from the presence of God. Now, with what face dare any of you pretend to believe, when ye come not up that length that we have just now let you see others come, and yet perish? Are there not among you, who will say ye believe, and yet can get drunk, can swear, mock religion, and entertain a heart-hatred at such as go beyond you in strictness, can ridicule them, and call them hypocrites? I fear there may be some such amongst you. I tell you, ye have no faith but such as may go to hell with you. "Faith works by love;" it is a heart-purifying grace, and discovers itself by a course of obedience, according to that of the apostle

H James,

James, "Shew me thy faith without thy works; and I will shew thee my faith by my works," James ii. 18. (3.) Ye say ye believe. When did ye believe? Did ye always believe? Yes, we always did believe. Say ye so? O horrid ignorance! Ye say, ye did always believe. I say, ye did never to this day believe; for we are not born believers, but unbelievers; and if ye think that ye did always believe, it is proof enough, that to this day ye are strangers to the precious faith of God's elect. I shall not at present insist in discovering the folly of such a pretence to faith, because I shall have occasion, if the Lord will, afterwards to discourse more at length of faith, and of the difference betwixt it and those counterfeits of it whereon many do rely. Only I say at present, that where faith is, it will lead to concern about salvation, and will lay hold upon the discoveries of sin; and that faith which is not endeavouring to get the soul in which it dwells more and more convinced of, and humbled for sin, is to be suspected.

3. When sin is held forth, and the law preached, then others will shelter themselves under the fig-leaf of their own blameless walk. Come to some of those who have all their days lived in a state of estrangement and alienation from God, and pose them, when they lie upon a sick-bed, or a death-bed, as to their state, they will say, they hope all is well; they shall be saved, they never did any body ill; and therefore they never feared the wrath of God. Wo's me that there is any so grossly ignorant, in a church that has been blessed with more clear and satisfying discoveries of God's mind and will, than most churches in the world. Ye say, ye have done no man any injury, and therefore ye will be saved. I answer, ye have injured God, and therefore ye will be damned. Ye say, ye have injured no man. I answer, ye understand not well what ye say, otherwise ye should not have the confidence to talk at the rate ye do. (1.) Ye have injured all with whom ye have conversed, in whom ye are concerned, in as far as ye have not laid out yourself in paying the debt ye owe them. Love is a debt

we owe to all, Rom. xiii. 8. ; and he that has never evidenced his love to them, in a serious concern about their salvation, is extremely injurious to them, in as far as he detains from them that which is unquestionably their due ; and, past all peradventure, he that was never serious about his own salvation was never really concerned about the salvation of others ; and therefore has detained from them what was their undoubted right. (2.) Didst thou never see thy brother sin ? No doubt thou hast. Well then, didst thou reprove him ? I fear not. Yea, many of this sort of persons can, it may be, see their own children, wives, servants, and nearest relations, commit gross acts of sin, and yet never reprove them. Is it not so with many of you ? I am sure ye cannot deny it. Well, is not this a real injury done to the persons ye should have reproved ? It is a hating them in your heart. God himself says so ; and sure his judgement is according to truth, Lev. xix. 17. " Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart : thou shalt in any ways rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." In fine, with what confidence dare ye say, ye have done no man any injury, when, by a tract of sin, ye have been doing the utmost ye could to bring down the wrath of a sin-revenging God upon yourselves, and upon all who live with you in the same society ?

4. Others, when pursued by the discoveries of sin, get in behind the church-privileges, and think there to screen themselves from the wrath of God. Thus it was with the wretches spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah, in that 7th chapter of his book ; they did steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense unto Baal. Well, the Lord threatens them with wrath, bids them amend their ways and their doings. but they sat still secure and unconcerned, never affected either with the discovery of sin, or with threatenings of wrath. What is the matter ? Have the men no sense of hazard at all ? They could not altogether shut their eyes upon the clear discoveries the prophet made of their sins to them, or of that consequential misery he did threaten them withal ; but they sheltered themselves behind their

H 2

church-

church-privileges, and they cry out to him, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these," ver. 4. And I make no doubt but it is so with some of you. It may be, ye reason as Manoah did in another case, "If the Lord designed to damn us, he would not have given us ordinances as he has done." Now, I only offer two or three things that will sufficiently expose the weakness of this defence or hiding-place. And, (1.) I say, ye may indeed reason thus: God has established gospel-ordinances, the signs of his presence amongst us; therefore he will save some. He will not bring the means of grace without doing some good by them. Yet, (2.) I say, ye cannot thence infer that he will save you: for, [1.] Many who have had the gospel-ordinances have been damned. [2.] It is not the having, but the improving of them, that saves any. [3.] To lean upon them is the worst misimprovement of them possible; and therefore take care that ye trust not in lying words, saying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these."

5. Others, finding no shelter from their convictions here, betake themselves to their good duties. We tell them, they are sinners, and lay open to their eyes their miserable and wretched condition and state; they turn their eyes to their duties, and, like the Pharisee spoken of by our Lord, Luke xviii. 11. they will stop the mouth of conscience, with an enumeration of their performances, whereby they excel others. True it is, will such an one say, I have sinned; but, on the other hand, I am not guilty of gross outbreakings, and scandalous sins; nay, more, I am much and frequent in the performance of the duties of religion, I pray, I fast, I communicate, and a great many other things I do; and therefore I hope to get heaven, notwithstanding all my sins. O how natural is it for a man to prefer a defenceless hiding-place of his own contrivance, to the impregnable city of refuge contrived by infinite wisdom and grace; the home-spun robe of his own, to the heaven-wrought robe of Christ's righteousness? Here many of you hide yourselves; I pray, I read, I seek unto God, and

and therefore all is well. A sad conclusion ! To this plea answer, (1.) If ye should dissolve in tears, pray till your knees grow into the ground, and give all ye have in alms, and fast every day, all this will not atone for the sin. (2.) Your best duties do but increase your guilt. This the church well saw, Isa. lxiv. 6. " We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (3.) Good duties, when rested on, have damned many, but never did, nor ever shall, save any. To lean to them, is to say to the work of our hands, ye are our gods ; a sin that the Lord forbids and abominates.

6. Another sort of persons, when convictions get hold of them, and their sin and misery are plainly and clearly discovered to them, get in behind their good resolutions, and thereby they shelter themselves. They resolve to consider of this matter at a more convenient season, like Felix, who dismissed Paul, when once he came to deal closely with him, and promised him a hearing afterwards. So do many, when they are almost convinced, they dismiss convictions, and promise to hear them afterwards. Now, I shall address myself to such in a few serious exhortatory questions. And, (1.) I inquire at you, is the consideration of sin and misery, and of your escape from it, a business to be delayed ? Is there any thing that ye can be concerned about that deserves to be preferred to this ? Is there any hazard like damnation ? any mercy comparable to salvation from the wrath of God ? If a man gain a world, and lose a soul, is he profited by the exchange ? (2.) Who is better judge of the most convenient occasion, God or you ? He has determined the present opportunity to be the best : " Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." (3.) When art thou resolved to take under serious consideration thy sin and misery, that now thou shiftest the thoughts of ? Ye must surely say, that it will be some time after this. But now I ask you, what certainty have ye of such a time ? and what certainty have ye, that ye shall then have the means that are necessary in order to this end ? I believe

ye dare not say, that ye are sure of either. (4.) Sure I am, some who in the same manner have made many fair promises and resolutions, have thereby cheated themselves out of their souls. But,

7. Another sort get in behind their own ignorance and think to shelter themselves there. They promise themselves safety, though they be not concerned about salvation, because they are but ignorant. God, say they, may deal severely with others that know better things; but for me, I hope he will have mercy upon me, because I know no better. With what astonishing confidence have we heard some plead this! Ye say, ye are ignorant, and therefore God will have mercy upon you. I say, ye are ignorant, and therefore God will have no mercy upon you, Isa. xxvii. 11. Ye are ignorant; but whose fault is it? Has not God given you the means of knowledge? Has not the light of the glorious 'gospel shined clearly about you? Have not others got knowledge by the use of the very same means which ye have neglected and slighted? This is a common excuse for sins, but a most unhappy one as ever any meddled withal; for (1.) God has expressly told us, that ignorant people shall be damned, 2 Thel. i. 8. 9. (2.) He has told us, that ignorance will be the ground of the sentence. This is the condemnation of ignorant sinners, that they love "darkness rather than light," John iii. 19. Nor will it excuse you to tell that ye want time; for, [1.] All other things should give place to this: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof," and other things will come in their own room and place. [2.] Others have had as little time as ye have, who yet have taken care of their souls, and have got the knowledge of God. [3.] Ye lose as much time upon trifles, or doing nothing, as might bring you to a competent measure of the knowledge of these things which do belong to your peace, were it but frugally managed; so that this will be found to be a weak defence, try it who will. And yet here a great many shelter themselves, and that two ways. (1.) Hereby a great many are not capable to understand

understand what we speak to them about their sin or their danger, and so we have no access to them to convince them. (2.) Others do think, that their ignorance will atone for their other faults; and this is a fancy so deeply rooted in the thoughts of many, that nothing is like to cure them of it, till the appearance of the Lord Jesus, for their destruction who know not God, do it.

8. There is one defence more whereby some put off convincing discoveries of sin; and that is, by comparing themselves with others. When it is borne close home upon their consciences, that they are in an estate of extreme danger, then they say, Well, one thing I am sure of, it is like to fare no worse with me than with others; and if I be damned, many others will be so besides me. O desperate, and yet common defence!

Thou sayest, if thou be damned, then many others are like to be so. Well, it shall indeed be so; many shall indeed perish eternally, as ye heard before. But, (1.) What will this contribute to your advantage? I make no doubt but company will contribute exceedingly to the blessedness of the saints above: but I cannot see what solace or comfort the damned can have from their companions; nay, past all peradventure, this will enhance their misery, their case being such as can admit of no alleviation. (2.) Knowest thou, O sinner! what thou sayest, when thou talkest at that rate? It is plainly to say, I will hazard the issue, be what it will; than which nothing can be more extravagant and foolish. Art thou willing to hazard eternal wrath? Can ye dwell with everlasting burnings? Can ye dwell with devouring flames? If there be any such an one here, as is resolved to hold on at this rate, and hazard the issue, I have a few questions to put to him. Is there any thing in the world, worth the seeking after, that ye would desire to be sure of? If there be any such thing, then I pose you on it, if there be any thing comparable to salvation? If ye say, there is, then I inquire further, is there any thing that will go with you after this life is done? Is there any thing that will make up your

H 4

loss,

loss, if ye lose your souls? what will be able to relieve you under the extremity of the wrath of a sin-revenging God? Again, when ye say, ye will hazard the issue, then I desire to know of you, do not ye think it as probable that ye shall be damned, as that ye shall be saved? Sure ye have reason to think so indeed. A person so little concerned about salvation, must think God has a very small esteem of salvation, if he throw it away upon such as care not for it. Finally, since ye are likely to be damned in the issue, have ye ever thought what damnation imports? I believe not. I shall only refer you to that short account of it, which the final doom of impenitent sinners gives of it, in Matth. xxv. 41. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

I cannot now enter upon the consideration of many other pretences, whereby sinners shelter themselves from convictions: only I wish ye may rivet upon your hearts three truths, which will help to preserve you from laying weight upon them. (1.) Be persuaded, that there are but few that will be saved. Christ has said so, and who dare give him the lie? (2.) Believe it, they who shall be saved, shall not be saved in an easy way. The "righteous are scarcely saved," 1 Pet. iv. 18. (3.) Ye are to endeavour a solid conviction, that there is no salvation for you, but in the gospel-way, Acts iv. 12. Understand and believe these three truths, and this will be a mean to preserve you from a reliance upon things that cannot profit. And this for the first word we designed to such of you as are not convinced of sin and misery.

2dly, To such of you as are not yet awakened, as are not yet convinced of your lost and undone state, I say, ye have reason to fear that ye shall never be awakened and convinced. There is ground to fear that Christ has said to you, "Sleep on:" and if it be so, then the thunderings of the law, the still and calm voice of the gospel, the most sweet and charming providences, yea, the most terrible threatenings of providence, shall never be able to open your eyes, or make you consider and lay
to

to heart the things that belong to your peace; but ye shall sleep on in your security, till the wrath of God come upon you to the uttermost. But it may possibly be, that some whose case this is shall say or think, or at least carry, as if they thought there was no danger of this at all. But I assure such, whatever their thoughts may be, there is great hazard of this. For,

1. God has taken much pains upon you already, to bring you to a sense of your sad state and condition; but he has not dealt so with others. He has not dealt so with many of the heathen nations; he has not dealt so with many who have been taken away suddenly after their refusal of the first offer of the gospel; he has not dealt so with not a few others, who have had the gospel-light quickly taken from them, upon their refusal of it. As for the way of God's dealing with the heathen, there is no place to doubt of it; and that the Lord has not dealt so with, or been at so great expence, either of time or means, with others, is plain in your own experience. Tell me, O sinners! have not many been snatched away by death from the advantage and use of the ordinances, since the Lord began to deal with you in order to your conviction? Sure, few of you can deny it: and that the Lord did allow others a shorter time of the ordinances, is no less plain from manifold evidences, both in scripture and in the experience of the church in all ages. Ye have had more time than Capernaum, and many other places where Christ preached, in the days of his personal ministry upon earth.

2. Ye have reason to fear this terrible issue, if ye consider the way that the Lord has taken with you. He has not rested in a general discovery of either your sin or danger, but has dealt particularly with every one of you, as it were by name and surname; he has spoken particularly to you, by his word and by his providences. In his name we have dealt particularly with young and old of you; and by his providences he has been no less particular. What person, what family, has not, either in themselves or in their relations, felt the stroke of God's hand? which tells all upon whom it lights, that

they "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." I believe there is scarce one in this house who has not smarted this way. So that scarce is there one amongst us who has not withstood particular dealings of God for his conviction: and this is a sufficient ground to fear that we may never be convinced, since all the ways that God is wont to take, are either general, when he deals with a person in common, by a proposal of such things as lay open the sin and misery of all in general; or particular, when he makes a special application of the general charge, either by his word, or by his providence, and says, as Nathan did, "Thou art the man:" and what can be done more for your conviction in the way of means?

3. He has not only used these ways and means mentioned, but has waited long upon you in the use of the means, even from the morning of your day till now. Many, if not all of you, have had precept upon precept, and line upon line, here a little and there a little. Christ has risen up early, and has dealt with you, by sending one messenger after another, one preaching after another, one providence after another, and yet ye are not convinced and awakened. This suggests great grounds to fear the issue, if it be considered,

4. That the Spirit of God, though he may long strive with sinners, yet will not always strive with them, Gen. vi. 6. "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh;" as if the Lord had said, I have long dealt with these men, by an awakening ministry, by awakening dispensations, by the inward motions of my Spirit, by checks of their own conscience, to convince them of their sin and danger, and to reform them: but now I find all means ineffectual, they are entirely corrupt; therefore I will convince them no more. I will spare them till they fill up their cup, and be fattened against the day of slaughter; but will never more convince them, or endeavour their conviction. And who can tell, but the Lord has this day pronounced the like sentence against the unconvinced sinners of Ceres, or some of them? Yonder

der is a people with whom I have long striven, by the word, by providences, by motions of my Spirit, and by secret checks of consciences, and yet they are not awakened, are not convinced: therefore I will strive no longer with them; I will either take them away with a deluge of wrath, as I did the old world; or I will take my ordinances from them, as I have done from other churches; or I will give my servants a commission to make their ears heavy, their hearts fat, and their eyes blind; and I will pronounce the barren fig-tree's curse against them. And that all this is not a mere empty bug-bear, set up on purpose to fright you, will appear evident, if it be considered,

5. That this is the stated measure, the ordinary way, that the Lord has laid down, for proceeding with persons in that case; as ye will see, if ye turn over to that terrible scripture, Heb. vi. 7. 3. "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." Here is the stated and ordinary rule of God's dispensation with sinners, who live under a gospel-dispensation; and that both with such as improve and with such as misimprove it. The way that God takes with the first sort, the improvers of it, is this: He gives them the means, his word and ordinances, which, like the rain, come down from heaven, and have a fructifying efficacy, when they fall upon good ground; and, upon their bringing forth good fruit, called fruit that is meat for the use of him that dresseth it, he blesteth them. On the other hand, we have the carriage of God toward the rest, and their carriage toward him, plainly enough represented unto us; which I shall set before you in a few particulars. (1.) God gives them, as well as others, frequent showers; he gives them sometimes the means, and that in great plenty. (2.) The generality of them use the means; both the one sort and the other is supposed to drink in the rain; for there is no doubt, that those who

openly reject the counsel of God against themselves, as the Pharisees and Scribes did of old, Luke vii. 30. shall be burnt up with unquenchable fire. (3.) Though this sort of persons we are now speaking of drink in the rain, as did the other, yet herein are they differenced, they bring not forth fruit meet for the use of him by whom they were thus watered; but, on the contrary, they bring forth briers and thorns: That is plainly, the discoveries of sin did not convince them, the discoveries of danger did not awaken them, the influences of grace did not quicken them, but rather made them more stupid, more dead and unconcerned. (4.) Upon this account the Lord rejects them; that is, he either gives over dealing with them entirely, or at least withdraws his blessing from the means. (5.) During the time of his forbearance, they are nigh unto cursing; there is nothing to keep the curse of God from them; it is fast upon its approach to them; they lie open to it, and are destined to the curse. Therefore, (6.) He burns such in the end. This, O sinners! is the ordinary way of the Lord's dealing with sinners. And now see and consider your own concernment in this: The Lord, as was said before, has often rained down upon you; ye have pretended to receive these showers, have been waiting upon the means; but have not brought forth good fruit; nay, on the contrary, ye have brought forth briers and thorns; what reason have ye then to dread the consequence? Have ye not reason to fear that ye are rejected, and so nigh unto cursing; and that therefore your end is to be burned? And that all this may not appear groundless, I offer this to your consideration,

6. As God has laid down the rule just now mentioned, as that by which he has walked, and will walk, with all to whom he gives the gospel, I mean for ordinary; so in his providence we find him dealing accordingly with sinners. I shall only lay before you two or three instances of God's dealing with sinners according to this rule. The *first* is that of the old world. The Lord did deal long and particularly with them, by the preaching of Noah, in order to their conviction:

conviction: they were not convinced, but rather grew worse and worse; whereupon the Lord rejected them, gave over striving with them: and though he spared them, Gen. vi. 3. yet it was not on a design of mercy, but only to suffer them to fill up their cup, that they might be without excuse, and that their condemnation might be the more terrible. The *second* instance is that of the church of the Jews in our Lord's time. He preached to them, and endeavoured their conviction; but they were not convinced; therefore he rejects them: and though they had a while's respite, yet things that did belong to the peace were now eternally hid from their eyes, Luke xix. 41. 42. as he himself tells them; and therefore they had nothing to look for but judgement and fiery indignation. In fine, I might to the same purpose set before your eyes many instances in the gospel-church, since the days of Christ, wherein the Lord has exactly followed the same measures. Now, tell me, O sinners! have ye not reason to fear, from all that has been laid before you, that ye shall sleep on, and never be convinced, never awakened. But this is not all; for we must tell you,

3dly, O unconvinced sinners! after all the pains that has been taken upon you for your salvation, it is highly probable that ye shall never be saved. We have just now laid before you many reasons we have to fear, that ye who have shut your eyes so long upon the discoveries of your sin and danger, shall never get them opened; and if they never be opened, then I may say that, as sure as God lives, not a soul of you shall be saved: For, 1. If ye be not convinced, if ye get not your eyes opened to see your sin and misery, ye will never lay salvation to heart, as appears from what has been already discoursed to you at great length. 2. If ye lay not salvation to heart, then sure ye will never seek after or look to a Saviour for salvation. Such as think they see, will not value eye-salve; such as think themselves rich enough, will not look after gold tried in the fire; such as see no hazard of damnation, will not seek after salvation. 3. If ye be not seeking after a Saviour, then though he come to you, yet will ye not receive him: nay, ye will reject him,

him, and that with contempt. And indeed it cannot otherwise be: who would not with scorn reject the offers of a physician, that should press upon him healing medicines, when he was not sensible of any disease? He is a fool that offers pardon to a man who is not condemned, or his hand to help up a man who is not fallen, or water to wash a man that is not defiled: and such an one is Christ in the eyes of all that are not convinced. Such an one really he is in your eyes; and ye will be sure to treat him as such. 4. The necessary consequence of this is, ye must be damned, ye cannot be saved; for there is no other way of obtaining eternal salvation, but only by Jesus Christ; for "there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby sinners can be saved, but only that of Jesus Christ," Acts iv. 12. And damnation is the eternal lot of all them that reject him, Mark xvi. 16. But further,

4thly, We say, woe to you, O stupid, hard-hearted, and unconvinced sinners! for if ye shall be damned, your damnation will be most terrible, your state will be unspeakably miserable. And this will appear plain to any who seriously shall think upon it. For, 1. Damnation at the best is most terrible. This we did make appear to you not long ago: and indeed, though we had spoken nothing, the thing speaks for itself. What is terrible, if eternal burnings be not so? "Who can dwell with devouring flames? who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" "Who can abide the heat of that tophet that is prepared of old, that is made large and deep, and has for its pile fire and much wood, and the breath of the Almighty like a stream of brimstone, kindling it." The coldest place there will be hot; the most tolerable place will be intolerable: and therefore the case of all who go there is terrible. But, 2. Your condition, O miserable sinners! will be more terrible than that of many who shall be there. Christ says, "Wo unto thee Chorazin, wo unto thee Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee
had:

had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes : But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgement than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell : for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day : But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement than for thee," Matth. xi. 21.—24. In which remarkable denunciation of wrath, against those sinners whom our Lord had endeavoured to convince, and yet were not awakened, it is plain, *first*, That some shall have hotter and more intolerable places in hell than others. *Secondly*, That they on whom most pains has been bestowed will have the hottest place. According to this rule of the divine procedure with sinners, I shall now proceed, and lay before you your case. I say unto you, O unconvinced sinners in the congregation of Ceres ! before whom your sin and misery has so fully of late been laid open, your hell will be hotter than that of many others. Woe unto you, for it will be more intolerable than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. They never sinned against the means of of grace, as ye have done. Upon this very account, when our Lord sends forth his disciples, Matth. x. he tells them, " That it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement, than for such as should refuse them. See 14th and 15th verses. Now, this is the case with you : the heathen world's hell will be hot indeed ; but your furnace will be heated seven times more. Again, woe unto you, for your hell will be more intolerable than that of Capernaum, Bethsaida, or Chorazin ; nay, than that of the soldiers that crucified Christ, and of the Jews that condemned him ; for they only sinned against Christ in his estate of humiliation ; but ye have rejected him, now when he is exalted upon high, and seated at the right-hand of God. Woe unto you, it will be more intolerable

able for you than for those who live in many other churches, where the gospel is corrupted with a perverse addition of human inventions and doctrines, that are alien from it : for ye sin against the clear light of the gospel, not darkened by the clouds of false doctrines. Once more, wo unto you of this congregation, if ye be found rejecters of the gospel, as certainly ye will if ye continue unconvinced ; for your hell will be more intolerable than that of many others in Scotland, who have not had that pains taken upon them which ye have had, who have not had these frequent and clear discoveries of sin and duty, which ye have had by one of Christ's servants after another. Now, tell me, O sinners ! can ye think upon your own case without horror ? Sure, if ye understood it, ye would not, ye could not do it. But,

5thly, I say further to you, who shut your eyes upon your sin and misery, notwithstanding all that has been said for your awakening, if ye perish, and perish ye shall, if ye be not convinced, then your destruction is entirely of yourselves. And O how galling, how cutting will this be to you eternally ! That it is, I make appear against you thus : Where can ye lay the blame of it ? 1. Dare ye say that ye wanted the means of salvation ? No, this ye cannot, ye dare not say ; for if ye shall do so, we are all here witnesses for God against you ; nay, your own consciences shall arise and fly in your faces, and force you, though unwilling, to own that ye have had the means. 2. Dare ye say that the means are not sufficient to the end for which they are offered ? No, I am sure there shall not be one that ever had them, who shall dare to charge them with insufficiency. And if any of you should arrive at that height of intolerable insolence and impudence as to do it, it were easy to stop their mouths : For God might ask you, when standing at his tribunal, *first*, How do ye know them to be insufficient, since ye were never at the pains to try them ? Next, He might stop your mouth thus : Behold here, upon my right-hand, that innumerable

able company out of all kindreds, tongues, and nations: And how were they saved? If ye should go to them all, and ask them one by one, would they not all with one voice answer, to your eternal shame and confusion, that by the use of these very means you had, but neglected, they were saved. 3. If yet ye will not see that all the blame of your destruction will come only to your own door, then I ask you, on whom will ye lay the blame? Dare ye lay it upon any other but yourselves, with any tolerable shadow of ground? I know ye dare not. To blame the devil, or the world, is downright nonsense; for it is salvation from them ye was to seek? and to tell that these are the cause of your ruin, when ye had relief against them offered, is vain; for it may easily be asked at a person who has lived under the gospel, and gives Satan or the world the blame of his ruin, was there not deliverance from Satan and the world offered to you? Were not the means mentioned sufficient? This will eternally acquit them as to your destruction, and lodge it upon yourselves as the principal cause of it, which is all we plead; for we do not exempt them from a share in the guilt of it. Now, this being incontestibly evident, it remains that either Christ or his ministers are chargeable with your damnation, or that ye yourselves only are so.

As for our blessed Lord and Master, we offer now to undertake his vindication against any that shall dare to accuse him. We have abundance to speak in his behalf; and are resolved to ascribe righteousness to our Maker. In his vindication, I appeal to your own consciences in a few particulars. (1.) Is he not indeed a sufficient Saviour, "one able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him?" Deny it you dare not; for this is the attestation of the glorious cloud of witnesses, who all have, by faith in his name, got above the reach of sin, death, and hell. (2.) Did ever any of you come to him, and get a refusal? Produce your instances of this sort, if ye can. We dare boldly, in our Lord's name, give a defiance to earth or hell to produce one instance of this sort. (3.) Has he not allowed, nay,

nay, invited, intreated, nay, commanded you to come unto him, that ye might be saved? If ye shall deny this, the word of God, the servants of God, are witnesses against you. (4.) Has he not waited long upon you? Has he not given you "precept upon precept, and line upon line?" And now, to conclude, I pose you on it, what could he have done more to you that he has not done?

But it may be ye will lay it to our door, and say, though Christ did his part, yet his servants have not done theirs; they have not given you fair warning. As for their vindication, I answer a few things; and I say, 1. Though they may be guilty, and conceal, or at least fail of faithfulness in their duty, yet your damnation is of yourselves: for ye have the word of God, that is plain, that is full, in its representation of your sin and misery; and had you paid a due regard to that, ye could not have missed of salvation: therefore yet your destruction is of yourselves. But, 2. We refuse the charge of your blood, and tell you, that ye have destroyed yourselves, if ye sleep on in your sins. And for our own vindication, I put a few things home to you: Have we not plainly told you your sin and danger? Have we not done it frequently? Have we not been particular in dealing with young and old of you? Have we not been pressing in order to your conviction? We have told you, with earnestness, both your sin and danger. We have looked from our watchtower, through the prospect of the word of God, and have seen the wrath of God ready to seize you; and we have not concealed his righteousness within us. And now, the Lord, the righteous Judge, be witness betwixt you and us, for we have done as much as will free us of your blood. Indeed we cannot deny ourselves to be sinners; and must own that we have sinned, even with respect to you: but this will not make your blood to be charged upon us; since, in order to our exoneration as to that, it is only required we give you warning of your danger; and if ye be slain sleeping,

ye are to blame. There is one word more I have to say to you, in the

6th Place; and then I shall leave you. What have we to do more with you? If ye comply not with the first part of our message, ye will be sure to refuse the second. Christ will be refused by you, and we will seem to you like them that mock. But whatever use ye make of it, we shall proceed in our work: and if we prove not the favour of life unto you, we shall prove the favour of death; for we are a "sweet savour unto God in them that are saved, and in them that perish; and if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost," 2 Cor. iv. 3. I come now,

2dly, To speak a word *to such as are awakened*, and are saying, with the convinced jailor in the text, *What shall I do to be saved?* And to you we say,

1. *Bless the Lord*, who has opened your eyes. Ye were naturally as much inclined to sleep on as others; and it is only the distinguishing goodness of God that has made you to differ.

2. *Study to keep your eyes open*. If ye shut them again, and lose convictions, then ye may never more recover them. If ye quench the Spirit, it is hard to say but the issue may prove fatal to you. If God, being provoked by your stifling convictions, shall give over dealing with you, I may say, woe unto you, for ye are undone eternally. And that ye have got your eyes opened in some measure, to discover your hazard, will be so far from mending the matter, that it will make it much worse; it will put an accent upon your sin, and likewise upon your punishment.

3. Endeavour to *improve the discoveries ye have got of sin*; and seek not only to keep your eyes open, but to have them further opened. The more clear the sight of sin is which ye get, the more welcome will ye make the gospel-tender of mercy and relief, the more sincerely and heartily will ye close with it.

4. Would ye indeed be saved? then take the advice in the text, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*. This leads me to that which I did principally

principally design in the choice of this subject ; therefore I shall, if the Lord will, insist upon it at length, because it is the very sum and substance of the gospel, that which comprises all the rest.

We have hitherto represented your case by nature, as ye are under sin ; and have hinted shortly at your case, as under the influences of the Spirit in conviction : now we shall proceed to a discovery of the gospel-relief, that is provided by infinite wisdom, for such as are awakened to a discovery of their lost and undone state ; and that lies before us in this 31st verse. Ye may remember, that when we did open to you the context, we did refer the explication of this verse, till such time as we had ended the former. This being now done, I shall briefly open the words, and then draw thence some such comprehensive truth as may give ground to discourse of that which we have principally in our eye.

The words contain a direction given to the distressed and awakened jailor : and in them we may take notice,

1. Of the person to whom the direction is given ; and, as was just now said, he is an awakened and convinced sinner. This is the gospel-method ; it proposes its remedy, not to those who are whole and well in their own eyes, but to such as are diseased. Christ is tendered to such as need him, and are sensible that they do so. The foundation of the gospel is laid in conviction of sin. Hence it is, that we find gospel-ministers begin their work here ; of which we have many eminent and notable instances in the scripture. John the Baptist, whose business it was to make way for Christ, and prepare sinners for entertaining the call of the gospel, begins his ministry with conviction, with preaching of sin to his hearers : “ Repent,” saith he, “ for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” He smartly rebukes such as came unto him, and fully unfolds to them their need of a Saviour. There were two sorts of people that came to him, as we read in the 3d of Matthew. The ordinary sorts of people, and the more refined sort,

fort, the Scribes and Pharisees; and he deals with them accordingly. The more gross sort he directly presses to repentance, in consideration of the approach of the gospel. Their sins went before-hand into judgment. Matters of fact they could not deny; and therefore he presses them to load their consciences with a sense of them. The more refined sort of sinners he takes another way of dealing with; he calls them vipers, thereby pointing them as full as bad, if not worse than the common sort, and beats them from their strong holds they were wont to shelter themselves in from the storms of an awakened conscience: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father," &c. This was their ordinary relief; and this he discovers the vanity of, in order to prepare them for the entertainment of the gospel. The same course was followed by the apostles, Acts ii. The same method did our Lord use with the apostle Paul, Acts ix.; and this method have we endeavoured to follow in dealing with you: we have laid sin before you; and it is for the sake of such as are convinced among you, that we have entered upon the consideration of this relief, that is only suited to convinced sinners. But,

2. In the words we may take notice of the *persons* who propose this relief to this awakened sinner, viz. Paul and Silas. In reference to them, there are only two things I observe, amongst many: the one, that they were persons who had a commission from Christ to preach the gospel; the other, that they once had been in the same case themselves; which two, when they meet in one, help to fit a man to be a complete minister; one who in his measure will be capable to answer the character given of Christ, that "he had the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to weary souls."

3. We may take notice of the *way* wherein they propose this direction. And here it is remarkable, that they do it *speedily*, they do it *plainly*. No sooner is the question proposed, but it is answered. One would have thought, that it had been the apostle's wisdom

wisdom to capitulate with him, and hold him in suspense, till such time as he should engage to contribute for their escape: but they would not do so, but presently offer him relief; having themselves been acquainted with the terrors of the Lord, they know how uneasy it would be for him to continue in that miserable perplexity, nay, how cruel it would be not to do their utmost for his speedy relief. They minded more the sinner's eternal salvation, than their own temporal safety. They had greater regard to the glory of Christ, than to their own safety. They were more concerned to satisfy a poor convinced and dejected sinner, than their own private grudges. And this they do, not by proposing the gospel in such a dark and obscure way as might amuse and confound, but in so fair and plain a way, as might be understood easily by the poor distressed man.

4. In the words we are to notice the *direction itself*, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*. In which, again, we are to observe three things, the *duty* pointed to, the *person* whom it respects, and the *way* how it respects him. The duty pointed to is, *Believe*; that is, act faith upon, receive and rest upon Christ, look unto him. All these words signify exactly one and the same thing, as we shall see anon, if the Lord will. The person whom this faith respects, is the *Lord Jesus Christ*. Here we have a threefold title given to him. He is called the *Lord*; which points at his authority and dominion. He is Lord over all things and persons, because he did create, and doth still uphold them: and he is so in a peculiar manner, as he is the Redeemer of the church, for whose behoof all things are put into his hands, he being made "head over all things to the church." Again, he is called *Jesus*, to point at the design of his lordship and dominion: as he is exalted to be a Prince, so is he likewise to be a Saviour. Nay, the design of his advancement to that dominion which belongs to him as Mediator, is to fit him to be a Saviour; which is the proper import of the name Jesus, according to the scripture-account of it, "Thou shalt call

call his name Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins," Matth. i. 21. In fine, he is called *Christ*, i. e. *Anointed*, because he is anointed, designed, and furnished of God, to be a "Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins," Acts v. 31. The last thing we did notice in the direction itself, is the nature of that respect which this faith has to Christ: it is not said, *Believe the Lord Jesus Christ*, but *believe [on] him, or [in] him*. It is not simply to give credit to his word, and take as truth whatever he has said; but it is to rely on him, to put our trust in him, as one that is able to save such as come unto God through him.

5. In the words we are to observe the *encouragement* that is given, to engage to a compliance with this direction. And this is twofold; particular, *thou shalt be saved*; and more general, *and thy house*. In the

1st, We have three things worthy of our notice, 1. The thing that is promised, and that is *salvation*, the very thing that the man was seeking. 2. The order in which it is to be had; *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*. 3. There is the *certain connection* betwixt the one and the other; thou shalt be saved, if once thou believe. Where, by the by, we cannot but take notice of the different influence of the Arminian doctrine of justification, and that of the apostle's doctrine, upon the comfort of awakened sinners. Had Paul said to him, *Believe on the Lord Jesus*; and if ye shall hold out in faith to the end, then ye shall be saved; if ye hold your will right, then all shall be well. If, I say, the apostle had made his proposal so, the poor man might have lain still upon the ground, and trembled all his days; since this would have given him, at best, but a may-be for his eternal salvation, and escape from eternal misery. But here there is a ground for present and abiding comfort: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*. The

2^d Branch of the encouragement is general, *and thy house shall be saved*. Which is not so to be understood,

as if hereby it were promised, that their salvation should absolutely depend upon his belief: for his faith could not save them; since the scripture is express, that he that believeth not, every particular person who doth not believe, shall be damned; and, upon the other hand, that every particular person that believes shall be saved, though there should not one more believe. But the meaning of the words I shall offer to you shortly thus: When it is added, *and thy house*, this expression imports, 1. That all his house had need of salvation, as well as himself. One might possibly think, as for that rude fellow, who treated the servants of Christ so ill, he has need to be saved; but his innocent children are guilty of nothing that can endanger their eternal happiness; but hereby the apostles intimate, that they needed salvation as well as he. 2. It imports the commonness of this direction; as if the apostles had said, This direction is not such as is peculiar to such great, notorious, and flagitious sinners, as thou hast been; but it is the common road wherein others walk towards happiness: there is one way for you and your house to be saved in. 3. It imports the extent of this remedy; as if they had said, This is not only sufficient to reach and benefit you, but it is such as may reach all in your house, and they may have the same advantage as ye may have. 4. It imports the certainty of salvation to them upon the same terms; as if the apostles had said, And let thy house believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they likewise shall be saved. 5. It imports this much, that hereby his family should obtain some special advantages, in order to their salvation.

Now, because I design not to speak any more of this part of the text, I shall here mention some of these advantages which the jailor's children or house had by his faith, and consequently which the children of every believer has by the faith of their parents. Amongst many such advantages, the few following ones are remarkable. 1. Hereby such children are taken in within the covenant: "For the promise," says the apostle, Acts ii. 39. "is to you and to your children, and to all that

are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." They are allowed hereby to have their names particularly mentioned in the promise. This is the advantage which church-members have beyond others, who are not yet taken within the covenants, nor admitted to those ordinances which are a badge of their reception. The gospel-call says in the general to all, if ye believe, ye shall be saved; but it, as it were, names every one that is baptised, and says in particular to him, O man, thou who art taken within the covenant, I say to thee, as it were by name, thou shalt be saved, if thou believe: and this is much more confirming than the other.

2. The children of real believers have this advantage, that they have their parents pleading for them at the throne of grace, which many times has availed much, in order to their salvation, though the Lord sees not meet always to hear parents in behalf of their children. If he did always so, then possibly it might prove a snare both to them and to their children, and might lead them into a dangerous mistake, as if God's grace were not so free as it is: but that many times they are heard this way, is encouragement enough to engage all parents to pray for their children.

3. The children of godly parents have their counsel and instruction, which is of use to engage them to religion, and to bring them to acquaintance with Christ: and of how much influence this is, the wise man tells us, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6.; that is, ordinarily he will not do so.

4. The children of believing parents, they have their parents good example; and this many times has more influence than precept and instruction: hence it is, that we find the apostle Peter exhorting wives to a holy walk, that their unbelieving husbands might be won by their conversation. "Ye wives," says he, "be subject to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear," 1 Pet. iii. 1. 2. Faith made visible in a holy walk, has

a most attracting and engaging appearance ; it is beautiful to an high degree. 5. Hereby children likewise have the advantage of the ordinances, which are the means of salvation. Godly parents will take care both to bring their children to the ordinances, and to bring the ordinances to them. 6. To add no more to this purpose, the children of believers have this advantage as they are theirs, that God has a particular respect to them ; which we find him expressing upon several occasions to the children of his servants.

Since, as I said before, I design not to return again to this part of the verse, I cannot but apply this truth, that the children or hoole of a believer has great advantages by his believing, in order to their salvation. And this I shall do in a few words to four sorts of persons : (1.) Believers ; (2.) Their children ; (3.) Unbelievers ; (4.) Their children.

To the *first* sort I say only a few words. O believers! is it so that your children, as well as ye yourselves, have so many advantages in order to their salvation? Then, [1.] Bless the Lord, who has given you faith, which not only is the spring of innumerable advantages to yourselves, but also entails so many upon your very houses. [2.] Bless the Lord, and be thankful for the extent of the covenant ; that it is so wide as to reach not only yourselves, but even your children. It had been much mercy had God given you your souls for a prey, though he had never given you the least prospect of mercy to your offspring. [3.] Take care that your children lose none of these advantages by your negligence. Some of them, as ye have heard, are of such a nature, that depends not only upon the being of grace in the parents, but upon its exercise. If ye live not holily and tenderly before them, ye may lay a stumbling-block in their way, which may cost you dear. The negligence of some godly parents this way, hath been heavy to them when they came to die, and sometimes even before. [4.] Do not quarrel God, or repine, if, after all, your children shall fall short of salvation. If ye have acquit yourselves

selves faithfully, then ye have and may have peace, though they prove final misimprovers of their own mercies. Christ has nowhere promised that they shall be all saved: the word of God gives a contrary account of the matter: "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated," Rom. ix. 13.

2dly, Are there here any who are the children of believers? Then, to such I say, [1.] Ye have great advantages, and therefore have an eminent call to thankfulness. Bless God that ye have religious parents. Many have found it not a little relieving to them in their straits and fears, that they could say, that they were early devoted to God by their parents, and that they had early access to know God, and had prayers early put up for them. [2.] Rest not upon these advantages; for your parents faith will not save you. Think not to say within yourselves, we have a believer to our father, and therefore all will be well. Esau had such an one to his father, and yet went to hell; and not a few others have gone the same way. Nay, [3.] I say to you, if ye shall be damned, all these advantages will be witnesses against you. Your fathers devoted you to God, but ye devoted yourselves to Satan; your fathers prayed for you, but ye prayed not for yourselves. These and many such will come in against you, as aggravations of your sin, and will eternally aggravate your misery. [4.] Therefore ye are called to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Since, if ye be ruined, ye must be so with a witness; if ye go to hell, it must be a hotter hell; therefore improve vigorously the advantages put in your hand. Resolve with Moses, Exod. xv. 2. "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; he is my father's God, and I will exalt him." [5.] Pay a double respect to your believing parents. Ye owe them much as your parents, much as believers, much as in Christ before you, and much as instruments made use of by God in promoting your eternal well-being. [6.] Take care that ye turn not aside out of their way; since this will prove eminently prejudicial, not only to yourselves, but to your posterity. In fine,

I say to you, if ye trace your parents steps, ye shall attain their blessing, even the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

3dly, I have a few words from this head to say to unbelieving parents. Ye are miserable yourselves; for he that believeth not "is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." Ye entail as many disadvantages upon your posterity, as believers transmit advantages to theirs; ye deprive them of many means which they might enjoy, ye ruin them by your example, ye provoke God against your families; in fine, ye do what in you lies to ruin them eternally; so that, not only your own blood, but the blood of their souls, will God require at your hands. Therefore, as ye tender their eternal advantage, as ye tender your own, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

4thly, I have a few words to say to the children of irreligious parents, and then I shall proceed. Ye are at a great loss indeed by your parents infidelity and impiety; yet it is not an irreparable one, for the door is open to you, and ye are called to enter in. The promise of salvation is not only to believers, and to their children, but it is to "all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," Acts ii. 39. Therefore lay hold upon the advantage that ye have of mercy offered to you upon the gospel-terms. See that ye believe in the Lord Jesus. Be very thankful to God; and admire the riches of his undeserved kindness, in having a regard to you, and calling you, notwithstanding your own iniquities, and the iniquity of your fathers. Take care that ye transmit not these inconveniences, that ye yourselves lie under, to your posterity. And, if ever the Lord do you good, seek by all means the salvation of your parents; and if ye obtain not an answer of peace with respect to them, then I can assure you, your prayers shall return into your own bosom, and so ye shall be no losers.

Thus far have we prosecuted the last clause of the verse, to which we design not to return again: we shall now proceed to that which is our principal design, in
the

the discovery of Jesus Christ, as the only relief of sinners, as the only one that can effectually quiet the conscience of an awakened sinner.

We have sufficiently explained the words already; that which I shall now insist upon at some length from them, is expressed in the following doctrine.

Doct.—“An awakened sinner, betaking himself to, or believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved.”

I think there is no need of any proof of the doctrine, it lies so plain in the words, and is so frequently asserted in the scripture, that one shall scarce look into the book of God, but he shall find some one proof or other of this truth. In the prosecution of this doctrine, we shall, if the Lord will, follow this method.

I. We shall tell you who this convinced sinner is, of whom we speak in the doctrine.

II. We shall offer you some account of the Lord Jesus, in whom he is to believe.

III. We shall shortly explain several scripture-expressions which point out this duty, that from them we may understand something of its nature; and then,

IV. We shall hold forth the nature of this faith in a few particulars, which may receive light from the former general head.

V. We shall inquire, what that salvation is which they shall have who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

VI. We shall offer some evidences of the truth of the doctrine, and then apply the whole, if the Lord allow time, and opportunity, and strength.

I. We begin with the first of these, which is, to show who this convinced sinner is, that shall obtain salvation on his believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall offer you his character in the few following particulars, in as far as we think it needful for our present design; for that it is in some measure requisite, is plain, since none can be saved but such as believe, and none can

believe but convinced and awakened sinners. Take then the character of such an one, thus :

First, He is an ungodly man. It is only such as are ungodly who are saved by believing in Jesus: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, is his faith counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5. Persons who are not ungodly have no need of Jesus; and persons who see not themselves to be such will never look after him.

Secondly, He is one that sees himself, upon this account, obnoxious to the judgement of God, even that righteous judicial sentence, that he who committeth sin is worthy of death. He sees himself lying open to the curse of the law, to the death it threatens against sinners. When the law says, "The soul that sins shall die," the sinner hears his own doom in that sentence, because he sees his name in the sentence. The sentence is against the soul that sins, and this he knows to be his very name.

Thirdly, He is a self-condemned man. He not only hears God passing sentence against him, but he passeth sentence against himself. Thus it is with every convinced sinner; he is as severe to himself as God, or the law of God, can be: whatever these charge him with, all that he takes with; whatever they determine to be done against him, he writes down under it, *Just; the Lord is righteous, for I have offended.*

Fourthly, He is one that has his mouth stopped, as the apostle speaks, Rom. iii. 16. He has sinned, and he is sensible that there is no hiding of it. He is guilty, and there is no excuse. He is every way *shut up under sin*, as the word properly signifies, Gal. iii. 22. "The scripture hath concluded all under sin;" that is, according to the force of the word, the scripture hath every way *shut up*, or *shut in*, all under sin, "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." In one word, he is a criminal, that has got such a sight of his crime, that he dare neither deny it, nor endeavour to hide it, nor extenuate it, but subscribes to the truth of all that the law of God and his own conscience

conscience charge him with. As for the sentence passed against him, he subscribes it just: he knows that he cannot flee from it, nor is able to undergo it. He is an enemy to God, brought to such a strait, that he is able neither to fight nor to flee. And when he looks to himself, and all those things he once laid some weight upon, he sees no prospect of relief. Such an one is the convinced sinner we speak of; and such of you as never were brought to this pass, never did believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This being once cleared, we proceed now,

II. To give some account of the Lord Jesus Christ, on whom he is called to believe. Here ye are not to expect a full account of Christ; this none can give; nor shall I at large insist on what may be known of him, but only glance at a few things, which suit the case of the convinced sinner, of whom we have just now been speaking. And this we shall do in a few particulars.

First, The Lord Jesus Christ, on whom we are bid believe, is "Immanuel, God with us," God in our nature, God man in one person. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And the Word that in the beginning was with God, and was God, in the fulness of time "was made flesh, and dwelt among men upon earth, who did behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." This the apostle John doth evince at great length; this he expressly teaches, in the first chapter of his Gospel, and the first fourteen or fifteen verses of it. Now, this discovery of Christ is extremely encouraging to a sinner, who is under the deep conviction of sin, as was the jailor in the text. If ye tell such an one, when he cries out with him, *What must I do to be saved?* Go, believe on God, it would give him no relief, for all his fears are from God; it is destruction from God that is his terror. He sees the holiness, the truth, the wisdom, and justice of God, all breathing out threatenings against him. Holiness cannot look upon an impure sinner. The truth of God has become surety for his destruction; the justice of God pleads it reasonable that the sinner should be punished,

and thereby evil taken away, God's honour, and the honour of his law repaired; and wisdom is so deeply interested in every one of these claims, that it seems to join with them. Hence it is that the sinner is horribly afraid of God. So far would he be from looking toward him, that, like Adam, he would flee from him, and endeavour to hide himself. What would such a poor trembling sinner reply unto any who should bid him believe in God? Shall I believe on him who threatens me with destruction, on him, all whose attributes conspire, and that most justly, my everlasting destruction? He has told me already what I am to expect at his hand, even sure and inevitable death: "In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die." This God is a consuming fire, and I am as stubble before him. On the other hand, tell such a convinced sinner of a man, a mere man, and bid him look to him for relief; this at first blush appears utterly vain. What! are not all men involved in the same calamity with me? are they not unable to save themselves? What! is man able to sustain the weight of that heavy stroke of wrath, which enraged Omnipotency is ready to lay on? Thus it appears, neither mere God, nor mere man, is suited to give relief to the sinner of whom we speak; but God and man united in one appears exceedingly suited to give him relief. There are three things which an awakened sinner will see, at the first view, in the person of Christ. (1.) He will see him to be one that may be approached by him. When one is made sensible of his own sinfulness, so far will he be from desiring a sight of God, that he will rather faint at the thoughts of it, since he dreads he cannot see him and live. Nay, such is the weakness of man since the fall, that the sight even of a created angel has made some of the most eminent saints exceedingly afraid, as we have instances more than one in the scripture. But there is not that dread in the sight of one that is clothed with flesh, that appears in the likeness even of sinful flesh, Rom. viii. 3. as to deter from approaching to him. Nay, on the contrary, will not every one in this case readily draw near, in expectation of relief from such an one,

one, knowing him to be "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh?" This is one of the excellencies in Christ's person that ravishes the heart of a sinner that is looking out for relief. (2.) The person of Christ, thus consisting of the divine and human nature united in one, appears notably fitted for undertaking the work of a days-man betwixt an angry God and rebel sinners. He is equally interested in both parties: being God, he knows exactly what all the properties of God do demand of sinners; and being man, he knows well what man's state is. Thus the sinner's fear is removed, that there is "not a days-man who should lay his hand upon the head of both parties," as Job expresses it. (3.) A convinced sinner here sees one, not only capable to know, but even to be "touched with the feeling of his infirmities, who withal has wisdom and power to improve any sense he has of our misery to our advantage. This is what the convinced sinner with admiration views in Christ, who is the great "mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh."

Secondly, The Lord Jesus Christ is cloathed with a threefold office, for the behoof and advantage of such as shall believe on him. He is a King, a Priest, and a Prophet: and each of these is exceedingly suited to the relief of an awakened sinner, as we may hear afterwards.

1st, I say he is a *Prophet*; and as such he was promised of old to the church by Moses: "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you from among your brethren," says he. Because this scripture furnishes us with a full account of Christ's prophetic office, we may take a view of it at some length. So then that text runs, "I will (says God) raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken to my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him," Deut. xviii. 18. 19. Now, in this scripture we have so full an account of Christ's prophetic office, with respect to our present design, that I cannot better

unfold this matter than by making some remarks upon it. And, (1.) Here we see that Christ is indeed a Prophet; for so he is expressly called, and as such he is here promised. That it is Christ whom Moses here intends, the Spirit of God has long since, by the mouth of the apostle Peter, fully determined, Acts iii. 22. (2.) Here we see his call to that office. "I will raise up a Prophet," says God; that is, I will call and set one apart for that work. (3.) We see further his furniture for the work: "I will put my words in his mouth." (4.) We see what his work and business is: it is to speak to them all that is commanded him of God; to deliver to them the whole counsel of God for their salvation. (5.) Here we see who the persons are to whom God has a regard, in the designation of Christ to this office; they are sinners, sensible that it was impossible for them to hear God speak to them immediately, and yet live; which put them upon that desire expressed in the 16th verse of this chapter: "Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God; neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not." (6.) We moreover see God's design in appointing Christ a Prophet, even a compliance with the desires and necessities of convinced sinners. This appears plainly to be his design, if ye observe the connection betwixt the 15th and 16th verses of this chapter. The Lord promises, in the 15th verse, Christ to be a Prophet; and in the 16th he tells, that it was, according to their desires, in Horeb. (7.) We may further take notice of the qualifications which they desire in this Prophet, and which Christ accordingly is endued with; and they are, that he be one of themselves, one who by his greatness should not be a terror to them, and that he be faithful in declaring to them all that the Lord should acquaint him with. Thus we see in some measure, and hereafter may see more fully, of what use it is to sinners, in order to their believing on Christ, that he be a Prophet.

2dly, The Lord Jesus Christ is "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," Psal, cx. 4. God having made him so by an oath. And in his discharge of
this

this office doth no small part of the concernment of awakened sinners lie. It is not my design at present to enter upon any large discourse of this office of Christ. I must here take notice of, and open up the nature of this office, in order to that end and scope which we now drive at, the relief of convinced sinners. I shall not stand upon a recital of all the acts which do belong to this office, of which not a few might be mentioned. There are two which deserve especial consideration, his oblation, and his intercession thereupon. The first is the foundation of the second. Now, that ye may understand what advantage flows from this office to the persons of whom we discourse, I shall a little inquire, who the person is to whom Christ offers sacrifice, who they are for whom he doth so, who he is that offers sacrifice, and what that sacrifice is that he offers: and, upon the whole, it will appear of how great advantage this office is to sinners, and how much he is thereby fitted to be the object of sinners faith. I shall only touch at such things here as are indispensably needful in order to lay a foundation for faith.

1. As for the person to whom he offers sacrifice, and with whom he intercedes, no doubt it is God only; and that as he is the just, the sin-revenging God, who has declared, that he "will by no means clear the guilty;" nay, "that the soul that sinneth shall die." There was no place for sacrifices before God was incensed by sin. It had no place under the first covenant, wherein Adam was allowed to come into the presence of God, without any interposal on his behalf by any other. God being then well pleased with him, he had acceptance with God, and by virtue of his acceptance, had a right to, and might ask and have whatever was needful for his happiness. But, upon the entry of sin into the world, God's favour was turned into anger and indignation against sinful man. This cuts him off from the expectation of advantage by God; nay more, threatens him with inevitable ruin and destruction from him, without the interposal of some one or other, as a Priest to appease the wrath of the sin-revenging God. Whence,

2. It is easy to understand who the persons are for whom he offers sacrifice. They are sinners, who are obnoxious to the wrath of God upon the account of sin ; who not only are cast out of the favour of God, but moreover are lying open to the stroke of vindictive justice. And this,

3. Clears to us who he is that must interpose as a Priest. He must be one acceptable to God : " Such an High Priest (says the apostle) became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," Heb. vii. 26. One who, upon the account of his own sins, was obnoxious to the just indignation of God, could be of no use to sinners in this matter. Again, he must be one who was capable of being affected with the feeling of our infirmities, that he might have compassion upon us : and upon this account it is that the apostle says, Heb. ii. 17. " That it behoved Christ to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people ; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted : " For, as the same apostle has it, Heb. iv. 15. " We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." In fine, he must be one called of God to this office ; for no man takes to himself this office, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." All which qualifications are found in Christ, and in him only, " who is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession."

4. We are to consider what that sacrifice is, which Christ, as a Priest, doth offer unto an incensed God for sinners. That he should have something to offer, is absolutely needful upon account of the office : " For every high-priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices ; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer," Heb. viii. 3. What that sacrifice was, the same apostle tells, Heb. ix. 13. " For (saith he) if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much

much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?" The sacrifice he offers is himself.

What has been said of Christ's priestly office, I shall bring home to the business in hand, in the few following particulars. From what has been said, it appears, that the case betwixt God and sinful man stands plainly thus.

(1.) Man has sinned, and thereby provoked God to wrath. (2.) Incensed justice lays hold of sinful man, takes him, and, like Isaac, binds him, and lifts the hand with the knife in it, to fetch a stroke down upon the sinner. (3.) In this case, no prayers, no tears of the sinner, nay, nor any thing that the sinner can think upon, can avail: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not," says our Lord, Heb. x. 5. (4.) While things are in this desperate condition with the sinner, Christ, being made a Priest, as has been said, by virtue of his office, steps in, and pleads for the sinner, and offers himself in the sinner's room, to suffer what justice was ready to have inflicted upon the sinner. (5.) Justice accepts of the sacrifice of this Lamb of God's providing, and lets the sinner go, but slays the sacrifice. (6.) This being done, God is appeased; he has no more to charge the sinner with, for the sacrifice has suffered; nay more, the sacrifice being of infinitely more value than the sinner, doth deserve and purchase a great many favours for him, all which this High Priest takes care to have bestowed on him; that is to say, he intercedes for him, that he may lose none of these things which Christ has purchased for him; for his intercession is nothing else but that care, if I may so speak, which the High Priest of our profession takes, that all those for whom he did offer himself a sacrifice obtain the advantage of that sacrifice. And of how great use this office is to such sinners as are in the jailor's case, may appear in part from what has already been discoursed on this head, and may more fully appear from what we shall afterwards discourse on the same. Now we come,

3^{dly}, To speak of Christ's being a King. As he is
by

by God appointed to be a Prophet and a Priest, so is he likewise to be a King: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion," Psal. ii. 6. His professed adherence to this cost him his life. This was his charge, that he made himself a King. I cannot stand to speak of all these things which do belong to Christ's kingly office. I shall only hint at a few things which are of especial use to our present purpose. (1.) He has power and authority, by virtue of this office, to enact all such laws as may contribute to the good and advantage of his subjects. (2.) He has power to reduce all such as do belong to his kingdom to his obedience: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," says God to him, Psal. cx. 3. Sometimes the subjects of his kingdom do rebel against him; but he makes them by his power willingly to submit to him. (3.) He has power to protect his subjects against all their enemies; and hereupon it is that the church's confidence is founded, Isa. xxxiii. 22. "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us." (4.) He has power entirely to make a conquest of all his enemies; for "he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet," 1 Cor. xv. 25. In fine, he has a power whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself, "all power being given him in heaven and in earth;" and being made "head over all things to the church," he will take care to employ and lay out all for the advantage, peace, rest, and stability, of his church and people. But, leaving this, we proceed,

Thirdly, To give a further account of the Lord Jesus Christ, on whom sinners are called to believe. Two things we have said of him; one, that he is God in our nature; the other, that he is clothed with a threefold office. We add, in the next place, as the consequence of what has been said of him, that he is one in whom the convinced sinner will find relief against a threefold evil, under which he lies. There are three things which do exceedingly burden the conscience of a sinner in any good measure awakened, ignorance, guilt, and the power of sin. 1st, He finds himself extremely ignorant, perfectly

in the dark, as to the mind and will of God. He knows not what hand he shall turn to, what is sin, or what is duty, whether he had best lie still, or move out of his present state; or if he find it ruining to lie still, he knows not what course to betake himself to. Now, for this plague, which is one of the dismal consequences of man's apostacy from God, there is relief in Christ's prophetic office, by which he doth translate sinners out of darkness into his marvellous light. What before was hid from the eyes of all living, that he reveals to sinners. That there were any thoughts of mercy or grace for sinners in the heart of God, could never have been known by any, had not Christ revealed it; for, "no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. *2dly*, Man is pressed down with guilt, and it is only in Christ's priestly office that the awakened sinner can find relief against this; for there is no way of purging the conscience from dead works, but only by the application of the blood of Christ, who offered himself to God, through the eternal Spirit, for this very end. *3dly*, In him there is relief against the power of sin, which is one part, and that no small part, of the misery which man fell under by his apostacy from God. He is insulted over, and enslaved by sin; and there never was, nor can there ever be any relief for him, but only in Christ, who has a power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. He can strengthen the weak, and make the unwilling to become willing, by a day of his power, and turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Moreover,

Fourthly, The Lord Jesus Christ is one in whom the sinner finds a threefold tormenting scruple fully satisfied. When the Lord opens the sinner's eyes, and gives him a view of his condition, how matters stand betwixt God and him, then there are three things which lie exceedingly heavy upon the sinner. *1st*, Where shall I get one that has ability sufficient to undertake for me? The sinner sees so much needful to be done in order to his relief, that he can think of none in heaven or earth that is

able

able to relieve him. He is, as it were, laid in a grave that has a stone rolled to the door; and many a time is he forced to put the question, Who will roll away the stone? He sees mountains lying in the way, and cannot think of an arm sufficient to lift them. In Christ only can he be satisfied. He it is who is the "mighty one, on whom the Lord has laid help," Psal. lxxxix. 29. one chosen out of the people for that very end, that he might be the strength of such as put their trust in him. He is the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength. *2dly*, When the sinner hears of one that is able, this gives him no relief; for presently another doubt perplexes him, and fills his soul with anxiety: Here indeed I see ability sufficient; Oh! but I fear he has no mind to employ and lay out his ability that way. This made many, in the days of Christ's flesh, when he lived upon earth, come to him with their hearts full of fear; they doubted he might not be willing to employ his skill, to lay out his ability for their help and relief. "If thou wilt, (said the leper), thou canst make me clean," Matth. viii. 2.; and so says the sinner. Now, in the discovery of Christ that is here made, we may see an answer to this doubt. As he is the Lord, one that has all power in heaven and in earth; whence it is that he is mighty to save; so he is Jesus, one that is willing, and designs to lay out and improve his ability that way. But here, *3dly*, Another doubt may stare the sinner broad in the face: There is perhaps wanting a commission for the work: the Lord Jesus Christ wants neither power nor will; but I much question the Father's willingness. This many times sticks long with distressed sinners. But in this person there is answer to this as well as the former: He is Christ, him hath God the Father sealed, anointed, and set apart for that very work. He it is that hath exalted him to be a Saviour, and put power in his hand for completing his work, and saving to the utmost all that came to God through him.

Fifthly, Christ, as cloathed with his threefold office, is able to remove a threefold obstruction that stood in the way

way of the sinner's salvation and happiness, arising from the nature of God. *1st*, Justice had a plea against the sinner, and stood betwixt him and salvation. The sentence of justice is, that he who doth sin is worthy of death. Well, the sinner that believes in Christ answers, I am dead, I suffered in Christ. *2dly*, Holiness says, Nothing shall approach it that is impure. Well, Christ says, I have power to purge them from their filth by the spirit of judgement and of burning. *3dly*, But then the difficulty remains, as to the discovery of this to the sinner. If God should call him to blessedness, he could not bear it: but here Christ undertakes to be the messenger to impart the welcome news, that all these rubs are out of the way. These things I only name, because I have hinted at them already: and hereafter, if the Lord give life and strength, I may have occasion to treat them more accurately and distinctly. At present, we design rather soundness than accuracy, rather satisfaction to the distressed than pleasure to the curious inquirer.

Sixthly, Christ is one who is able to do the sinner a threefold kindness with respect to his spiritual adversaries. Three things they do against the sinner. *1st*, They charge him with things that he cannot deny. *2dly*, They lay deep contrivances against him that he cannot discover. *3dly*, They fall upon him with a force that he is not able to resist, and thereby endeavour his ruin. As for the *first*, Christ puts an answer in the sinner's mouth to all Satan's charges against him. As to the *second*, he gives him wisdom to escape his snares to know the depths of Satan. And as to the *last*, he furnishes him with power, whereby he is made more than a conqueror over all enemies that put themselves in his way.

Seventhly, That there may be nothing wanting, this Lord Jesus Christ is one who can satisfy the mind, the conscience, and heart of sinful man. He fills the mind with light; he pacifies the conscience, and stills its disorders; and he presents to the will a suitable object. He as a Prophet opens blind eyes, and enlightens a dark mind; as a Priest, he stops the mouth of a disturbed and disturbing

disturbing conscience ; and as a King, he bestows upon man what is sufficient to content his heart, even himself, and all things else.

Eighthly, To conclude all, he is one offered in the gospel for all these glorious ends to all who need him. He has bid all that are weary and heavy laden come to him, and has promised them welcome. He is one whom God has in the everlasting gospel proposed as the object of faith, on whom sinners are allowed, warranted, nay, commanded to believe, in order to their salvation. These things we shall not any further insist on at present. I come now,

III. To mention and open up these scripture-expressions whereby this duty of believing is held forth, and that are of the same import with that in the text. This is a duty whereupon salvation and damnation do depend ; therefore the Lord has taken great care to make its nature plain ; and because sinners are of many different sorts, and have different ways of taking up their condition, the Lord has expressed it so many ways, that every one may see that the duty is suitable to their circumstances, and expressed in a way that is adapted to their capacity. This inquiry we are now to enter upon, may be of great use ; therefore we shall insist at the more length upon it. Some are ignorant of the nature of faith, know not what it is. This inquiry is like to lead them into an understanding of that duty, which is the foundation of all others, without which they signify nothing in order to the salvation of such as perform them. Others know what faith is, but are not confirmed in their apprehensions of its nature, and therefore may be easily induced to think themselves in a mistake. To such it will be of notable use to understand, that the thoughts of its nature lean upon the plain meaning of so many scripture-expressions. In fine, this inquiry is like to bring down the thing to the capacity of every one of you who will give heed, since such as cannot take it up under one notion may under another. And I might add, that it may be of use to confirm such as have faith, that it is so, and to convince them who want it, that they do so.

And

And, to conclude all, it will give light to the next general head, and confirm the description we design to give of it. These things have induced me, not only to inquire into the several expressions whereby the scriptures hold forth this duty, but to insist upon them at somewhat more length than we are wont to use upon such occasions. This being premised for shewing the use of this inquiry, we come now to enter upon it.

First, Then, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is "to look unto him," Isa. xlv. 22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." And to the same purpose is that of the apostle, Heb. xii. 1. 2. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." I conceive that the Spirit of God in this expression alludes to the brazen serpent set up in the wilderness. The children of Israel sinned against the Lord; therefore he sent fiery serpents, which stung them, and many died of their wounds. The Lord, in his pity, notwithstanding the dishonour they had done to him, was pleased to ordain the erection of a brazen serpent upon a pole, that whoever was stung might look to it, and be saved from death. Just so all men are stung by sin; and all men had died of the wound, had not God been pleased to set up Jesus Christ, and given command, that all who feel the smart of sin should look unto him and be saved. In this expression we may see what is the nature of faith. *1st*, We see who it is that believe: it is one that is stung, a sinner that is sensible of the smart of sin. Such, and such only, will believe. The whole Israelites, such as were not touched, or such as were not sensible that they were touched and stung by the serpents, would not look to the brazen serpent: they had no business to do with it; it was none of their concernment; it had no use to them. Just so is it with whole sinners, that were never pained at the heart for sin; they see no occasion for Christ, and cannot under-stand

stand of what use he is. *2dly*, We see here what it is that gives rise to faith; it is a smarting sense of present pain and future danger. The men that were stung found themselves ill, and saw ground to dread they might be worse, since the sting was mortal; this made them look. And this makes sinners look to Jesus Christ; they find the poison of sin already tormenting them, and they see that this is but the beginning of sorrows, the distemper being mortal. *3dly*, Here we see what it is to which the sinner looks; it is unto Jesus, and that as he is God, and a God laying out himself for the salvation of sinners. It is God, and none else, that must save sinners, if they be saved. *4thly*, We may here see further, how the sinner looks to him, and what he looks at in him; which is, that he is the ordinance of God's appointment for his salvation, and proposed as such. Moreover, *5thly*, Here we see what faith itself is; for this expression of it, "looking to Jesus," plainly imports, (1.) That the person is convinced of the sufficiency of that remedy that God has appointed. (2.) Expectation of relief from it. And, (3.) The heart's resting here, and trusting to it for healing, without betaking itself to any other thing, from a conviction of its own need on the one hand, and of the sufficiency of this relief on the other.

Secondly, To believe on Jesus Christ, is "to come to him." So faith is expressed, both in the Old and in the New Testament. In that forecited 45th of Isaiah, we find that the Lord presses his people to believe, under the notion of looking to him, in ver. 22.; and we find, that, in the following verses, he promises that they shall obey this command, that they shall believe; and then he expresses faith by coming: "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." The same duty we find expressed by the prophet Jeremiah, in the same manner: "Return, (says the Lord), ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings," Jer. iii. 22. To which they answer, "Behold we come unto thee; for

for thou art the Lord our God." And what their errand is, the promise God makes in the beginning of the verse, and the profession they make in the following, plainly enough insinuates, it is to get healing to their backslidings; and it is to get that salvation from him which they had in vain looked for from the hills and multitude of mountains. And faith is frequently held forth by this same expression in the New Testament also, John vi. 35. 37. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." And he complains, John v. 40. that they "would not come to him that they might have life." Now, the Spirit of God, expressing faith thus, gives us to understand, *1st*, What the state of persons is before they do believe: They are at a distance from God, like the prodigal in a far country, not near his father's house, where he sustains many inconveniences, suffers hunger and thirst, is oppressed by enemies, and, in one word, meets with all inconveniences that tend to imbitter his life to him, and kill him out-right at the long-run. (2.) Here the Lord insinuates to us what is the rise or the occasions of the sinner's motion, or of his believing, both upon God's part, and upon the sinner's part. Upon the sinner's part, it is a conviction, a smarting sense of present want, and of future wrath. He is hungry, and can have no food; he is thirsty, and can have no drink; and unless he gets food and drink, he knows he must die. He feels the present smart and pain, and knows he must suffer more, if he gets not a supply. The starving prodigal was hungry, and would have been glad of the scantiest allowance; but he could not have it in that unhappy place where he was. Just so is it with sinners, when at a distance from Christ; when the Lord opens their eyes, to see what their condition is, a pressing sense of want following thereupon is, as it were, the spring of their motion toward the Lord Jesus Christ. On the Lord's part, that which occasions, nay causes, this coming, is his calling them, and his drawing them. He
calls

calls them to come unto him, Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And he powerfully draws them to him; for no man can come, except he be drawn. Therefore we find the Lord promising peremptorily in that just now quoted scripture," Isa. xlv. 24. that "unto him shall men come." (3.) We see to whom a sinner comes by faith; it is to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom there is righteousness and strength to be had, which is matter of glorifying to poor sinners. (4.) We see what this coming itself is; it is the same with believing on him. And, [1.] This way of expressing faith imports, that the sinner despairs of being relieved where he is. If the prodigal could have been supplied where he was, he would not have come home; so neither would sinners. [2.] It imports a persuasion, not only of Christ's sufficiency, but his willingness; or, at least, that he is not unwilling that we should be bettered by his sufficiency, and have supplies for our wants, according to the riches of his glory. [3.] It imports the soul's rejection of all other things which have any appearance of relief in them; for when we come to one, we go from all the rest. [4.] It imports an expectation of relief from him; this holds the soul moving, and without this it could not move. In fine, the whole of this matter of deliberation, after felt insufficiency in other things, the soul comes to and acquiesces in Christ for salvation.

Thirdly, To believe on Christ, is "to flee, to run to him." He is that "strong tower, to which the righteous run and are safe," Prov. xviii. 10. And to the same purpose is that of the apostle, Heb. vi. 18. where God is said, by two immutable things, to provide for the strong consolation of such as have "fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them."

This expression takes in all that is in the former; for coming is included in flying and running, yet the expressions of running and flying import something more, viz. the sinner's being exceedingly moved by a sight of his danger, and his extraordinary earnestness to be out of harm's way. The awakened sinner is like the man-
slayer

layer of old: he was safe no where but in the city of refuge; therefore he run thither. He was obnoxious to justice; the avenger of blood had a commission to kill any murderer he found out of this city. So is it with sinners; they are in continual hazard of their life. Justice has a plea against them, and pursues them. Death is, as it were, the serjeant that closely follows the guilty; and if it overtake them before they get into the city of refuge, then they are gone; it will kill them doubly, it will put an end to their present life, and prove the beginning of eternal misery to them: "How excellent (says the Psalmist) is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings," Psal. xxxvi. 7. It is the excellency of God's loving-kindness, as revealed to sinners in Christ Jesus, that engages sinners to betake themselves to him, and trust under the shadow of his wings; as the pursued birds are wont to betake themselves to the clam, and there to shelter themselves.

Fourthly, To believe is to "roll over our burden upon the Lord Jesus Christ," Psal. xxii. 8. The word that is here rendered *trusted*, in the first language signifies *rolling over*. *He trusted in the Lord*, that is, *he rolled himself over upon the Lord*. Hence it is that we find our Lord inviting such as are weary and heavy laden to come to him, that they may find rest to their souls. Sin is one of the heaviest of burdens; man would sink under it quite. Every one that feels the weight of their sins, will with the Psalmist own, that they are too heavy for them to bear. "Mine iniquities (says he) are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me," Psal. xxxix. 4. They proved a burden so heavy to the angels that sinned, that its weight sunk them into the bottomless pit. They are at this day so heavy, that the whole creation groans under the pressure and weight of them, Rom. viii. 22. They who have the first fruits of the Spirit, and so have, as it were, the heaviest end of the burden taken off them, yet do groan, being burdened, 2 Cor. v. 4. The very being of sin, though its guilt be taken away, is such a burden

as

as the saints find it hard to bear. In every one of these we might take notice of all the particulars formerly noted in the two first scripture-expressions which we insisted upon; but it is needless to repeat the same things over and over.

Fifthly, To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is to "put on the Lord Jesus," Rom. xiii. 14. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus." Man by nature is, like Adam, naked; and though he endeavour to cover himself with fig-leaf aprons of his own framing, it will not serve his turn; it will not hide his nakedness, nor will it preserve him from the storms of wrath, that are the necessary consequences of sin. No robe can cover him, but that of Christ's imputed righteousness; and to believe is to put on Christ for righteousness. Now, here we see, (1.) What man's state without Christ is: he has no ornament, the shame of his nakedness is seen, and he is exposed to storms. (2.) Here we see what is that cloathing that sinners betake themselves to: it is Christ; they come to him for white raiment, that is for beauty and glory, and covering their shame. (3.) We see wherein the nature of faith lies; and we may take it up in three things. [1.] The sinner sees in Christ what is sufficient for ornament, for hiding of his nakedness, and preserving from the injury of the storm. [2.] He being convinced of his need, puts Christ as a covering betwixt him and spectators, that when they look to him he is not seen, but only Christ. His deformity is hidden under Christ's beauty and glory. [3.] The sinner rests here; he thinks of no other covering or ornament.

Sixthly, To believe on Christ, is "to receive him," John i. 2. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." And elsewhere it is expressed in the same manner; only the object is varied, for they who believe are said to receive remission of sins, Acts x. 43.; and to receive the atonement, Rom. v. 11. Here we may again understand something of the nature of faith: for here we see, (1.) Who he is that believes: He is one that wants Christ; he is one that wants righteousness;

teousness; one that is condemned to die, and wants a pardon. (2.) We see what it is that faith eyes, that the sensible sinner receives; it is Christ, and all with him, as offered to him; for as he is said to receive Christ, so is he said to receive remission of sins, &c.: and it is most certain, that none can separate Christ and his benefits; he that takes one takes all. (3.) We see what faith is; it is the acceptation of what is offered for the ends for which it is offered. Christ and all his purchase is made offer of to sinners, and that freely; and they accept of the offer, and receive him.

Seventhly, To believe on the Lord Jesus, is "to lean upon him," to "stay ourselves upon him." "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?" Cant. viii. 5. that is, believing on her beloved. And in the like manner doth the prophet Isaiah express himself, Isa. l. 10. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Now, here we again may see what the sinner's state is before he doth believe: he is in a tottering condition; he is not able to stand under the weight of that burden he has upon him. He is not able to abide the shock of the storm that is blowing against him: if he get not something to lean to, he must fall; and if he fall, he is crushed entirely; for he stands upon the brink of the pit, and if he falls, he falls into that pit whence there is no redemption. If he miss a step, and plunge into the pit, there is no stepping up thence again: this he sees to be his case; he is sensible of his danger, and sees Christ able to support him, to establish him; therefore he leans to him; he expects to be able to stand the shock of all the storms that can blow against him in his dependence on him.

Eighthly, To believe on Christ, is "to lay hold on him, to take hold of his strength." "Let him take hold of my strength, (says the Lord), that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me," Isa. xxvii. 5. And it is called a taking hold of God's co-

K

venant,

venant, Isa. lvi. 4. And in the New Testament it is called an apprehending of Christ, Phil. iii. 12. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus." And, Heb. vi. 18. it is called "a laying hold on the hope set before us." The sinner is like to sink; and seeing Christ by him, he catches hold of him, to keep him from sinking. We might multiply other expressions of faith, such as, cleaving to the Lord, opening to Christ, submitting to the righteousness of God, 2 Kings viii. 5. Deut. iv. 4. These we pass, not designing a full enumeration, but what may lay a foundation for the following inquiry, and lead us into the meaning of this word used in the text. We might have insisted in shewing these three or four last expressions to be comprehensive of all the particulars noticed in the two or three first expressions: but what is obvious needs not be insisted upon. We shall therefore wave the explication of any more texts to this purpose, and proceed,

IV. To inquire what is implied in this duty enjoined in the text, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*. This inquiry will be easy, after such a foundation has been laid in the preceding. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, implies, then,

First, A sense of sin and misery. This is plain from all the expressions whereby the Spirit of God elsewhere points forth this duty. There is not one of them but carries in it an indication of this. The stung Israelite is sensible of his smart and danger, before he looks to the brazen serpent. The prodigal knows his want, before he thinks of coming to his father's house. The man-slayer understands his sin and danger, before he flees to the city of refuge. The burdened sinner is sensible of the weight of sin, before he roll it over upon another: and the like may be said of all the rest of the expressions mentioned; putting on, receiving, leaning to, laying hold of, opening, and cleaving to the Lord Jesus Christ. All of them plainly intimate this, that a sense of sin and danger is the ground-work of this duty, necessarily

necessarily presupposed to, and implied in it. And, moreover, we may not only understand, that the sense of sin and misery is implied in the duty, but also what sort of a sense of these it is, which is requisite, and which is implied. And,

1. By these expressions we may see, that it is a distinct and particular knowledge of our sin and misery. The sinner that betakes himself to Christ by faith, knows his sore, understands well the evil he labours under. It is not a confused and general apprehension of danger, such as persons who are melancholy sometimes fall under, without understanding what it is, or whence it flows; but they can tell distinctly what it is that pains them. The stung man knows where he is wounded. The prodigal can tell what he wants. The man-slayer can tell why he makes such haste to the city of refuge. The burdened sinner can tell, that it is a load upon him, under the weight of which he is like to be crushed, that makes him flee to one that has shoulders able to carry it.

2. This sense of sin and misery, as it is distinct, so is deep. A great many of those who live under the gospel, and are furnished with any tolerable measure of knowledge, it may be, can tell pretty distinctly their sin and danger, and, it may be, know likewise many particular sins they are guilty of: yet their sense, however distinct, is not deep. But such as do believe have a deep sense of sin and misery. It is such a sense as is fixed, and has rooting in the mind; it engrosses the thoughts, and fills the mind with apprehensions about the soul's state and condition. And, moreover, it doth not hold here, but sinks down upon the heart, and takes hold of the affections, and fills them likewise. Fear, grief, hatred, and revenge, take their turns in the soul; grief for the offence done to God; fear for the consequence of it, with respect to ourselves; hatred against sin, and self-revenge, because of our folly in loading on the guilt of so much sin upon ourselves. Many in the visible church who will pretend they are sensible of sin, have never, it may be, to this day been affected

affected with it ; never had any grief or fear, any hatred or revenge against it, and themselves on its account. Such persons, pretend what they will, are indeed strangers to faith, and one day will be found so. The man that flees for his life to the city of refuge, not only knows what he has done, and what sin deserves, but moreover has a deep impression of both. What do ye think was it that busied the man's thoughts, when fleeing to the city of refuge? Certainly his sin and danger were the things that stuck with him, and affected his heart with fear, which made him flee a main to the city of refuge : and the like might be said with respect to the other expressions of faith.

3. This sense of sin and misery is a pressing apprehension of both ; and this lies in two things. (1.) It makes his present state and condition intolerable ; I mean, it makes a Christless state utterly intolerable. It is so uneasy, it cannot be endured. It is not like that sense of sin which most part have, and have no more, that suffers them to live contentedly all their days in the world without Christ. Who of you will not pretend to be sensible of sin ? and yet, who of you doth not find it an easy thing to live in that condition ? I appeal to your consciences, who pretend to be sensible of sin, whether or not ye could live contentedly all your days in your present state, had ye but corn, and wine, and oil, all the necessities for a present life ? I am sure most of you cannot but own, that ye would and could do so ; ye could easily digest sin, and get rid of disturbance from that, if things in a world went well with you. A sad and sure symptom is this, that hitherto ye are not sensible of sin, and therefore do not believe. (2.) It prompts to diligent endeavours after salvation, as absolutely necessary. The sensible sinner, as he cannot rest, and acquiesce with satisfaction in his present condition, so it makes him restless in looking after relief.

All these things appear so plain from what has formerly been discoursed, in the explication of the several scripture-expressions which point forth this duty, that it is needless to insist upon the proof of them by new scriptures.

scriptures. And indeed, though the testimonies al-
 leged had not given such pregnant proof of this, the
 reason of the thing itself will discover it to be indispen-
 sably necessary to faith, that there be a distinct, deep, and
 pressing sense of sin. For, (1.) Where there is only a
 confused apprehension of danger, or indistinct notion of
 it, it confounds and disturbs the sinner, and puts him
 perfectly out of case to judge of the suitableness of any
 relief that is offered to him. He knows not where the
 sore is; and therefore can neither know what would be
 useful, nor where to apply it. (2.) If impressions of
 sin and danger be not deep, and amount to no more but
 some notions floating in the brain, every thing will car-
 ry the mind off from the gospel-relief, and take it to
 other things. Unless the affections be some way or
 other engaged, we seldom do any thing to purpose in
 any business. In fine, a man that feels some pain, and
 fears some danger, may defer and neglect his going to
 the physician; but one that is under intolerable pain,
 must take some one way or other for his relief, and will
 stick at nothing, if he may obtain it. It is much the same
 with these sinners, who have some sense of sin, but are
 strangers to this distinct, deep, and pressing apprehension
 of their sin and misery, which faith comprehends and im-
 plies in its nature, as it is with one who has some sore
 in his leg: he knows where the pain is; he feels some
 smart of the pain; but it is not such a smart as dis-
 ables him entirely from walking or conversing with
 others: he goes indeed uneasily with it; ay, but he
 goes still, and, it may be, sometimes he gets rid of the
 thoughts of it, and therefore can make a shift to live
 in that condition. If one tell him, that it will turn to
 a gangrene, and prove mortal; he flatters himself, that
 possibly it may cure of its own accord, or by the use of
 some domestic remedies; and therefore he will rather
 stay still in that condition, than go to a physician who
 cures by cutting off. Just so is it with half-awakened
 sinners: they never come the length of believing, be-
 cause their sense of their sin is not so deep as to make
 them in earnest think of the physician. They hope to

get their wound cured at home, by some easier remedy than the cutting off the right hand or foot, and plucking out the eye. But where the sense just now spoken of is found, such an one will be satisfied with none of those things. This sense is not only presupposed to faith's first actings; but, moreover, it continues in some measure in the soul as long as we live here by faith; and is the spring of all the after actings of faith. But passing this, this believing implies,

Secondly, Some knowledge of Jesus Christ. Hence it is, that we find faith called knowledge by the prophet, Isa. liii. 11. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." By his knowledge, that is, by faith in him, shall my righteous servant justify many: now this knowledge is evidently requisite. From all that formerly has been hinted, in the opening up of the scriptures we insisted on, not one of them but speaks this needful. And here there must three things be known, in reference to Jesus Christ.

1. The excellency of his person. This is that which faith fixes its eye upon first. It is him we primarily receive; it is to him we look, we flee, we run; it is on him we lean, we stay ourselves, and roll over our burdens; therefore his person must be known. We must know that he is God and man in one person, "God manifested in the flesh." Now, that this knowledge of the person of Christ is a necessary ingredient in faith, not only appears from the consideration just now laid down, but also from this, that otherwise we can know nothing of his usefulness to us, since all that has its rise from the glorious constitution of his person, is from this, that he is one able to save lost sinners: therefore of necessity this must be known.

2. Believing implies the knowledge of Christ's fulness to save. There is no faith without this. It is the knowledge of sufficiency alone that can induce to reliance; and if there be not in Christ a fulness of all these things that are requisite in order to the effectuating the salvation of sinners, then he is no meet, no suitable person
to

to be believed on: therefore of necessity he must be known, as "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth." And this, as was said before, flows from the constitution of his person, which therefore must be known in order to our acquaintance with this. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth." It is from the union of the two natures into one, the Word's tabernacling in flesh, that this glorious fulness of grace and of truth flows.

3. Believing implies the knowledge of Christ's suitability to the sinner's condition. There may be fulness and sufficiency where there is not suitability. The city of refuge, though its gates had been shut, and the ways to it impassable, would yet have been sufficient to have preserved such as should get within it: but in this case, a sinner, the man-slayer, could have no relief from it, there being no way of the communication of that sufficiency to him, no way for him to have that security communicated to him. Just so is it here, Christ clothed in human nature is indeed, and could not but have been sufficient to do all that was requisite in order to our eternal salvation: but in order to sinners accepting of him, it must be understood, that there is a way of conveyance, whereby all this fulness may be called ours. We must know him, not only as full, but as he has assumed the exercise of his threefold office, whereby all the benefits he has purchased are made over unto us, and do in very deed become ours. But we proceed to a

Third thing implied in believing. This duty not only implies the sense of sin, and the knowledge of Christ just now insisted upon, but moreover it implies some knowledge of the gospel-offer of Christ. This is absolutely necessary in order to our acceptance of Christ. It was not enough to set the man-slayer a running to the city of refuge, that he knew there was a city that had gates open, and was sufficient to preserve him; but moreover he must know, that it was designed for that purpose,

purpose, that he had warrant to enter in at these open gates, and so to expect protection. And here there are two things must of necessity be known.

1. That Christ and all his benefits are indeed offered in the gospel to poor sinners, and that freely. Hence it is, that our Catechism doth thus qualify the object of saving faith, while it describes faith in Christ to be a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him as he is offered to us in the gospel.

2. As we must know that he is offered to us, so we must understand what the terms are whereon he is offered. That he is offered freely, doth not hinder his being offered upon terms. If one offers another a sum of money, if he will receive it, he may be said to offer it upon terms, and yet offer it freely: and just such are the gospel-terms upon which the Lord Christ is offered; whoever will take him and use him, shall have him. But to be a little more particular, here we may learn what these terms are, from that of the apostle, Phil. iii. 3. For "we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." These are the persons who have an interest in Christ, who come up to these terms; and the knowledge of them is necessarily implied in believing. We must know, that upon these and no other terms may we be saved. (1.) We must know, that all confidence in the flesh is entirely to be abandoned. There must be no expectation of relief or salvation, from any external privilege, or any performance of duties. We must know, that our own prayers and tears can be of no value in this matter. (2.) We must know, that we are only to rejoice in Christ Jesus. What is here called rejoicing is elsewhere called glorying; that "he that glorieth may glory in the Lord." And here it is opposed to a having confidence in the flesh; which says plainly, that this rejoicing in Christ Jesus is placing all our confidence and comfort in him alone. (3.) We must worship God in the spirit, in the strength of that spirit which Christ did purchase for, and bestows on such as do believe on him. We must serve God in the way of his own appointment.

pointment. Upon these terms is Christ offered in the gospel; and these must be known. The knowledge of them is undoubtedly implied in faith, as well as the knowledge of sin, and of Christ, formerly insisted upon. This leads me to the

Fourth thing implied in believing, and that is, the heart's closing with the gospel-terms just now mentioned. This is the principal thing, without which there can be no faith, no believing; for, if we should speak strictly, this is faith, and all the other things mentioned are only prerequisites; yet they are such as are not only presupposed to the first actings of faith, but must also accompany it, in some measure, as long as it continues in the soul; that is, as long as believers are on earth. Now, this acceptance of Christ upon the gospel-terms takes in three things.

1. A renunciation of all other things. Hence it is that believers are said to have no confidence in the flesh; that is, they have no expectation of relief from any of these things corrupt nature is wont to incline us to rely on. The soul's motion to Jesus Christ, is a motion from all other things. The soul that rolls the weight of all over upon him, doth not lean to any thing besides him. All the expressions formerly opened up do sufficiently intimate to us, that this renunciation of all confidence in other things belongs to the nature of faith, and must go to the constitution of it: and the same the scripture plainly enough declares, when it expressly enjoins sinners this as a part of their duty, or rather expresses the whole of this duty by it: "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, nor will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains," says the returning church, Hos. xiv. 3. and Jer. iii. 23. And these two texts are a good commentary upon that forecited expression of the apostle, "and have no confidence in the flesh." To have no confidence in the flesh, is to expect no salvation from the hills and multitude of mountains, from Ashur, from horses, or the work of our own hands.

But that I may be a little more particular, faith or believing has in it an express renunciation, (1.) Of our own wisdom. Carnal man is exceedingly inclined to trust to his own fleshly wisdom, which is enmity against God, and to advance this as of use to direct him to true happiness. This was that which befooled the heathen world: they thought by their own wisdom to reach happiness, to know God. But in the wisdom of God, "the world by wisdom knew not God;" and the believer becomes a fool, that he may be wise, perfectly renouncing his own wisdom, and subscribing himself a fool, owning himself, with wise Agur, more brutish than any man. (2.) Believing has in it a renunciation of our own strength and power. Man is conceited exceedingly of his own ability. As long as man has a leg of his own to walk upon, he is sure never to look near Christ Jesus. But no sooner has he a mind for Christ, but presently he confesses his own impotency. If the man be able to stand alone, what means he to lean upon another? If he be able to bear his burden, what needs he roll it over upon another? (3.) Believing has in it a renunciation of man's own righteousness. The natural man goes about with the carnal Jews, who were "ignorant of the righteousness of God, to establish his own righteousness, not submitting to the righteousness of God." But the believer rejects this, and owns with the church, Isa. lxiv. 6. "We are as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The believer sees his righteousnesses all ragged. He sees here one duty wanting, and there another entirely amissing, which makes his righteousness no better than a ragged coat, which is full of holes; and he sees what remains to be all defiled; there is some wanting, and what is not so is filthy. The best fall short of, and are entirely deficient as to the practice of some duties; and filthiness adheres and cleaves to what they do perform: therefore they renounce their own righteousness. (4.) Believing, or faith in Christ, renounces all foreign relief; I mean, relief from other things besides Christ. It will not trust to privileges, to saints, to any creature. If any would
entice

entice believing sinners to follow any other, then faith answers the tempter, as Peter did our Lord, in an address to Christ himself, "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Now, all these are comprehended in that of the apostle, "having no confidence in the flesh." And therefore we find him rejecting his own wisdom, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus; rejecting his own strength, for acquaintance with the power and efficacy of Christ's death; renouncing his own righteousness, that he might be found in Christ; and counting all the privileges he had, as one of Abraham's children, one in covenant with God, one of the strictest sect of the Jews, to be but loss and dung, for an interest in Christ.

2. There is, in believing on Christ, a consent of will to the terms of the gospel, as good and desirable. And who can refuse this, save such as are blind? The gospel-terms may be reduced, as has been hinted just now, to three. (1.) Seek not salvation from that which cannot save you, have no confidence in the flesh. (2.) Take freely whatever ye need. Need ye righteousness, or need ye strength, or need ye wisdom, or redemption? All these ye may have freely in Christ, who is made of God to all them that believe, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; in whom all believers have righteousness and strength; in whom all the seed of Israel, by this means, shall be justified and glorified. This is to rejoice in Christ Jesus. (3.) Lay out and improve what ye receive. Ye are not bid spin a web out of your own bowels; but ye are bid improve what is given to you. Ye are bid worship God in spirit; ay, but it is by the assistance and direction of the Spirit that is given freely. The will closes with these terms as good and agreeable; and who could refuse to do so, were there not in him the carnal mind that is enmity against God? The world can conceive nothing more reasonable, no terms more encouraging, favourable, and condescending, than these; therefore they are embraced as worthy of the love, goodness, mercy, and wisdom of God.

3. Hereon there ensues an acquiescence and rest of soul in Christ Jesus for salvation. The sinner is no more tossed in perplexing inquiries after a Saviour. Now it fixes upon him, according to the proposal made of himself; and it will not look near any other thing. It has tried them, and found no rest in them: Now it comes where it finds rest; and therefore here the soul is in a blessed composure. It has confidence in Christ Jesus, rejoiceth in him, and glories in him. If conscience challenge for sin, it points it to Christ Jesus, and lets it see what he has done, and seeks no other answer to conscience. If the threats of the law set themselves against the sinner, he gets in behind Christ's righteousness to screen him, and here he thinks himself secure; therefore he will not betake himself to any thing else. He rests in this as safe, and seeks not any other thing to shelter him from the wrath of God, to fit him for every good word and work. Thus we have opened up in some measure to you the nature of faith, sufficiently in order to our present design. We proceed now,

V. To inquire what this salvation is, which a convinced sinner believing on the Lord Jesus Christ shall assuredly obtain. Upon the former verse, we did observe, that this word is taken in a lax sense, not only for a deliverance from evils, but for a collation of good things; that is plainly, it takes in all that is requisite in order to re-instate the sinner in that happy condition whence Adam fell, or even into a better; so that salvation and eternal life do not much differ. Now, here I shall first inquire, what salvation thus taken implies, and then name some of its properties.

As to the *first*, salvation implies these three particulars, to which all others may be easily reduced.

1st, Deliverance from wrath. Sin deserves wrath: the sinner sees it a-coming, and feels its beginning, which makes him flee for refuge from the wrath to come. Thus it was with the jailor in the text: he was like a man going abroad, who feels the beginnings of a bitter storm, and sees the clouds gathering, which portends a heavy deluge; and not being able to abide the very be-

ginnings

ginnings of it, he timeously betakes himself to a convert; he runs to seek shelter from the storm. So this awakened sinner feels some of the drops, as it were, of the wrath of God in his face already; and he knows he is not able to abide any more, and therefore cries out, *What must I do to be saved?* Where shall I get shelter? And here his question is answered, *Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.* He will screen thee from that storm of wrath that has begun to fall down with so great violence.

2dly, It implies a title to life eternal. The man would be happy, and how he shall be so, he cannot tell. He fears he may never attain to it, and this pains him. Once man was on a fair way to eternal life; but now he is far out of it, and never like to obtain it. This makes the poor awakened man shiver, and cry out, *What must I do to be saved?* I cannot think of falling short of happiness: how shall I come at it? *Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.* There is the answer: Thou shalt have a title to eternal life; "for he that believeth the record that God hath given of his Son, putteth to his seal that God is true." And this is the record that God hath given of his Son, that "there is life eternal in him," and that "he that hath the Son hath life," 1 John v. 11. 12.

3dly, It implies a full possession of this life eternal, and perfect deliverance: *What must I do to be saved?* How shall I get out of harm's way, be meet for, and be actually possessed of that "inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and fades not away? *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Ye shall be made meet for, nay, put in actual possession of, this blessed inheritance, and saved from all these dangers that lie in the way. Ye shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and shall receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," 1 Pet. i. 5. 9. Thus have we given some account, in the general, what salvation implies. We shall now proceed to give some account of its properties, whereby we shall see further into its nature.

Many

Many properties of this salvation might be named and insisted on, were it needful we should inquire into them all. I shall satisfy myself to name and insist a little on a few of the more considerable properties of it. And,

i. It is a *great salvation*. So the Spirit of God expressly calls it, Heb. ii. 2. 3. "If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." And indeed, if we shall take a view of it, we shall find it deserves the title or character given of it. It is called great salvation; and it is so,

(1.) In regard of *its contrivance*. It is not a thing that falls out by chance, without any project, forecast, or forethought; no, but it is one of the deep contrivances of Heaven. It is the master-piece of divine wisdom. There was much wisdom in the contrivance of the world, much in the creation of man, much appears in the works of providence; but infinitely more in this. The manifold wisdom of God is to be seen in the salvation of the church, Eph. iii. 10.: wisdom lies in proposing right ends to one's self in acting, and finding out and using suitable means, and ordering all the circumstances of action to the best advantage. Now, all these parts of wisdom are eminent in this salvation. Never was there a more noble end than what God had in the salvation of the church. [1.] What more suitable to God than that he should glorify his mercy and grace, the only attributes which, before the fall of man, had not been glorified in any remarkable instance? God had made his infinite wisdom, power, and Godhead, legible in the creation of the world. His moral perfections were copied out in the souls of men, and in the nature of angels. Thence one might learn, that God was glorious in holiness, goodness, bounty, justice, and all other moral perfections: but all the while there was no vestige, no footstep of mercy; nor could there be, till once sin entered into the world. Vindictive justice was eminent in the miserable state of fallen an-
gels,

gels, who were justly plunged into remediless ruin and destruction; only mercy seemed veiled and hid. There was nothing by which this darling attribute could be known, or God receive any glory on the account of it. It was not seen in either the works of creation or providence: nay, there seemed by these no room for it; since, upon supposition of the fall, where only there was access for it, the door seemed perfectly shut against its appearance, by the peremptoriness of the threatening, "In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die." And indeed man had all the reason in the world to believe it should be so, not only from the veracity of God, but from the sad and lamentable proof of God's holy severity, that was given in the ruin of the angels that sinned. [2.] What more worthy the great Lawgiver of the world, than to make it appear to the conviction of all, that the laws he at first framed were exactly suited to the ends of government, the glory, the safety, the comfort, and peace of the subjects, and the honour of the Governor? This end surely, if any other, was worthy of God the Lawgiver of the world; and this he had in view in the salvation of the church; and this he obtains by this means. The obedience of the Son of God proclaims, that it is man's honour to obey: the peace that his people, when renewed by his grace, do find in obedience, proclaims it their interest to obey; the pain they suffer in the ways of sin, declares all the calumnies cast upon the ways and laws of God abominably false. [3.] What end more suitable for him who had undertaken the protection of his subjects, which is unquestionably a part of a governor's business and work, than to give an eminent proof of his abilities for defeating the most crafty and subtle plots, and breaking the greatest force of his and his people's enemies? And this is done in a signal manner, in the salvation of the church. [4.] What more suitable end for him who had all the jarring elements to manage, all the opposite tendencies of things to govern, and direct to one common end, than to give a proof of his wonderful skill in reconciling the seemingly opposite and irreconcilable interests

terests of justice and mercy? Never was there any end more noble, more suitable, than that which God had in view in the contrivance of this salvation. He designed to complete the discovery he gave of his attributes, to honour his laws, to expose the folly and weakness of his great enemy, to show his glorious wisdom in composing the greatest difference, reconciling the most seemingly cross and irreconcilable interests of justice and mercy.

Thus we see the end was wise: nor were the *means*, and the *timing* of the means, less so. Much of wisdom was there laid out in fitting the person of the Redeemer, to open a door for the glorification of the grace, mercy, and love of God, to repair the honour of God's law, and of his authority, to baffle Satan's power and policy, and to reconcile and amicably compose the opposite interests of spotless justice and tender mercy. Much of wisdom shines in the timing of this discovery, and in the application of it. Well might it be called manifold wisdom that shines herein. And justly may that salvation which is thus wisely contrived be called great, in respect of that wisdom which did contrive it.

(2.) This is indeed a great salvation, and cannot but be so, if we consider the *author of it*, God, the great God. He it is who contrived, and claims the honour of the accomplishment of this work of the salvation of the church, as his due: and this honour is given him cordially by all those who are saved. They find themselves obliged to own all other things unable for contriving, or for effectuating a work so great as is the salvation of sinners. "In vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people," Jer. iii. 23. And this acknowledgement of the church is consonant to that declaration which God gives, Isa. xlv. 21.—"There is no God else beside me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me." All the persons of the glorious Trinity have their distinct hand and concernment in this salvation. The first
proposal

proposal is owing to the love of the Father, the accomplishment of it to the Son, and the application of it to the Spirit. Sure it must be a great work indeed, a great salvation, that busied the thoughts of the blessed Trinity from all eternity, and employed, if I may so speak, their hands in time. And such is the salvation we speak of.

(3.) It is a great salvation, if we consider *the way of its accomplishment*, the means whereby it is brought about; and these were the wonderfully great condescension of the Son of God, humbling himself so far, as to take upon him "the form of a servant," of sinful man, Philip. ii. 6. 7. his inexpressibly great sufferings in soul and body, and the exceeding greatness of his mighty power put forth in the application of these great things which were purchased, not with things of so small a price, so inconsiderable as silver or gold, or such corruptible dross, but "with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. i. 18.

(4.) It is great salvation, if we consider the *manner of its publication*. God himself brought the first news of it to Adam, and did afterwards upon several occasions carry on the discovery, by adding to that first revelation, and giving new beams of light to it, as the various occasions of the church did require, Heb. ii. 2. 3. But that which is most remarkable, and of greatest consideration, is, that the publication of this was a part of the work which a humbled God, while tabernacled amongst men, took to himself; he went about preaching salvation.

(5.) This salvation deserves to be called great, if we take a *view of the great evils we are hereby liberate and saved from*. (1.) Hereby we are saved from *great pollutions*. We are all by nature as black, as filthy as hell; we have by sin debased ourselves to hell; we are so filthy, that God, the holy God, cannot look upon us without abhorrence; we are abominate by the holy angels, and even by ourselves, when our eyes are opened. There is so much filthiness in every sinner, as is sufficient to make him loath himself, if he but saw himself.

himself. Job, who had as great a testimony given him by God, the best judge, as ever man had, yet loaths and abhors himself, when God lets him see himself. Must not that be great filthiness that makes not only God, the holy God, loath man; but even man, sinful and polluted man, abominate himself? And is it not a great salvation to be saved from so great filthiness? sure it is. It is a filthiness that the nitre and soap of human endeavours has been many times tried upon, but to no purpose. Nothing can wash out the stain, but the blood of God: and to be saved from such filthiness, is a mercy of no small consideration: it is indeed great salvation. (2.) It is salvation from the *guilt of sin*. Sin carries in it an obligation to punishment, Rom. viii. 1. It ties sin and punishment together; and consequently is like a strong chain whereby the sinner is bound to destruction, so fast that he cannot get away from it. He is tied to hell; and sure when one finds himself thus knit to destruction, he will think it a great salvation to be saved from it, to have this knot loosed. (3.) It is salvation from the *dominion of sin*. Sin is a great tyrant, and imposes a most heavy and intolerable yoke upon all its vassals. We may see what a tyrant it is, by the many tragical events with which the world is daily filled. We see some kingdoms soaked in blood, some families buried in contempt, some men ruined in their reputation, others in their bodies, others in their estates: and if we inquire who has done all this mischief, we shall find that sin has done it all. It has made one part of a nation imbrue their hands in their neighbour's blood; it has hurried men upon these foolish and hurtful practices, whereby they have ruined their families, their estates, their names, their souls, their bodies. Sure, then, salvation from the reign and dominion of this insufferable tyrant, deserves to be styled great salvation. (4.) It is salvation from the *molestation power of the remainders of sin that dwells in believers*, and this is great salvation. So grievous are the workings, stirrings, motions of this enemy, that it makes the children of God many times look upon themselves

as wretched, and cry out with the apostle, Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And to be freed from that which makes a man account himself miserable and wretched, is certainly a great salvation. (5.) It is salvation from the *wrath of God*; and how great a mercy is this? "Who knows the power of his wrath?" And who knows how great a deliverance it is to be saved from the wrath to come? Such only can who have their eyes opened, to see the danger they are in from the imminency of the whirlwind of the Lord's anger, that goes forth with fury, and falls with pain upon the head of the wicked. (6.) It is salvation from *Satan's slavery*: and sure to be saved from his slavery, is a great salvation indeed. He "rules in the children of disobedience:" and where he reigns, he never treats one of his slaves better than he did that poor child, of whom we have an account in the evangelists. He takes them, and "tears them, and bruises them, throwing them sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water," Matth. xvii. 14. Mark ix. 17. Luke ix. 39. He runs them into very different evils, fire and water, but equally destructive to their life. And to be saved from such treatment, from such an enemy, is surely a great salvation; and will easily be acknowledged such, by all who know how great a misery it is to be under such a yoke. (7.) It is salvation from the "sting of death," and from the "fear of death." We read of some that "all their lifetime have been in bondage through fears of death," Heb. ii. 15; where it is likewise declared a part of Christ's undertaking, to deliver such: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Whoever takes a view of these evils, which this salvation and deliverance has a respect to, cannot but own it a great salvation.

(6.) To add no more considerations for the illustration of this property, it must be owned to be a great salvation, if we consider what are the *advantages that follow upon our deliverance* from these evils mentioned. I only name a few of them. (1.) Instead of these filthy robes which sinners are naturally cloathed in, they are clad in *garments of salvation, garments of righteousness*. "I will," says the church, Isa. lxi. 10. "greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath cloathed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." (2.) This salvation has in it a title to a *noble inheritance*. Guilt is the sinner's, the unsaved wretch's title to wrath; it makes it sure to him: but such as are saved, are made sons upon their believing, John i. 12. "And if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. iii. 17. (3.) They who are partakers of this salvation, are *put under the dominion of grace*. They are not under sin, but under the dominion of grace, Rom. vi. 14.; and where grace bears sway, there is indeed perfect liberty. Faith working by love is the spring of all the obedience they perform to these commands, which are not grievous, but, on the contrary, are pleasant, and have not only a great reward in the issue, but even in the time wherein obedience is performed to them; see Gal. v. 6. 1 John v. 3. Prov. iii. 17. Psal. xix. 11. (4.) *The Spirit dwells in all believers*, and abides with him for ever, 1 John iv. 13. Rom. viii. 9. And hereby relief is provided against that uneasiness that arises from the remainders of sin here; for "through the Spirit believers do mortify the deeds of the body, that so they may live," Rom. viii. 13. And by the abounding of the fruits of the Spirit, they are brought to that frame, that spiritual mindedness, which is life and peace, Rom. viii. 6.; and not only is there, by the indwelling of the Spirit, provision thus made against the remaining power of indwelling sin here, but moreover hereby there is assistance

rance given of full freedom from it. The Spirit will at length entirely cleanse the soul: and he is the earnest of glory of that state where believers are entirely freed from sin, 2 Cor. v. 5. It is by him they are sealed to the day of their final and complete redemption from sin, in all its concernments, filth, guilt, reign, power, and being, Eph. iv. 30. (5.) Instead of wrath under which the sinner was lying, by this salvation he is brought into a state of *favour and acceptance with God*, through the beloved, Eph. i. 6. Instead of war with heaven, they have peace; for, "being justified by faith, they have peace with God," Rom. viii. 1. And of how great consideration this is, the Psalmist well understood, who, Psal. xxx. 5. tells us, "That in God's favour is life," and, Psal. lxxiii. 3. that his "loving kindness is better than life." (6.) Satan's slave is *placed upon a throne* by this salvation: and is not this a great privilege? Sure it is; and this is the privilege of all overcomers; and such shall all believers be: "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 21. (7.) Instead of feared death, *everlasting life shall be the privilege of the nations of them that are saved*, John iii. 36. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life;" and here we may hold. All words are for ever lost who can tell what a life this is? A life of God, a life of comfort, a life of promise in heaven; and such a life for ever. May we not conclude from the whole, that this salvation, which is the contrivance of so great wisdom, has so great an author as God, is brought about by so great means, proclaimed by so great a person as the only begotten of the Father, frees from so great evils, and entitles to so great blessings, is indeed a great salvation? We shall proceed now to a

2d Property of this salvation As it is upon the accounts mentioned, and not a few others, a great salvation, so likewise is it a *complete salvation*. It is called salvation to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by

by him." Now, the completeness of this salvation, we may take up in four particulars. (1.) It is salvation from all evils. It is not only salvation from many, from great evils, as we did at length make appear under the former head, but it is salvation from all evils. It extends to all sorts of evils. We might mention many sorts of evils; but they are all easily reducible to two moral evils: or sins, penal evils, or punishment. Now, this salvation extends to both. It is salvation from all sin: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," 1 John i. 9. It is justification from all things, Acts xiii. 39. "Be it known to you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." And if we be saved from all moral evils, salvation from all others follows in course. (2.) It is salvation from all degrees of all those evils. It might have extended to all sorts of evils, and yet not have comprehended a deliverance from all degrees of them: but it is complete in this respect; as the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, so it cleanseth from every degree; it cleanseth fully. As the Spirit of Christ is able to subdue all sin, so is he able to subdue all sin fully. In a word, Christ makes thorough work of it; and such as do believe shall be saved from all their fears, from all their enemies, from all their sins, and all their sorrows; Christ will "present them without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." No stain, no blemish, shall be left on them, before he have done with them. (3.) It is comprehensive of all spiritual blessings; nay, of every good thing. "God will give grace and glory, and he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly," Psal. lxxxiv. 11. And believers are said to be "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus," Eph. i. 3. (4.) It comprehends all these blessings in their perfection. While in this world, the enjoyments of the saints are not complete; but they shall be so ere it be long. Grace will ripen into glory. That which is in

part will be done away, and that which is perfect will come in its room.

3dly, This is a *suitable* salvation. How suitable it is to God, we have hinted already; and therefore I shall only name a few things which may evince its congruity to such poor sinners as are convinced of their need of salvation.

(1.) This salvation is exceedingly suitable to such a poor sinner, because it is near. One that is in a great extremity, to tell him of a remedy in some far country, at a great distance, will rather increase than help his inquietment. Such a remedy, may he say, is sufficient; but how shall it be got? who will bring it to me? and may I not be dead and gone before it arrive? So might the convinced sinner say, did we tell him of a Saviour that were to be met withal in some remote country, or after the course of some years, his perplexity would hereby be increased. His case requires speedy relief; it will not admit of long delays: and this salvation is exactly adapted to his condition, as the apostle shews, Rom. x. 6.—9. “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 faith 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.” This salvation is near in the offer; it is near in its advantages. As the offer brings it close home; so the advantage of it is presently to be obtained. The jailor soon got ease; and so may every convinced sinner, in the same method; he may obtain, if not present satisfaction, yet present safety.

(2.) This salvation in its terms is suited to the needs and desires of a convinced sinner. He cannot purchase salvation; therefore salvation freely offered is suitable to him. If money were required of such as come to the

the market of grace, the sinner would never look near it: but when all that need are bid come, and take and have all, without money and without price, then he finds a market to his mind, salvation according to his wish, perfectly such as he would have.

(3.) It is suitable in its nature to his wants. As it is salvation upon the very terms he wishes, so all the blessings he needs are to be had upon these terms: needs he pardon? he may have it; needs he repentance? he may have it: in a word, if he needs grace or glory, he may have them.

(4.) The security offered is suitable to the very desires of such an one. The convinced sinner is now deeply sensible of the concern, moment, and importance of salvation; and therefore he would not willingly hazard it upon a small security. He would not venture so much upon some weak probability, he would have the highest security in this matter, which is of the highest importance. And what greater security can he desire for his salvation, than God's covenant and promise, confirmed by his oath?

4thly, This salvation is called *eternal salvation*, Isa. xlv. 17. "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." And we are told, Heb. v. 9. "That Christ being made perfect through sufferings, is become the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." It is eternal salvation upon a threefold account. (1.) It is eternal salvation in its design and contrivance, the fruit and product of everlasting love. The Father's drawing sinners, in time, into a compliance with the terms of salvation, is the fruit of everlasting love, Jer. xxxi. 3. "The Lord appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." (2.) It is everlasting salvation, because it is salvation from everlasting evil. "He that believes not shall be damned;" that is, as the Spirit of God comments upon it elsewhere, he shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power," 2 Thes. i. 9.

(3.) It is eternal salvation, because it entitles to, and puts man in possession of, eternal blessings. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," John iii. 36. Thus have we seen what this salvation is, in itself, and in its properties. We proceed,

VI. To demonstrate the truth of the doctrine, that such as do betake themselves by faith unto, or believe on, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall assuredly be saved. And this we make good,

First, From the eternal and immutable purpose of God, that he that believes shall be saved. Great contests there have been among Christians about the decrees of God; but scarce ever any yet had the confidence to allege, that God had not decreed this. Such as will allow least to the decrees of God, are forced to own, that he has purposed in himself, that he that believes shall be saved; and when God has purposed so, who can contradict, or who can make him fall short of whatever he has purposed? Since it is unquestionable, from the revelation that God hath made of his will, that he has purposed the salvation of all that do believe, it must of necessity be so, that such shall infallibly be saved. Could any believer fall short of his happiness, of the salvation which God has purposed in himself to bestow on him, it must flow from one of two; either a change in God's purpose, or God's falling short of his intent. But neither of the two can possibly be. (1.) As for God's purpose, it must of necessity be unchangeable, like himself: "He is God, and changes not," Mal. iii. 6. Should God change, he would lose his name, "I am that I am." Upon this ground it is, that the wise man says, Eccl. i. 14. "I know that whatever God doth it shall be forever." God is "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," James i. 17. That man is changeable in his purpose, flows from his weakness, and from his ignorance of events. His purposes are founded upon a supposition, or at most a probability, that things shall be so and so; and when things fall out otherwise than was expected, man must suit his purposes to the state of things. But

the matter is far otherwise with God, who doth not therefore purpose to act so and so, because he seeth such things will fall out; but things fall out so, because God purposed in himself that they should so fall out. All things are wrought by him according to the counsel of his own will; and known to him are all his works from the beginning. Again, man changes his purpose, because he knows not at first what is best to be done: but the matter is nothing so with God. (2.) As for the event of the purpose, that must be infallible. God cannot fall short of his purpose, if we will take his own word on it: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever," Isa. xl. 8. And again, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," Isa. xlv. 9. 10. And well may he say he will do so, since none is able to resist his will; he that doth it must first grapple with Omnipotence. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" Isa. xiv. 27. "If he works, who can let?" Isa. xliii. 13. "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?" Dan. iv. 45. What is then purposed by God must be infallibly certain, that such as do by faith betake themselves to Jesus Christ, shall be saved.

Secondly, The faithfulness of God in the promise is engaged for it: so runs the promise, "He that believes shall be saved." When a man's purpose is not declared, he is indeed accountable to himself for any change or alteration of it, but not to others; but if he declare it openly, especially if he turn his purpose into a promise, in that case he is brought under a more public and solemn tie to stand firmly to what is engaged. So had this been a purpose concealed in the breast of God, if I may so speak; however he himself should have been engaged for its accomplishment, yet we had in that case nothing to say: but God by his promise makes himself a debtor; such is his condescension to his own creatures.

God

God cannot suffer a believer to fall short of salvation, matters are now stated, unless he thereby fall into disgrace and contempt; which is as impossible as it is for him to resign his Godhead. Certain it is, therefore, upon the account of the promise of God, that a lost sinner, taking himself by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved. This will appear indeed of great weight, if we be considered, (1.) That there is not only a promise, but a covenant. (2.) That this covenant has seals appended to it, for the ratification of it. (3.) That Christ is the Surety of this covenant. (4.) That all the blessings promised are bought by Christ at no lower rate than that of his own blood. (5.) What he has purchased is made over in a testamentary way, by way of legacy, to believers. (6.) This testament being confirmed by the death of the Testator, there is no altering of it. (7.) The Holy Spirit, if I may so speak, is left executor of his latter-will; therefore it is utterly impossible that any believer should miss of salvation. These things we have only named, because we hasten to the improvement of this truth; which we shall come to, after we have handled a

Third argument for proof of the truth under consideration, and that is taken from the experience of such as do believe. And because this argument is, it may be less understood, therefore I shall insist somewhat the more largely upon it. That I may prove it certain that believers are saved, from experience, I shall inquire, 1st, What it is that such as do believe experience? 2^{dly}, How we know that they do so? for their experience signifies nothing to us, unless it be made known in such way as may give it some weight.

As to the 1st, we say, (1.) All believers, at death, attain the full possession of this great, complete, stable, and eternal salvation: they enter into rest, being conducted safe to glory, by the glorious Captain of his people's salvation. But this is not that which we principally design to insist upon, as an evidence of the certainty of the salvation of such as do believe. Wherefore we say,

(2.) That such as do believe, even in this life, have some experience of this salvation, upon their believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not say, indeed, that all believers have the same degrees of experience, or can give alike distinct account of their experiences : but this we say, that all who do believe, upon their believing, have some experience ; and such as are diligent, and do carefully improve that spirit which is given them, whereby they may know the things that are freely given them of God, may understand, in some measure, if not all, yet most of the experiences we shall mention. Ye may easily understand, from what has been at great length discoursed to you, that this salvation comprehends a deliverance from evil, and a grant of all that is good. Now, we shall name some experiences that believers, upon their believing, obtain, both of the one and of the other.

[1.] Then, such as do by faith receive Jesus Christ, upon their believing, have a gracious experience of a begun deliverance from wrath. Whereas, before their believing, they were under fears of wrath, and saw themselves in imminent danger of inevitable ruin, so that they were much disquieted ; now, upon their believing, they find something of a blessed calm. True it is, indeed, they do not always presently find rest, full rest I mean ; yet, upon their reception of Christ, there is ever some beginnings of rest, and somewhat of a begun deliverance from these cruciating and tormenting fears, which formerly did appear intolerable. The case of a believer, at such a time, may be like that of a man, who, falling over a dreadful precipice, gets hold of something which he is sure is able to support him : such an one, though he be in some degree free from that dreadful fear he was under, may yet be under some apprehensions of danger from his own inability to hold the grip he has gotten. Just so is it with a poor convinced sinner : at some times, before Christ is discovered, he is in the most lamentable case imaginable ; he finds himself falling headlong into ruin and misery, and this frights him terribly ; he sees the pit beneath him, and finds himself hastening thither ;

hither; and therefore is in a dreadful consternation, while there is "nothing but a fearful looking for of wrath and fiery indignation:" while he is in this case, Christ is discovered to him; he sees him sufficient to save him, and understands on what terms he may have him; he is pleased with them, and lays hold on Christ; and thence there ensue some beginnings of rest, though he may still be in some fears that he may lose the grip; and this begun deliverance from the fears of wrath, is a pledge of that full and complete freedom which he has ground to expect.

[2.] Sinners, upon their believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, have some experience of begun salvation from the dominion of sin. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes them free, *in some measure*, from the law of sin and death," Rom. viii 2. I know, indeed, there may be greater complaints of sin after believing than ever, and its power may be felt more than formerly; yet every one that truly doth believe, has some experience of a begun deliverance from the reign and dominion of sin. However sin may make more stir in the soul, yet it has not so much power as formerly. Now there is not that willing compliance with it as formerly there was in all its commands: now its title is disputed, its commands are rejected; and when any of them are complied withal, there is a force put upon the soul in its so doing.

[3.] They experience some beginnings of a deliverance from the guilt and filth of sin in their approaches to God. Before, when they heard of God, they were, like Adam, ready to run away and hide themselves; they were afraid to look him in the face: but now they begin to feel some more confidence in their approaches to God. They draw near, and are not so frightened; nay, they have some hopes as to the issue of these their approaches to God. These and many such experiences of a begun salvation from evils have all believers, if they would be at pains to observe them.

[4.] They likewise have some experiences of the freedom of Christ's subjects. They find a freedom

in the service of God ; it becomes natural and easy to them. They find not obedience so hurtful as once they thought it ; nay, now they find a delight and refreshment in it, which is indeed something of the beginnings of that satisfaction with God's likeness, which is to be completed fully in heaven.

[5.] They experience many times the beginnings of heaven in some refreshing tastes of the gracious communications and intimations of God's love to their souls. In fine, all of them, upon their believing, do experience in less or in more, Christ as the hope of glory in their hearts. Some dawnings of hope there are in the darkest and most disconsolate believer that lives : for where there is no hope, there can be no use of means ; it is hope of success that is the spring of action.

These and many such experiences do even the weakest believers some time or other find. That they are not more clearly discerned, to the comfort of such as have them, is, past all peradventure, in a great measure owing to their own negligence and want of observation. Now these things are evidences of the truth under consideration. When sinners, upon their believing, do experience the beginnings of that salvation which God has promised them, they may comfortably, and without any hesitation, wait for its completion, expecting firmly, that he who has begun that work will complete it ; that he who has begun the accomplishment of his promises will in due time fully accomplish them. Now, these experiences being of no use for proving the truth to others, unless they can be known satisfyingly by them, we shall,

2dly, Shew, in a word, how we come to know that believers do find such things upon their believing. And thus we do,

(1.) By the account we have of the experiences of believers in the word of God. To go no further than the text, who more frightened, who more terribly shaken, and under greater horror, than the jailor, when he is trembling and putting the question, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?* Well, what becomes of him afterwards, when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ? Look to the

34th verse of this chapter, and there we shall find him rejoicing and believing. The like account have we of those who were "pricked in their hearts, and cried out, Men and brethren, what must we do?" Acts ii. 37. As perplexed as they then were, yet, upon their believing, the state of their affairs was perfectly altered; for "they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people," ver. 46. 47.

(2.) We may know this, as from the testimony of God, so from the testimony of believers in our day. Though there be but few, yet we hope there are not wanting some, who will readily and cheerfully give in their testimony to the same truth, and own, that, upon their believing, they have had some experience of the things mentioned, and of not a few which we have not mentioned.

(3.) Though they should hold their peace, yet we might even with our eyes see the truth of what is asserted. Have we not sometimes seen some graceless and even profane wretches, who have been mad upon their own ways, stopped in their progress and career? Has not the Lord shaken them, and filled them with his terrors? and has not this course of believing calmed them? Have they not visibly been delivered from these fears of wrath, which had gone to such a degree? Has it not been clearly seen, that they were freed from that dominion of sin, under which they formerly lived? Surely these things are obvious proofs, that, upon believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, such persons have been made partakers of some beginnings of this great salvation, and that as an earnest of the whole. Several other things might have been added for proof of this great truth: But, passing them, we shall now come to make some practical improvement of this great truth.

In the improvement of this truth, we shall first draw some general doctrinal inferences; and then proceed to trial, which will lead us into a more close and particular application.

Is it so, then, that a convinced sinner, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, shall assuredly be saved? Then,

1. We may hence infer, *That faith is a most valuable blessing.* Well might the apostle call it *precious faith*, 1 Pet. i. 1.; for not only is it precious in itself, but it is unspeakably so in respect of its consequences. It, like a chain, draws Christ and all his purchase after it: it is big with many and great mercies. There are great and precious promises fraught with the great and precious blessings of the gospel, nay, with Christ himself; and precious faith lays hold upon the promises of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, of grace and glory, and makes them all ours.

2. We may safely hence infer likewise, *That the preaching of the word is a great blessing*; since "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The whole of this the apostle plainly enough declares, Rom. x. 13. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

3. Then we may infer, *That such as do believe, whatever their circumstances may be at present, are in an unspeakably happy condition.* They have an interest in the great salvation; and what losses will not this compensate and make up? How rich are they who have heaven, and all the means leading to it, as theirs? They have a good title to, and shall at length be actually possessed of, that rich inheritance of the saints in light, James ii. 5. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

4. *Assurance of salvation is attainable.* If salvation be sure upon our believing, then we may be fully assured of salvation; for one may know certainly whether he believes or not, whether he be content to accept of and close with the Lord Jesus Christ upon his own terms. This is not only knowable, but it may be more easily discerned

discerned than most do apprehend. Were we but, with any measure of seriousness and concern, turning our eyes inward, we could not but know how our hearts stand affected toward Christ, and the gospel-method of salvation; but of this more afterwards.

5. *Perseverance in faith is not the condition of salvation*, or at least that which founds our title to it; for whoever believes shall be saved. If once a person believes, then he has a right given him by the promise of God to eternal salvation. The promise of God doth not run thus, Believe, and if ye persevere in believing, then ye shall be saved; but, Believe, and ye shall be saved. Once lay hold on and accept of Jesus Christ for salvation, and then saved ye shall be.

6. We may safely infer, from the doctrine insisted upon, *That unbelief is self-murder*, and that of the worst sort. It murders the soul eternally. Hence it is, that it is said to be a rejecting the counsel of God against one's self, Luke vii. 30. "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves;" that is, to their own ruin: and so it may be said of every unbeliever; he rejects the counsel of God to his own destruction and ruin. But these things we only mention.

We now proceed to improve this doctrine for trial. Is it so, that it is certain, that a convinced sinner accepting of, or believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, shall assuredly be saved? Then all who would be saved, are nearly concerned to try whether they do believe or not. And that I may stir you up to this duty, I shall lay before you some few considerations. And,

1. Consider *the moment, and importance of the matter*. It is a trial whereon not your worldly estate, nor any other petty temporal concern hangs; but your life lies upon it, and that even the life of your souls. When we bid you try, whether ye believe or not, it is as much as if we bade you try whether ye shall be damned or not. Unbelief is the damning sin, by way of eminency: all other sins, without this, will not, cannot damn those who live under the gospel; but this alone will; for "he that

believeth not shall be damned." Faith, on the other hand, will save. God has tacked faith and salvation together; and it passes the power of all the devils in hell, or men upon earth, or sin in the heart, to break the link. Now, is not that a matter of the greatest concernment? Is not this a question which is worth your while to be satisfied about, whether ye shall be saved, or whether ye shall be damned?

2. Consider that ye had need to try, *whether ye have faith or not*; "for all men have not faith," 2 Thes. iii. 2. Indeed I confess, if all that live under the gospel had faith, there were less occasion for trying it: but since it is quite otherwise, since there are some men, even within the verge of the church, who have not faith, every one of you is concerned, the matter being of such consequence, to try, whether ye be amongst those wicked and unreasonable men who want it, and so shall be damned, or not. Nay further,

3. There are but a very few among the swarms of professors who have faith; and therefore certainly ye are nearly concerned to try, *whether ye may be among these few*. Our Lord tells us, that few shall be saved, Luke xiii. 23. "Many are called, but few are chosen," Matth. xxii. 14. Therefore there are few believers; for all believers are saved and chosen; and none shall believe but they who are "chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Now, is it not the great concernment of every one of you to be putting the question to yourselves, Am I among the few who believe, and shall be saved? or am I not? If we should tell you, that before ye go from this house, God would strike some one of this assembly dead, every one would be anxious to know if he were the person: and now, when we tell you, that the greater part of this assembly have nothing betwixt them and hell but that brittle thing life, were it not very proper that every one should put the question, Am I among the few that believe, and shall be saved? or among the many who believe not, and consequently shall be damned? See Isa. liii. 1.

4. Consider,

4. Consider, *That many have been deceived in this matter.* They have thought that they had faith; and others, it is like, have thought so concerning them; and yet it has been found quite otherwise in the end. The Laodiceans thought themselves "rich, and increased with goods, and that they stood in need of nothing," Rev. iii. 18. while in the mean time they were "poor, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked." And our Lord tells us, "Not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven," Matth. vii. 21. Think ye that ye do believe? Well, others have so thought likewise, and have been mistaken; and may it not be so with you? and if it may, have ye not reason to put the matter to trial? Especially considering,

5. *That a deceit or mistake in this matter is of the worst consequence imaginable.* I might enumerate not a few of the bad, destructive, and ruining consequences of it: but I shall only name three. (1.) It makes men neglect an opportunity that is never to be recovered again. Opportunity is drawn with a hairy forefront, and bald behind: and sure, if in any thing the emblem was significant, it is here. Men, while under the gospel-dispensation of mercy, have an opportunity of making peace with God, and of securing their eternal concerns; but if once time be gone, then there is no more access for sinners to treat with God about this matter. Now, a mistaken apprehension, that one does believe, when really he does not so, makes him slight this golden opportunity, this choice season, which can never be retrieved. Many think they believe already, and so put all exhortations by themselves, as belonging to others, and not to them. (2.) This mistake exposes them to a confounding disappointment. It buoys them up with hopes of heaven and happiness, fills them with big expectations of glory, and then hurls them down headlong into the blackest despair, into inevitable misery. (3.) This mistake brings upon them eternal and intolerable, as well as irreparable misery. It must of necessity plunge them headlong into the pit whence there is no redemption.

It is not one's apprehending himself to have faith, but it is faith itself that saves ; and the want of it inevitably damns.

6. Consider that *it is your interest to put this matter to a fair trial*, be the issue what it will. Some of you, it is like, may think otherwise ; ye may possibly apprehend, that it is your interest to sleep on in that pleasant dream, that ye have faith ; because if once ye put it to a trial, and it be found that ye want it, then ye must take up with that melancholy conclusion, that ye must be damned. To such I only say, in a word, (1.) This plea were something reasonable, if it were possible for you to sleep ever on in this dream ; but this cannot be so. Ye will be obliged, even though unwilling, to see and know, before it be long, whether ye have faith or not. (2.) Ye might say something for yourselves, if it were impossible for those who want faith ever to come by it ; but this cannot be said. But further, I add, either you indeed have faith, or ye want it : and which soever of the two be said, it is certainly your interest to put the matter to a trial.

If ye want faith, then it is your interest to know so much : For, (1.) One of the greatest impediments will be taken out of the way of your believing. Nothing so great a let to faith, as a groundless conceit that one has it already. (2.) Hereby likewise ye will be helped to see the necessity of faith. (3.) And this will put you upon the diligent use of the means : and who can tell but the issue will be comfortable, and what is wanting may be made up through the mercy of God. If ye continue under this deceit, ye are certainly ruined : if ye see your mistake, ye have at least a peradventure for happiness.

Again, if ye have faith, it is past all doubt your interest to bring it to trial : For, (1.) Before ye try and find that ye have faith, ye want the comfort of it. Safety indeed results from the being of faith : for he that believes shall be saved : but solid peace and comfort results from the knowledge of our own faith. While we know not that we have faith, we know not
but

but the wrath of God may be abiding on us; we know not but we may be on the way to destruction; we know not but the Lord may turn us next moment into the pit: and what comfort, what peace, can people have in such a condition? (2.) While we know not that we have faith, God gets not the honour that is his unquestionable due from all believers. As faith is his gift, so we are indispensably obliged to be thankful to him for it: but this we cannot be till once we know that we have faith. Thus God is robbed of the glory due to his name: nay, many times he is signally dishonoured, by believers denying his goodness to them, and refusing to acknowledge what he has wrought in them and for them. In one word, it is certain, sooner or later, all must be resolved in this question, whether they do believe or not; the only question is, whether it be our interest to be resolved now, when there is access to rectify what is found amiss, and to get what upon search is found wanting: or afterwards, when there is no place for altering any thing in your condition.

7. The *authority of God* should in this matter prevail with you, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownelves; know ye not your ownelves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" God commands expressly, nay, doubles his commands to this duty; whereby he at once checks our backwardness to the duty, and insinuates the importance and necessity of it.

8. To add no more, consider *that it is a strong evidence of the want of faith, to neglect an inquiry after it.* Such as will not judge themselves, have reason to fear that they shall be condemned of the Lord. Such as have faith, will prize it highly; and such as do prize it, will think it worth their while to inquire, whether they have it or not.

Since, then, we have made it appear, to be of such near and deep concernment to you all to try this matter, I shall now, for this end,

I. Let

1. Set by *some sorts of persons* among you, who without all doubt are unbelievers.

2. I shall shew *some false marks* by which some do deceive themselves.

3. I shall lay down *some true marks* whereby ye may know certainly that ye do believe. Now, of these things in order.

First, We say, we shall set by some persons who are, past all peradventure, unbelievers. *There are some men whose sins go before them into judgement*; some unbelievers who have their name writ upon their forehead. It is needless to talk of applying marks to them. We need not bid a drunkard or a swearer try themselves whether they believe or not: we may tell them plainly they do not believe, and that therefore they are under the wrath of God. Therefore, before we proceed to deal with close hypocrites, whose sins do follow after, we shall set aside some, who without all doubt want faith, and therefore, if they continue in that estate, shall be damned. And,

1. All of you who are *grossly ignorant*, are to be reckoned among this sort of persons. How many are there in this house, who are grossly ignorant of God, of Jesus Christ, and of themselves, who know no more of these things which do belong to their peace, than if they had been born in Turkey! We are grieved to find such ignorance among you. Well, O ignorant sinners! we tell you, in God's name, ye are unbelievers. If we should ask you, when we come to deal with you on a sick-bed, or a death-bed. do ye believe? It is strange to think with what confidence you would tell you do believe. But flatter not your own selves; if ye be grossly ignorant, believers you are not, you cannot be: for, (1.) None can believe, unless they have a new heart, and a new spirit given them; faith being a fruit of the Spirit in a renewed man, and not a fruit of the flesh, or of a corrupt unrenewed nature. Now, wherever this new heart is, there is of necessity the knowledge of God; for a new heart is a "heart that know God," Jer. xxiv. 7. (2.) None can believe who

know not their need of Christ. "The whole need not a physician, but the sick." Nor will such as do not know their disease, ever inquire after one that can cure it. What occasion should persons who are ignorant of their own misery find for a Saviour? And how can they prize a Saviour, who know not his worth? And how can they embrace him, who neither know that he is offered, nor the terms whereon he is so? Knowledge is so necessary to faith, that it is impossible it should be without it: it is expressed by knowledge, Isa. v. 3. "By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many." It is so much allied to it, that the working faith in conversion is expressed by a "translation out of darkness into God's marvellous light." Lay aside, then, O ignorant sinner! all pretences to faith. We, in the name, and by the authority of our great Lord and Master, do discharge such of you as are thus grossly ignorant to make any pretensions to faith; for ye have no reason to do so, ye have no warrant; and therefore ye do it cross to the mind and will of God. Now, if all who belong to this one sort in this congregation were set by to a corner, how great a multitude of unbelievers, old and young, would we see? And O what a sad sight would it be, to see you set by yourselves, and all of you carrying upon you the stamp and superscription of Satan, ready to be seized by him as his prisoners, and thrust into the pit?

2 All who are *openly profane*, who live in the habitual and customary practice of open and notorious sins, are to be numbered amongst this sort, who, past all peradventure, are unbelievers. The scriptures are very plain in asserting this. What is unbelief, if not to deny God? And sure the scripture reckons such as live thus, deniers of God. It is said of such, that "they profess to know God, but in their works do deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate," Tit. i. 16. And what can be more express to this purpose, than what the apostle James discourses at great length, chap. ii. A set of men there were in his day who were profane, but yet had high pretences to faith. These

the apostle there smartly reproves, and endeavours to convince them, that the devils may have as good a claim to faith as they have. "Thou believest," says he, ver. 19. 20. "that there is one God, thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead." And ver. 26. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." And a dead faith is no faith at all. Lay aside, therefore, O profane wretch! your pretences to faith. Will ye lie, steal, swear, and commit uncleanness, and yet pretend to faith? Will not our God be avenged of such hellish impudence as is this? Sure he will. But to be somewhat more particular, we do,

(1.) Charge such of you as are *customary swearers*, to lay aside all pretences to faith. Ye are certainly unbelievers; and as sure as the eternal God lives, shall be damned, if ye continue in this your impiety. Our lot is cast in an unhappy age, wherein men are grown intolerably bold in blaspheming the name of God: nay, not only so, but not a few glory in their shame, and boast of it, that they can out-do others by swearing more and greater oaths! Be astonished, O heavens! Be ye very desolate! Has any of the nations served their gods so? The poor Americans, who worship the devil, will not treat him so ill, as a set of men called Christians, nay more, reformed Christians, Protestants, do the great God of heaven. O what a wonder of divine patience is it, that God does not dash down the world about the ears of such sinners, that he sends them not alive into hell! O what hearts! what trembling hearts will these men have, when, ere it be long, they shall find God shaking the earth terribly, when he "comes out of his place to punish them?" Such monsters as have torn God's name by hellish blasphemies, how will they look, when the almighty God shall grasp them with his omnipotent arms, and "tear them in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver them," none that dare interpose in their behalf? What hearts will they have, who by their monstrous oaths have made God's jealousy burn against them, when a little hence his wrath will flame so high, as to dissolve the elements with fervent heat, and pour down the
visible

visible heavens like so much boiling lead upon the heads of such God daring sinners? Would to God there were no such monsters in this congregation; none such hearing me this day, who boast of and glory in their swearing. If there be any such monsters here, I do, by the authority of the great God, charge such either to repent of this impiety, or to be gone, and leave this assembly. I know no place meet for such an one but hell. But it is like some of you may bless yourselves in your own hearts, when ye hear such things, and say, ye do not swear such monstrous and horrid oaths. Ay, but if ye swear habitually the lesser oaths, we bid you, in the Lord's name and authority, lay aside all pretences to faith.—Some of you can swear by your faith upon every turn, and yet pretend to faith in Christ. They who have faith, will not dare to swear by it. And such as do customarily swear by faith, or by conscience, I dare assert to be unbelievers. A believer in Christ will not make so light of precious faith, as to baffle it upon every occasion; nor will he dare to make that an idol which is a grace; the chief glory whereof is, to abase the creature, and to exalt God. To swear by faith, or by conscience, is to put them in God's stead; and that is an indignity which God will by no means bear with, for he has said, he "will not give his glory to another." This sin is become so common and customary, that there is but little hopes of persuading people to leave it, unless God by a strong hand do it. But since we have occasion to speak of swearing, I shall only add a few words to such of you as are guilty. (1.) God has taken the punishment of swearers into his own hand. Men commonly let such easily pass; but God has said, he will not hold them guiltless." (2.) It is a sin that brings ruin not only upon particular persons, but upon families. The flying roll that is twenty cubits long, and ten cubits broad, and full of curses, enters into the house of the swearer, and destroys it with the timber and stones thereof, and every one that is guilty shall be cut off," Lech. v. 3. 4. (3.) It is one of the sins that brings desolating calamities upon nations, and makes the land mourn,

mourn, Hof. iv. 2. 3. (4.) So hateful is this sin to God that he threatens such as know any to be guilty of it and conceal the sin, Lev. v. 1. "And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he doth not utter it then shall he bear his iniquity." It is not enough to forbear swearing, but we must prosecute the guilty.

(2.) *Unclean persons*, of which there are too many in this congregation, are all to be reckoned amongst the unbelievers. The defiled and the unbelieving are put together by the apostle, Tit. i. 15. The works of the flesh are enumerated, Gal. v. 19. &c.; and uncleanness leads the van. Such of you as live in uncleanness are past all doubt in the flesh, yet under the power of unbelief; for they that do believe, or are in Christ Jesus, "have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof," Gal. v. 24.

(3.) *Drunkards*, in vain do ye pretend to faith; ye are unbelievers, and shall have your part eternally with them. If ye look the forecited list, ye will find your names amongst the rest. Ye are not in Christ Jesus for they who are in Christ Jesus do not "walk after the flesh, but after the spirit," Rom. viii. 1. Now, to the class of unbelievers belong, (1.) Such as do spend and habitually throw away their time in ale-houses. Against these there is a woe denounced, Isa. v. 11. 12. "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night that the wine inflame them. And the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands." Some, it may be, will not be put by themselves with drink, yet they spend their time ordinarily in the ale-house. Such persons are to be reckoned amongst these unbelievers, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (2.) Such as do abuse themselves with drink, that they lose the use of their reason: this sin so abominable, and more than beastly, that it is a wonder how a man can be guilty of it; it being such

evil that we cannot find the like of it among the beasts. (3.) Such as go to that height, as to glory in their drinking, against them God pronounces a woe, Isa. v. 21. "Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink." (4.) A sort of sinners that seem to out-do all the rest, belong to this class, and that is, such as have the heaven-daring boldness, to tempt others to get drunk, not fearing the curse of God that is denounced against such, Hab. ii. 15. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look upon his nakedness." God threatens, in the following verse of that chapter, that the cup of his right-hand, the cup of his fury, shall be turned unto such. He will make them eternally to drink of the cup of his wrath, yea, the very dregs thereof. Whoever they are in this congregation that belong to this sort of men, we charge you to lay aside all claim to faith. Unbelievers you are: and if ye do flatter yourselves that ye do believe notwithstanding, ye but deceive yourselves, and ruin your own souls.

(4.) *All liars* are scored by as unbelievers. They are not the children of God, but of the devil. They have his name upon their forehead, and do exactly resemble him who was a liar from the beginning. They have no likeness to the God of truth. Therefore every one that loveth and maketh a lie shall be excluded from heaven, Rev. xxii. 15. In fine, to this sort belong thieves, murderers, evil-speakers, deceivers, Sabbath-breakers, &c. All these are openly profane, and so, past all peradventure, unbelievers. We need not endeavour to find them out by secret search, when these evidences are to be seen and observed by every one. But, besides the grossly ignorant and openly profane,

3. The *habitual neglecters of secret duties*, particularly of prayer, are to be set aside from the number of believers. Prayer is, if I may so speak, the very breath of the new creature; as soon as it is created, it prays; so that where there is an habitual neglect of secret prayer, there is no faith. Are there not here some of
you,

you, who will rise from your bed in the morning, and go to your work, and never bow a knee to God; and just so leave it at night again, and have never one check from your conscience for all this? If there be any amongst you who do neglect prayer, we charge you to lay aside all pretences to faith in Christ.

4. All that *expect to get heaven by their own prayers and other duties*, are to be set aside as unbelievers. How many of this congregation are there, who, when interrogate as to their hopes of heaven, have nothing else to found their hopes upon, but their religious performances! O wretched ignorance! your own duties are thus made your saviour. A certain and sure proof that ye do not believe.

These, and not a few others, are unquestionably unbelievers. Now, set aside the grossly ignorant, the profane, the neglecters of secret prayer, and such as rest upon their performances for heaven, we fear the greatest part of this assembly might be set aside. Having now named some sorts of persons, who, without all doubt are unbelievers, and therefore have no lot, no portion in Jesus Christ; and who, if they continue in that state, shall have their portion assigned them in utter darkness, with hypocrites and unbelievers; we shall proceed,

Secondly, To take notice of *some false marks*, whereby people judge of themselves, and conclude they have faith, while indeed they have it not.

1. It will not be a sufficient proof that ye have faith, that ye *think so*, and confidently *say so*. This is it that many of you build upon, your own confident assertions of it, upon no other account, but only that ye think so. When we ask you, Do ye believe? you will readily reply, Yes indeed we believe; and if we further press you to it, as to the ground of your assertion, we shall find nothing but the same thing told us over again with confidence; we believe, God forbid we should not believe. Nay, it may be some will say, "Though he slay us, we will trust in him." This we have had told us from persons who were as far from faith as the Turks are. We intreat you, in the fear of the Lord

hazard not your souls upon a strong fancy that ye have faith; for we assure you, in the Lord's name, that this is a false mark: for, (1.) Where there is least faith, there is usually most confidence. Where faith is, it occasions a holy jealousy, which others know nothing of: faith makes such discoveries of the deceitfulness of the heart, as makes the soul suspect itself. (2.) Our Lord positively says, "That not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is not every one that thinks and says he believes, that will be owned as a believer. Ye think ye believe; ye say ye do so: well, others have both thought and said so, who yet are in hell. Our Lord tells us in Matth. vii. 21. 22. that many will meet with a fearful disappointment: he will not own them, nor their faith, but send them and it together to the pit, telling them that he knows them not. But,

2. Some think they believe, because they have *no doubts*, and never had any, about the truth of the gospel, their pardon, and acceptation with God, through Jesus Christ. But take heed to yourselves, that ye do not flatter yourselves upon this ground, for it is a false one. Ye say, ye never doubted, therefore ye believe. But,

(1.) What if we should say that the contrary follows? Ye never had doubts, therefore ye do not believe. We might say so on better grounds: for want of doubts may flow, [1.] From unconcernedness about the truth of the gospel. Persons hear of a thousand things, and scarce are at pains to be anywise satisfied, whether they be true or false; because they are not concerned. If we hear that there is a man in America that has a vast estate, and a huge revenue, we will never scruple the truth of it, especially if they who tell are but of ordinary credit; but if we understood, that we could never be maintained, unless we got a share of that estate, and that the owner is willing to impart to us what we needed for our use, we would soon begin to be a little more scrupulous upon the point, and would not believe the report so easily, but be apt to entertain a
thousand

thousand suspicious thoughts about every circumstance of the matter. Just so is it with the most part of men and women in the matter before us: they do not know their need of Christ; they do not know but they may be able to do their own business well enough without him; therefore they are not at pains to inquire narrowly, and to be satisfied as to the truth of the gospel-report: they give it credit, from an easy credulity, because they do not know their own concernment in it, but were they once satisfied about their concernment in it, they would have more doubts about it. This we see plainly to be the case of these, when God awakens their conscience. While they sleep on in their natural security, and see not their need of Christ, they can easily believe, as they think, the truth of what the gospel reports concerning him: but as soon as they are awakened, and begin to know how much depends upon it, then they find that doubts do arise. [2.] Want of doubts may flow from a "profound ignorance of the mystery of the gospel." Ignorant persons have not their thoughts exercised about Christ, the excellency of his person, the necessity of his death, and of the virtue and efficacy of it, as meritorious of pardon, and satisfactory to the justice of God; and therefore see no difficulty in giving a sort of an assent to, or rather in not questioning the truth of the gospel. And then, [3.] As to persons confident reliance on Christ, or believing without any scruple, that they shall be saved by him, this flows from ignorance of God's holiness, and their own sinfulness. They think sin no great matter, and therefore think God may be soon reconciled to them. From these, and such other like causes, may it proceed, that ye want doubts, and that ye are so easily satisfied about this matter; and from the consideration of these causes, it is apparent, that want of doubts as to the truth of the gospel-report, and want of difficulty in the believing of your own advantage by it, is rather a sign that ye want faith, than that ye have it. Further, it is plain, that where persons have just impressions of their own sinfulness, and of God's holiness; of their own meanness, of God's greatness; of the

hateful

ateful nature of sin, and the stated aversion and irreconcilable hatred God bears to it; it will occasion difficulty in believing the truth of any way wherein a sinner may be admitted to the enjoyment of God, and consequently some difficulty in hazarding a reliance upon it; considering that there is naturally much darkness and weakness in the mind of man since the fall. But, passing this consideration, we say,

(2.) It is evident, that a great many, who have no doubts, are yet unquestionably unbelievers, because they live in gross ignorance, and in the habitual practice of known sins. In one word, ye who think ye have faith, because ye have no doubts, are like to deceive your own souls; for I make no doubt, there are not a few in hell roaring out of their intolerable pain, who never doubted but they had faith, and should be saved, till sad experience convinced them that they were damned.—The scripture, and the experience of the people of God in all ages, makes it plain, and incontestably evident, that they who do truly believe, find difficulty in doing so; and who never found any, have never yet seen that “the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” They are the whole persons that need not, and will never come to the physician. Where there is any thing of the carnal mind remaining, there will be still found difficulty in believing; unbelief will still be faith's neighbour; and where is any thing of God's marvellous light in the soul, this unbelief, and aversion to believing, will in more or less be decerned.

3. Some conclude that they themselves and others have faith, because they are *moral*, and *civil*, and *blameless in their external conversation*. Nothing more common than to call a civil moral man, a good man, and so conclude all is right with him. This is a mark whereby many judge, and judge amiss, of their own estate, and of the estate of others: for it is one that will not abide the test of God's word; if we weigh it in the balance of God's sanctuary, we must write *Tekel* upon it. We grant indeed, (1.) That it is very desirable
to

to see men moral and blameless in their conversation. It is a thing praise-worthy, because of its usefulness among men: and it were to be wished that there were more of it in the world; therefore we shall say nothing to discourage any from a blameless walk. (2.) We grant that immorality or profaneness is a sure mark of the want of faith. But because profane and immoral wretches do not believe, we must not therefore conclude, that they who are not thus immoral do believe. For, notwithstanding of what has been said, we say, [1.] That a man may be blameless, sober, and civil, as to his external conversation, who is so far from faith, that he may be hatching in his mind the most abominable evils: pride may reign there, ambition, worldly-mindedness, envy, discontent, and the like. There are two sorts of lusts spoken of by the apostle, Ephes. ii. 3. "Among whom also we all had our conversation in time past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Here the apostle gives us to understand, that there are desires or lusts of the mind, as well as of the flesh; and that the fulfilling the desires of the mind, or of the flesh, proves a man a child of wrath, and so void of faith. The civil moral man, it may be, fulfils not the one, but he may be fulfilling the other, and so perish eternally. [2.] So far is a moral civil walk from faith, or from being a sign of faith, that it has been found in many heathens, who never heard tell of faith, but perished in heathen darkness, quite ignorant of Christ, and the way of salvation by him. [3.] So far is it from being a sign of faith, that in many it has been found to be a sad hindrance to faith; inasmuch as they have abused it so far as to lay weight upon it, as did the proud pharisee, Luke xviii. 11. The eyes of thousands are so dazzled with their own blamelessness, that they can see no need of the righteousness of Christ: and this is destructive eternally to their souls. Believe it, that a moral, civil, and blameless man in his external walk, may be an unbeliever, and may be damned. A
profane

profane man walks openly and avowedly, as it were, on the rod to the pit; and, like Solomon's simple man, says to every one, that he is a fool: but a civil man may be going the same road; and if a man have no more, he is surely in the road to eternal damnation, as well as the other; he goes only, if I may so speak, in a cleaner path to the pit, but will as certainly come thither: O that we could get that fond conceit banished from the world, that there is no more required to make a man a Christian but morality. Flatter not yourselves; this is not faith: I assure you, you will be made to see so one day to your cost.

4. Others have *some awakenings*, by some common touches and motions of the Spirit of God, and therefore conclude that they believe, and have faith; especially if there ensue any thing like peace after them. The occasion of this mistake is, that when the Lord works the work of faith with power in the soul, he begins his work by convincing men of sin. But it is a very perverse and dangerous consequence, to conclude from thence, that faith is where there are convictions. For, (1.) The worst of men may have, and have had convictions. Judas, Pilate, Simon Magus, and a great many others, had bosoms full of convictions; and yet, past all peradventure, were unbelievers, and that of the worst sort. (2.) Ill men may grow worse by convictions. Many are so far from being bettered by them, from being brought to Christ by them, that they are put further from him, and that several ways. 1. Some, by their convictions are driven from gross sins to more secret sins, from profaneness to morality, and hold there; and their last case is, in several respects, worse than their first; as is plain from what has been discoursed above. 2. Some, by means of conviction, have the sins of their whole life aggravate more grievously than otherwise they would have been. Sins against light are the greatest of sins: and some continue all their life long under a continual vicissitude of sin and conviction; they hold on in sin, though they have from time to time dreadful throws of conviction. Some persons we have

M

known

known this way exercised all their life, yea, persons of great knowledge, who have been so far from being beat from their sin by convictions, that they have only served to aggravate and enhance their guilt. 3. Some others are so far from being led to Christ by their convictions, that they make a Christ of their convictions, and conclude all is well with them, because they are convinced, and so seek no further. They think God loves them, because his Spirit deals with them; little minding, that God's Spirit strove many a year with the old world, and then destroyed them at last. 4. Others there are, who, by despising and quenching convictions, pave the way for themselves to open profaneness, and a boundless liberty in sinning: for by hardening themselves under convictions, they provoke God to give them up to the ways of their own hearts, because when "they know God, they do not worship him as God, therefore he gives them up to vile affections," Rom. i. 21. &c. This was the unhappy case of many in the heathen world; and I may say is the case of many in the Christian world. Likewise, 5. Convictions many times terminate in dreadful despair; and so hurry men headlong to hell, instead of bringing them into the way to heaven, driving them to the devil, when they should come to Christ. Thus it fared with Judas and some others.

In fine, we intreat you do not flatter yourselves; convictions are no good sign of faith. I know some are so ignorant of God, and of this work of the Spirit of God, that they are apt to mock and deride such as the Lord brings to a conviction of sin, as mad, or at least melancholy. To such I say, if ye never knew conviction for sin, ye never knew conversion; and unless ye be convinced of sin, and awakened, ye will never believe, and so shall never be saved: And to laugh at conviction is a sure sign of one that never had faith. But, on the other hand, let none rest upon convictions, either as conversion, or as a sign of faith: for there are abundance of convictions in hell, where there is not one grain weight of faith, nor to eternity shall be. Every bosom there is full of convictions, and yet all

all are unbelievers; and as many of them as lived under the gospel, are damned for unbelief.

5. Some have *knowledge of the things of God*, and therefore conclude that they do believe: they understand the letter of the gospel, and have been instructed by reading, converse, and the painfulness of masters and ministers; therefore they bless themselves in their own hearts, when the judgements of God are denounced against unbelievers; and when they are bid believe, they put the exhortation by them, thinking that they believe already, and that all is well with them. This is a dangerous mistake, and ruins many poor souls.

We do indeed grant, that there is no faith without knowledge, and therefore have already laid aside the ignorant as unbelievers: but we are far from allowing that knowledge is a sure sign of faith. For, (1.) A great deal more of the knowledge of the gospel than even many true believers have, may be attained without any special aid or assistance of the Spirit of God; but faith is not to be obtained without the special operation of the Spirit. Hence it is called, "the faith of the operation of God, and the work of faith, that is wrought by the exceeding greatness of God's power,"

Col. ii. 12. 2 Thess. i. 11. Eph. i. 19. (2.) One may have much knowledge, and yet live in open profaneness, and the continued practice of known sins; which is utterly inconsistent with the least spark of saving grace. (3.) An unbeliever may have such a measure of the knowledge of Christ, and of the way of salvation by him, as to be able to instruct others in the knowledge of him: Judas had this, and yet wanted faith.

Nay, (4.) One may not only be capable of teaching others, but may even excel others, and be eminent for such gifts as are of use for the edification of the church, and yet be void of saving faith; no doubt Judas was beyond many others: being a disciple of the highest form, he had gifts in a suitable measure, but no grace.

But what need I say more upon this head? the devil, no doubt, has more knowledge of, and insight into the mystery of the gospel, as to the letter, than perhaps any man on earth; and yet has a heart full of malice, spite,

and irreconcilable enmity to it. Men, after the same manner, may have their head full of notions of truth and be perfectly void of saving grace: like the toad which has a precious stone in its head, and yet has its body full of poison.

6. Every sort of *concern about salvation* is not a sufficient evidence of faith. Some have some concern and are some way thoughtful about salvation, and about freedom from wrath, and yet are strangers to, and never come the length of the precious faith of God's elect. O what a length went the young man in the gospel, in his concern about salvation! we may see the history, Matth. xix. 6. &c. and Mark x. 17. Now, I shall take notice of several evidences of some concern about salvation in his conduct, to let you see that a concern about salvation will not prove you real believers. (1.) He was sensible that it was not any enjoyment of a present life that could make him happy. Though he was a young man, as Mark tells us, a young man that had the advantage of a fair estate, and a ruler, as Luke tells us; yet he had something more in view than a present temporal life: it was eternal life he would have. (2.) Such was his sense of the worth of eternal life, and of his need of it, notwithstanding his youth, health, honour, and wealth, that he had strong desires after eternal life. This the whole series of the history makes evident. (3.) His desires were not mere sluggish wishes: they put him upon a concern about the means whereby this life was to be obtained. This was the question he came to our Lord about: "Good Master," says he, "what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (4.) As far as he knew he had practised. The poor man knew no more but the commands, and that they ought to be kept; and that he had kept, and that universally, without any exception of any of them, and that with diligence and continuance: "All these have I kept, and that from my youth." There is universality, diligence, and continuance. (5.) He had a sense of his own ignorance: he was jealous of the shortness of his knowledge, and that he yet lacked something. (6.) This sense did lead him

to seek after, and desire instruction ; and he came to the right hand, Christ. (7.) When he came, every thing in his carriage discovered his great concern : *First*, He comes running, he was afraid of being in a mistake, he was desirous to be informed ; and these two together made him run. *Secondly*, He took all feasible methods to obtain his desire at Christ's hand ; he gave him an epithet importing much respect to him, as able and willing. " Good Master," says he. (Master) points at his ability, and (good) at his willingness : and moreover, Mark tells us, that he kneeled to him. (8.) Such was his concern for salvation, that he resolved to scruple nothing that was enjoined him. He knew of no reserve in his own heart. The words say plainly, to any one that considers the import of them, that the man had a resolution to do any thing that was enjoined him. He knew not that there was any thing he would not do. " What shall I do ?" says he. He was resolved to decline nothing that he could be desired to do, in order to obtain eternal life. Now, thus far did he go in concern for salvation, and yet he fell short of it ; as far as his concern brought him, it led him not to faith ; he fell short of that. Now, ye who think that ye believe, because ye have some concern about your souls and eternal life, do ye come this man's length ? I fear few of you can say, ye do : and yet ye must and will advance farther, if ye have faith, and be saved ; for this man and Christ parted, and we never hear of their meeting again.

7. Some joy in hearing the word, some affection to and delight in the gospel-report concerning Christ, are not sufficient marks of faith. Many people, especially of the younger sort, are ready to mistake this for faith, or a sure sign of faith ; therefore, to undeceive them, we shall shew, 1. Whence it is that people take it for faith, or an evidence of it at least. 2. Whence this may arise that may occasion these flashes of tenderness, where there is no faith. 3. That it is indeed no sign of faith.

As to the *first*, It is no great wonder it should be mistaken for faith, or an evidence of it, if we consider, (1.) The state of the person in whom faith is wrought,

and the state of the soul in which such flashes of affection and tendernefs are ordinarily wrought. When the Lord works faith, he works conviction to clear the way; fo, ufually thefe flashes follow fome convictions and awakenings. (2.) As faith is wrought, and comes by hearing of the word, and by the Spirit of God's concurring with his power; fo thefe flashes are occafioned by the word, and by the operation of the Spirit, though but a common operation, giving fome fuperficial tafte and relifh of the fweetnefs of heavenly things. (3.) As faith, when wrought in the foul, glues it, as it were, to the ordinances; fo the ufual effect of thefe tafte is, a great and ftrong defire after the ordinances, which makes them multiply duties, and delight in approaching to God. (4.) As faith makes the foul feek beyond the bare performance of duties, for communion with Chrift in the ordinances; fo perfons who have fuch flashes, may find an unfatisfiednefs with the ordinances, when they find not that fame relifh as formerly. Any one that confiders duly thefe things, will think it no wonder to find that there are mifakes in this matter.

2dly, We fhall a little inquire into the *rise of thefe flashes* of concern, delight, and tendernefs, which look fo like to that joy which believers find upon their believing. And if we obferve, we fhall find fome one or other of the following particulars, or at leaft a concurrence of more of them, to have an influence upon thofe perfons, to the production of thefe effects. (1.) Novelty. The things of the gofpel are new many times to people; and new things, efpecially when of fuch a nature that they threaten us no hurt, but, on the contrary, eminently promote our advantage, will very readily work upon our affections, and give fome delight, which longer cuftom and acquaintance doth abate. (2.) There may be fomewhat in a perfon's circumftances, which falling in with the propofal of the fweet offers of the gofpel, may readily occafion thofe flashes of tendernefs we are now difcourfing of: as for inftance, a perfon under diftrefs of mind will defire freedom from it; and if, upon fuch an occafion, the mind be entertain-

ed with the joys of heaven, the love, mercy, and grace, of God in Christ to sinners; if the mind hereby find a diversion from its trouble, this may occasion great delight. The like instance we may have, when persons fall out with the world upon some signal disappointment.

(3.) This may be considerably augmented by the strength of the passions in youth. (4.) A variety of gifts in preachers may occasion this. (5.) Something taking and peculiar in some men's way of preaching occasions this. Some have fluency of language, plenty of matter, warmth of affection; when these meet together, such affections will readily be moved. (6.) A surprise may have a great influence this way. These we may possibly afterwards have occasion to discourse more fully of: now we but name them, and proceed,

3dly, To shew that these are *no sure signs of faith*. And, for clearing this, we say, (1.) We have let you see how such affections may be excited, without any special operation of the Spirit of God; which faith can never be. (2.) The scriptures give us an account of such persons who had the flashes we speak of. Our Lord, speaking to the Jews of John Baptist, says, "He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing to rejoice in his light for a season," John v. 35. And these hearers of the word, that are resembled to the stony ground, received the word with joy, and yet proved naught in a day of trial. (3.) Our own observation may furnish us with instances, more than enough, of persons who have had great flashes of joy, which have terminated in nothing, or worse than nothing. But, leaving this, we say,

8. The *multiplication of religious duties* is no sufficient mark of faith. Some do apprehend, if they be punctual in their attendance upon the duties of religion, that this is proof enough that they do believe. But how far this is from truth, is easy enough to be discerned, by any that duly considers what great proficiency some have made this way, who yet have remained utterly unacquainted with God, and strangers to the faith of God's elect. If ye have no other proof of your faith

than this, that ye are punctual in your attendance upon the duties of religion, what do, or have ye, more than they with whom the prophet Isaiah had to do? A people they were who did abound in all these performances, and yet were naught. Look at them in that representation the prophet gives of them, Isa. lviii. 1. We shall find they had more to say upon this score than, I believe, most of you can pretend unto. "They seek me daily," says God, "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." One would think, here are surely a set of excellent persons, believers no doubt: but, notwithstanding all this, God rejects all their duties, and themselves also, with the greatest detestation and abhorrence, as we find the prophet telling them, both in this and in the first chapter of his prophecies. We may here observe, that they went a great way in the performance of duty: for, (1.) We find that they seek God. They do not live, as many others did, in a careless neglect of him, whereby there is an incontestable evidence given of an utter and entire want of faith. (2.) They seek him in the ordinances of his own appointment; as this prophet hints here, and gives a more full account in the first chapter of his prophecy. They did not invent to themselves new and uncouth ways of serving and seeking God, such as their own extravagant fancies might suggest to them; but they adhered to the ordinances of their God, his appointments. (3.) Their attendance was not a piece of force and violence put upon them: they took delight in duty, and in approaching to God. (4.) They were frequent and close in their applications to duty; they sought God daily. (5.) They are desirous of further information as to their duty; they did ask of God the ordinance of justice. (6.) They did not only go on in the performance of the ordinary duties of religion, but they did likewise multiply the more extraordinary; such as the fasting spoken of in the ensuing verses. Thus far did they go; but, notwithstanding all this, they were void of faith. Thus far may ye

go, and yet be utter strangers to the faith of God's elect. Indeed, such as are habitual neglecters of duties, cannot reasonably pretend to any interest or concern in this faith of God's elect: yet neither can such as multiply them say, on this account, that they have faith; since it is plain, in the instance just now mentioned, that this may be to a high degree, while faith is wanting. And no doubt Paul, before his conversion, was short of none in performances of this sort. Nay, further we add,

9. *Every change upon the man, even to the better, is no sure proof of faith.* For great alterations, as to people's sentiments, or to their inclination and conversation, may be wrought, where there is no gracious change upon the heart, but it continues as before. Some, when they find themselves altered to the better, from what once they were, do presently begin to think, that now they have faith, and that all shall be well with them. But there is a vast mistake here, a most dangerous, ruining, and soul-destroying error. Indeed, we must own, that where there is no change, there can be no faith; for faith is the gift of God, the work of the Spirit of Christ, and is not born with men, but wrought in them; and when it comes, it comes not alone; it is one of the most essential parts of the new man, or new creature. That here we may undeceive any of you who lay weight upon that which may fail you, if trusted to, we shall insist a little in shewing you what changes there may be on a man, who yet continues a stranger to the precious faith of God's elect. How these changes are to be distinguished from the other, which persons really regenerate do undergo, we may afterwards have occasion to discourse, when we come to give the marks of faith that will abide the trial. We say, then, that some change wrought upon you to the better, is not proof enough that ye have faith; since there may be a great change wrought upon persons who never did believe, and that upon the whole man. For,

(1.) There may be a great change wrought upon the *mind* or *understanding* of a man. Man is naturally blind, and knows not his way. Sin has put out the eye of the

soul; and hence men are said to be in darkness, or to be
 darkness itself in the abstract, before the Lord begins
 to deal with them; and when the Lord begins to work
 upon them, then he enlightens their minds, translating
 them from darkness to his light. But one who never
 was savingly illuminated, nor, it may be, ever shall, may
 yet undergo a great change in his understanding. I tell
 you a threefold change upon the mind that one may un-
 dergo who never was savingly enlightened. [1.] Such
 an one may, by mere diligence and application, without
 any supernatural assistance, attain a great deal of know-
 ledge of the truths of God, and of the things of religion,
 that he had not before. There are few, if any of you,
 so very dull, but could attain to a great measure of
 knowledge, would ye apply yourselves to reading, study,
 and meditation; ye might get your minds fraught with
 much head-knowledge of religion; and some by this means
 do attain a great measure of knowledge, which makes a
 great change upon their minds; the mind that formerly
 was full of the blackness of darkness and gross igno-
 rance, is now furnished with a stock of knowledge. But
 all this may be without any faith, or without any super-
 natural work of God upon the soul; yea, it may be in
 one utterly void of any regard to God. [2.] There may
 further be a change to something yet higher; the mind
 may have a beam or ray of supernatural light darted
 into it, whereby it may not only understand these truths,
 as it doth other truths, but may further come to see
 some peculiar beauty and usefulness in them. That
 one that is void of the saving faith of God's elect may
 reach this illumination, the apostle asserts plainly, while
 he makes it one of the attainments of them who may fall
 irrecoverably away, Heb. vi. 4. Nay, [3.] This light
 may be increased to such a degree, as to put them in a
 capacity to unfold the truths of the gospel to others.
 Thus there may be a great change wrought upon the
 mind or understanding, a change from gross ignorance
 to some acquired knowledge; from this acquired know-
 ledge to some degree of spiritual illumination, and from
 that to a high degree of spiritual light, such as Judas and
 Balaam

Balaam had, whereby they were capacitated to know and understand the things of God, in a degree so eminent, as to be able to instruct others. All this change may one that is an unbeliever undergo, and yet continue so still, and perish eternally in unbelief.

(2.) There may be a great change upon the *conscience*, and yet the soul may be void of faith. There may be a change from deep security to awakenings and convictions, and from such troubles again to a sort of peace, calmness, and serenity of conscience. Thus many times it is with temporary believers. If the thunderings of the law make sinners begin to shake and bestir themselves, then the joys of heaven, presented to the soul's view in the light of a beam of supernatural common illumination, will immediately calm, compose, and settle all again.

(3.) There may be a great change wrought on the *affections*, where there is no faith. One may have flashes of joy and grief about spiritual objects. Nay more, there may be something like an abiding change wrought on the affections; the delight in spiritual duties, the sorrow for sin, fear of wrath, that is attained, may be kept up in the soul for a long time. But of this we have spoken sufficiently already; wherefore we proceed to,

(4.) A change that may be, where there is no faith, and that is upon the *will*. See what a will the Israelites had, Deut. v. 27. The will may be wrought so far upon, as to arrive at many faint inclinations, wishings, and wouldings after grace. The man that is awakened in some measure, hears so much of the excellency of grace, and of the beauty of holiness, which he is convinced in his judgement is true, that it may induce and draw the will to some wishes, and even to some resolutions of seeking after it. In fine, there may be,

(5.) Great changes upon the *conversation* where there is no faith. The openly profane man may be changed into a civil, moral, and blameless man; the civil man, by some common work of God's Spirit, may be turned into a professor, who may multiply religious duties, and pretend as high as any. Where persons live under a

faithful ministry, and under the influence of lively ordinances, they may find it almost impossible, through the power of conviction, to continue in open profaneness, or, it may be, to rest upon mere civility. These minds may be so filled with light, that conscience will not suffer them to rest short at least of a form of godliness; and therefore many upon such occasions go this length, and step no further. As some do escape the pollutions of the world through lust, who are yet again entangled therein, and overcome, 2 Pet. ii. 2.; so some, who have been entangled for a considerable time, are afterward pulled, as it were, out of the snare again, and reach a blameless walk before the world: and, it may be, make a fair profession of religion, and yet are unacquainted with faith. Paul, before his conversion, was blameless concerning the righteousness that is of the law: and why may not one, who has for a while been profane, reform, and go as great a length that way as Paul did? There is no doubt he may.

10. In the *last* place, we say, that ye may have some sort of faith, and yet want the saving faith of God's elect. Every one that believes has not that faith which we have been discoursing of. There are three sorts of faith which ye may have, and yet be eternally ruined, getting your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers.

(1.) There is a sort of faith that we may call a *cradle-faith*. It is of an age, if I may so speak, with the person who has it. Some of you, though ye say ye believe, ye cannot tell how ye came to believe; only as long as ye can mind any thing, ye remember ye still did so; from the time ye could distinguish betwixt good and evil, ye did always believe; ye brought it from the cradle with you. This is the common faith that most part have, and they go no further. And if we could but once get men and women persuaded that this faith will not save them, we would, we think, have gained much upon them. Believe it, my friends, this faith never saved one, and to eternity will never save any; but many one it has ruined. I have a four-fold exception to lay against this faith. [1.] It is a plant
not

not of God's planting. The faith of God's elect is a plant that is planted by the hand of God; hence it is called, "the faith of the operation of God," and "the gift of God:" but this faith, that is so rife among you, is a weed that grows up of its own accord, without any sort of pains. They who have it, are not debtors to God for it, since it sprung up with them, and God had no hand in its production. [2.] It is in a bad soil that it grows, in a corrupt unrenewed nature. Ye who say, ye do believe, dare ye say, as in the sight of God, that ever your hearts were changed and renewed? I am sure many of you dare not say it; or, if ye do, conscience will tell you to your face, that you lie; yet, notwithstanding this, you will maintain that ye believe, and so think yourselves sure of salvation. I beseech you, by all the love you bear to your own souls, do not hazard them upon this faith; for, as sure as God lives, it will deceive you. There never grew a tree in nature's garden, in a soil so bad as that of an unrenewed nature, that ever was capable of bearing so choice a fruit as salvation is. All that grows there is sin, and the fruit of that is death. "The wages of sin is death," Rom. iii. 23.; and if ye expect any other, ye will meet with a disappointment that will not be easy to be borne. [3.] This faith of yours is not kept alive by influences from heaven, as is the faith of God's elect: As the precious faith of God's elect is at first planted in the soul by the blessed hand of him who is the Author of faith to all them that believe; so it receives all its increases from him. He nourishes it by influences from above; it derives all its growth from him. The gentle breezes of the Spirit, the north and south winds, breathing in the ordinances, quicken all the graces of the Spirit, and cause them to send forth a savoury and fragrant smell. Faith holds its life, its all of Christ. But this faith of yours quite overlooks the Mediator; it sees no need of him; it leads not to him. That which it lays hold upon, is some wrong notion of God, as if he were altogether such an one as yourselves, a God that has as light thoughts of sin as ye have, and can with as much ease pass it by without

without any repentment, as ye can commit it. God doth indeed take pleasure in them that hope in his mercy; but it is in his mercy as discovered in the gospel-method of salvation; and any faith that hath no respect to this will be rejected of God. The faith of God's elect fetches every thing from Christ, as the way and the treasure; and it comes all to him as the end. This faith of yours, when ye have need of pardon, carries you straightway to God's mercy, without ever owning Christ; but the faith of God's elect leads the believer to Christ, as to him whom mercy has exalted, to be the Prince and the Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Thus faith, saving faith, comes to Christ for all, while that common faith that ye rest upon quite neglects him. [4.]

As is the tree, so is the fruit. This faith of yours, as it is not of God's planting, but a weed sprung out of corrupt nature's soil, and is kept alive by ignorance of God's holiness and justice, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin; so its fruit is answerable to the root. We see not the fruits of holiness grow upon it; but, on the contrary, formality, a neglect of God, indifferency about salvation, and all the concerns of religion. And whether ye will believe it or not, when these fruits continue a while, they will ripen into damnation. This faith will not save you, and therefore trust not to it.

(2.) Ye may have a faith, which I may call a *rational faith*, for destruction's sake. This is a step beyond the former. That common faith is merely the fruit of custom and education; but this goes a degree farther. Some men of refined spirits are not accustomed to take truth upon trust from others, but to search into it themselves, that they may give their assent to it upon solid and rational grounds. And such persons are apt to think it irrational to a high degree, to use less caution in inquiring into the grounds whereon they do believe that religion they are to hazard their souls upon: and certainly thus far are they in the right. Well, then, that they may be satisfied in this matter, they inquire what reason they have to believe that these persons did indeed write the scripture, who are given out to be the penmen

of it; and whether, if they be found to be the penmen of it, they be persons worthy to be credited. Upon search, they find both to be confirmed, by the greatest historical evidence possible: and thus they are brought to give a general assent, and take up a firm persuasion of the truth of the scripture in general, and particularly of the truths concerning Jesus Christ; and here they rest, and take this for saving faith. And this sort of faith is common enough among the more learned sort, as the other is among the more ignorant. Many a learned man has gone to hell with this faith, which is sufficient indeed to put an accent upon their misery, and to vindicate the justice of God in their eternal destruction; but is no way useful to them for salvation. The nature, uses, and defects of this faith, I shall not insist on; because few of you are much concerned in it, it being not ordinarily to be found among any, save those who have more leisure and occasion for reading than most of you have.

(3.) Ye may yet go a step further, and reach that faith, which by practical divines is called a *temporary faith*; such as was that which the hearers compared to the stony ground had, of whom our Lord speaks in the parable of the sower, Matth. xiii. 20. And this steps further than that faith which we last mentioned, in two things. *First*, In its rise. The former sort of faith is the fruit merely of the exercise of the rational faculties; but this is produced by an operation of the Spirit of God. The power of the Spirit going along with the dispensation of the word, doth by a common operation produce this effect in the soul. *Secondly*, The former faith has a respect principally, if not only, to the truth of the gospel; whereas this has likewise a respect to the beauty, sweetness, and goodness of the things themselves; and hence we are told, that they received the word with joy. They saw a beauty, sweetness, and usefulness in the things discovered, as well as truth in the discovery; and both, by a beam of supernatural light, let in upon the soul by a common operation of the Spirit of God. But although this faith goes thus far; yet in two things it

it falls short of the faith of God's elect. *First*, It has no abiding root; it is only a transient work upon the soul, without the communication of any inward and abiding principle; the heart is not changed; only there is a transient effect wrought upon the rational powers of the soul. *Secondly*, It never carries the soul the length of a full closure with the gospel-method of salvation, whatever apprehension of the excellency thereof may be in it; yet there is never such a view got of all the parts of that contrivance, as is sufficient to determine the heart to an approbation of it.

Several other sorts of faith might likewise be named, which persons may have, and yet fall short of that which is saving: but I shall pass them, because there is not so great danger that they be mistaken, and put in the room of the faith we now inquire after.

Thus far have we gone in a discovery of the sandy foundations whereon many of you do build your hopes of heaven, and we fear that yet many of you will hold on in the old course, holding fast deceit, and building upon the sand. If ye do so, then we assure you, in the name of God, the foundation will fail you; and the higher your expectations are raised, the more confounding will your disappointment be. Since the hazard has been laid before you, God is free, we are free of your blood; and therefore your destruction is entirely of yourselves; and this will be no mean aggravation of your misery.

We shall now proceed to lay before you,

Thirdly, The *true marks* of the faith of God's elect, whereby we may know and be sure that ye do believe, and that, believing, ye shall be saved; which was the last thing we proposed in our entry upon this use of the doctrine.

But before we come to the marks themselves, we shall lay before you a few things. And,

1. We take it for granted, that there are marks whereby faith may be known. A very considerable part of the scripture is said to be written on this very design, to assist persons in making a judgement of their

own state, whether they do believe or not, 1 John 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, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

2. That we may make so clear a judgement of our case by these marks, as to reach joy in faith's apprehension of our own interest in Christ and salvation, there is requisite a special influence of the Spirit of God. God keeps comfort in his own hand, and he is most sovereign and absolute in the dispensing of it. Yet,

3. We say, there are such marks as may, through an ordinary influence of the Spirit, keep the soul up in such a comfortable persuasion of its believing, of the reality of its faith, as will at least keep from disquieting and sinking discouragements, and engage it to a cheerful attendance to all commanded duties, as not being despondent of a blessed issue of what concerns it.

4. There are some marks which have a respect to the reality, and others which do respect the degree of faith. We design only to insist upon such as have a respect to the reality of it; and shall not spend time in offering marks whereby we may know where faith is in its highest degree: for when it comes to that, it will evidence itself to the soul by these blessed concomitants of it, "peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Our business now leading the other way, we shall inquire into those evidences of faith which are to be found for ordinary in all them that do really believe, that is, when not under the immediate influence of some temptation. There are, moreover, some marks that are steadable upon all occasions, in a storm, as well as in fair weather: they are of use to the soul in all its greatest straits and perplexities; there are others which are not discernible in storms. We shall only insist upon the former, and shall not spend your time in handling many, because one solid mark may be of more real and solid use than many.

The way being thus far cleared, I shall now proceed to lay before you some of these evidences of faith; these marks

marks whereby ye may safely conclude that ye do believe. And,

1st, We say one may know and be sure that he doth believe, and that even in the midst of all temptations that may befall him, *by his heart's choosing, embracing, and approving God's way of saving sinners by the mediation of Jesus Christ, and relying thereon, with a renunciation of all other pretended ways.* This mark indeed is not distinct from faith; for it is one of the principal actings of saving faith, yet it is such an one as is discernible by all that will reflect upon themselves, and that even under great storms and violent temptations. Now, that ye may understand this mark distinctly, we shall, 1. Give some short account of the *gospel-contrivance* for the salvation of sinners. 2 We shall shew Wherein it is that this *approbation* of the gospel-method of salvation consists. 3. We shall shew, how faith doth *approve* of it. And *lastly*, How it doth *discover*, even under the greatest temptations, that it indeed doth approve of this method, to an utter rejection of all others.

1. As for the *gospel-contrivance* which faith approves of, ye may take some account of it in the following remarks.

(1.) It leans upon a twofold supposition in reference to man's estate. The one is that which we find our Lord asserting of the church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. And it is equally true of all naturally. All men, by nature, "are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Poor straying apostate man has his eyes put out, and knows not how to take one step towards happiness: he is as blind as a stone. Nor has he any thing to screen himself from the wrath of a sin-revenging God: sin has made him naked: he has now no garment to clothe him, to keep the shame of his nakedness from being seen. He is a perfect bankrupt, and cannot go to the charge of one good thought. Ransack his heart, look never so narrowly into it, ye shall not there find so much goodness left by sin, as to furnish out one really good and acceptable thought. Upon all these accounts, he is miserable and wretched with a witness.

Again,

Again, this contrivance lays down as a foundation this grand supposition, that man can do nothing for the supply of his own wants.

(2.) The gospel is a discovery of a blessed contrivance that God has laid down for the salvation of sinners, for providing them a blessed supply of all these defects. There was from eternity a happy contrivance framed, for providing sinful man with a garment, a robe of righteousness, that the shame of his nakedness may not appear; and for preparing eye-salve to him, to cure his natural folly and blindness; and riches to him, that he may have a sufficient stock to live upon in time and for eternity, even riches of grace, and riches of glory, the unsearchable riches of Christ. For,

(3.) This blessed project provides all this supply for poor sinful man, in Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the covenant: "All the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge are hid in him; for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19. and ii. 3. And that upon this blessed design, that all his people might come to him as the great repository of wisdom, and thence derive such supplies as they find occasion for. He is able to furnish them with riches of grace here, and riches of glory hereafter; for with him "are durable riches and righteousness," Prov. viii. 18. And hence it is that we find him pressing the Laodicean church to come to him, that she might have "gold tried in the fire, that she might be rich; and white raiment, that she might be clothed, that the shame of her nakedness might not appear; and eye-salve, that she might see," Rev. iii. 18.

(4.) There is in this contrivance a way laid down, for putting the persons whom God designs to save in the actual possession of that blessed provision that is made for them in a Mediator; and such a way as is exactly adapted to the wise and holy ends God proposes to himself in the whole project.

(5.) The great design God aims at, both in making this provision for the supply of the wants of elect sinners, and in putting them in the possession of it, is, on the

the one hand, to advance glorious grace; and, on the other, to lay man low. This is expressly asserted to be the design of God in carrying on this project and contrivance, 1 Cor. i. 29. 30. 31. Christ Jesus "is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; that no flesh might glory in his sight, but that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord." Man has wisdom; but there is no access for him to glory in it, since God has provided and treasured it up for him in Christ Jesus; and not only so, but actually put him in possession of it; for he is made of God wisdom to him. Man, by this means, is clothed in a stately robe of righteousness; but he has nothing to glory of, since, I may say, God not only prepares the robe, but puts it on. Christ Jesus being made of God righteousness to man, he is made holy, and so made meet to be a sharer of the inheritance of the saints in light; but what has he to boast of, since it is entirely owing to the Lord Jesus Christ that he is so? This is that great contrivance which faith approves of.

2. As for the *nature* of this approbation which faith gives of it, whereby it evidences its own truth and reality, we may take it up in four things.

(1.) Some *knowledge* of it. Approbation ever implies knowledge: there is no approving of that which we know not. And before we do approve this blessed contrivance, we must see it in a supernatural light: none ever will approve of it, who see it only with a carnal eye; for to such it is foolish and weak. To save sinners by a crucified Saviour, in such a way as to ascribe all the glory of it to the grace, mercy, and love of God, without allowing man to divide the spoils with God, "is foolishness to the Greeks, and a stumbling-block to the Jews," 1 Cor. i. 23.; and it ever will be so, unless to those into whose minds and hearts God has "shined, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

(2.) It takes in the *heart's satisfaction* with God's ends and designs in this blessed device. What these are, ye may understand from what we did just now discourse to

to you. They are easily reducible to these three. *First*, He aims at the salvation of his own elect. *Secondly*, He designs to save them in such a way, as that they shall have no share in the glory of their salvation. *Thirdly*, He designs to have all the glory of it to his own blessed name. Now, when one approves the gospel-contrivance for the salvation of sinners, then his heart is satisfied with all these designs. The first of them would relish well enough even with a carnal heart; it is natural to every one to desire salvation: but the other two will never go down with any who is not, by a day of God's power, made willing. Nothing but omnipotent grace can make man content to stoop so low, that the Lord alone may be exalted.

(3.) This approbation takes in the heart's satisfaction with the *means* God has made choice of for compassing these blessed designs. The mind sees them in God's light; and the heart rests in them as proper and sufficient, such as became the wisdom of God to appoint and make use of, in order to the attainment of these ends; and hereon,

(4.) There ensues the *heart's cleaving* to this contrivance, even to the whole of it, with universal satisfaction, being fully content with it in all its parts, and preferring it to all other ways; nay, not only so, but counting them loss and dung, so it may have an interest in this way and method of God's contriving. This is that acting of saving faith that gives a sure title to Christ and all his purchase. He that thus approves of this blessed device, in so doing putteth to his seal, that God is true in the record he hath borne; and this is the record that God hath borne, that he hath provided life, and that "this life is in his Son," 1 John v. 10. When once a sinner is brought this length, then God reaches all his design, gets all that glory that he is seeking: and therefore no more can be required in order to the sinner's obtaining the advantage of that contrivance. It were easy to make it appear, that all the descriptions of saving faith that we find in the scriptures terminate here. I proceed now,

3. To inquire particularly, how faith doth *approve* of this contrivance ; or, what is in it that it doth approve. And in answer to this, we say faith approves of it,

(1.) As a way *full of infinite wisdom*. The manifold wisdom of God shines with such a dazzling lustre in the eye of faith, that it fills the soul with admiration at the depth of wisdom that doth appear in this blessed contrivance, which reconciles the seemingly irreconcilable interests of justice and mercy in God, the one whereof seems to rest satisfied with nothing short of the sinner's death, and the other demands his life: moreover, it admires this contrivance, because it reconciles these two seemingly irreconcilable desires, viz. that of the glory of God, and that of our own salvation. Both these we should ever have, and both these every one that is savingly enlightened will have: But how they could have been together, in the same soul, the wit of men or angels could never have contrived. For the glory of God's faithfulness in his threatnings, of his authority, purity, and wisdom in his law, seem to rest satisfied with nothing short of the sinner's destruction: therefore, in desiring the glory of God, he must have at once desired his own damnation; and consequently, in desiring his own salvation, he must have desired God's dishonour. But now this blessed contrivance lets us see how these two may be, not only reconciled, but made inseparable one from the other. Further, as faith approves of, and admires the wisdom of God in the contrivance, so,

(2.) Faith approves of this as a way *full of love and goodness*; and consequently as that which highly suits the nature of God, who represents himself as love, "God is love," 1 John iv. 8. And the soul sees and perceives a blessed suitableness betwixt God's nature and his actings. Hereby it perceives the love of God in that he laid down his life for his people. This is that which the apostle takes notice of, Tit. iii. 5.—7. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy,
he

he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life." Thus faith sees this way, as that which is full of kindness, grace, mercy, and love; and it is highly pleased with it as such.

(3.) Faith approves it as a way *wherein much of the power of God appears*, in that it infallibly obtains his end: "Christ crucified to the Jews is a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that believe, he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God." They see more power, strength, and efficacy in it, than any creature can pretend justly unto; and therefore they do, on this account, approve of it, as becoming the omnipotent God.

(4.) Faith approves of this way as that which *exceedingly honours God's law in all its parts*. The obedience that the Son of God gave to it in his life, was the highest honour it was capable of; and therein there was a glorious testimony of respect given to the authority of God, his wisdom, goodness, and purity, in the framing the law: nor was the sanction of the law less honoured by Christ's undergoing the penalty in his death, than the precept was by the obedience of his life.

(5.) Faith looks upon this way as a way that is *full of peace*, and approves it as such, all challenges being answered by it. The law has nothing to demand. If it require perfect obedience, then Christ hath fulfilled all righteousness, and so is become "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes:" if it demand the bearing of the penalty, then Christ has done that also; he became obedient even unto death: so that he answered the law in both its demands. God, by raising him from the dead, declared himself satisfied, both as to the one and as to the other. And God justifying, conscience has no more right to open its mouth against the sinner. Thus is the peace and comfort

fort of the sinner excellently provided for by this contrivance: and faith approves of it with respect to this.

(6.) Faith approves it as a way *full of security* for poor sinners. The soul doth by faith see provision laid in against all these things whence it has any reason to fear hurt; and all this put in the hand of one who is wise to dispense it seasonably, and has engaged to do no less. It sees a fountain standing ever open, for preventing any hazard from the guilt of sin; it sees armour laid in for preventing any danger from the power of sin; and withal strength provided, for the management of that armour. In one word, it sees here what is sufficient to satisfy all its desires. These may be all reduced to two, God's glory, and its own salvation. Here it sees them so well provided for, that they are now not only consistent, but linked together, after such a sort, that not only the salvation of sinners is consistent with the glory of God, but, moreover, the greater the sinner be, the greater glory has God in his salvation: and upon this account the heart doth approve this blessed device, as that which in particular is suited to its own salvation, counting it a "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom itself is chief." Hereon the soul cleaves to this way with satisfaction and delight, as the only way wherein its own salvation and God's glory are both provided for. I proceed now,

4. To inquire, how faith doth *discover its satisfaction with, and approbation of*, this way of salvation. And this it doth,

(1.) By the soul's *betaking itself, in all its straits, fears, and storms, to this as its anchor*. If guilt be charged upon the soul, it has no other relief but this: if the temptation represent God's glory and the soul's salvation inconsistent, the soul flies to this, as to its only refuge: if death and judgement, and its appearance before God, present themselves to the soul's eye; it fixes only on this, as that which alone can give it relief in all its perplexities.

(2.) In that the soul doth ever *confidently reject all other ways* that may be tendered. Other ways there are which will offer themselves to the soul in its straits for its relief; such as, diversions to take off the mind, duties to satisfy the conscience, promises of amendment for the future: faith rejects all these as insufficient; it will not look to them for relief.

(3.) When at any time, through the power of temptation, any thing has been attribute to self, to a derogation from the glory of grace in this contrivance, faith will discover its satisfaction with this way, by the soul's *displeasure with itself*, for discrediting this blessed contrivance.

(4.) The soul discovers its approbation of this way, by that *high satisfaction and delight* which it takes in its own conformity to it. When faith gets the soul moulded into the very frame of this contrivance, resting in this way, taking shame to itself, attributing all to God, then it fills the soul with refreshing sweetness and satisfaction. The conformity the soul sees in itself to this way, makes it lovely to itself.

(5.) It discovers its approbation of this way, in that it will *refuse to abandon it*. Sometimes, through the power of temptation, it may be made to fear exceedingly, that it get not hold taken of this blessed device: but it will not be beat from this, that it is a way sufficient and able particularly to save it, could it but bring itself to venture on it. Therefore it will lay the weight of its salvation upon this way, and none other; and the doubts that are in such a soul, are not about the sufficiency of the way, but about its own being in it.

2dly, But, passing this mark, I shall now offer a second. Wherever saving faith is, it will discover itself, by leading the believer to an approbation of *the whole law of God*, not only as holy, just, and spiritual, but as good.

A stranger to the faith of God's elect may approve of some of the commands of God. A temperate man may applaud highly the law that forbids drunkenness:

the churl may approve the law that forbids prodigality. In a word, every one may approve such precepts as strike not against his own peculiar sin or sins ; but the believer approves the whole revelation of God's will concerning man's holiness and obedience.

An unbeliever may be induced to own the law to be spiritual, just, and holy ; but never can he, nor will he, be induced practically to own it as good : here it sticks. It is only faith that can say, that his commandments are not grievous ; for “ the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The light of nature may oblige men to judge such and such things lawful or unlawful, just or unjust ; but the unrenewed will can never be induced to bend toward the law of God as that which is good. Whatever it may be said to do as to some of God's commands, yet it can never have an equal respect to them all ; for an unrenewed will is not subject, nor can be subject, to the law of God. It is faith that receives Christ as a King, and so subjects the soul to all his laws. It receives him as the King of Salem, the King of peace, one that has framed all his laws so, that they all concur to promote that great end of government, the peace of his subjects. And this engages the soul to love the law of the Lord, and to delight in it. “ O how love I thy law,” says the Psalmist, “ it is my meditation all the day,” Psal. cxix. 97. The righteous man's delight is in the law of the Lord, Psal. i. 2. And it is only the righteous man who can delight in the law of the Lord ; for, if we speak strictly, the ungodly, the unbeliever, can delight in or approve of none of God's laws. Sometimes indeed, as has been said, the unrenewed man may reflect with delight on some of God's precepts ; but he has no regard to them as such. It is rather the things enjoined, than the precept enjoining, that pleases him. It is not the congruity of the thing to the divine will, but to his own inclination, that gains his approbation.

Now, what say ye to this evidence ? Can ye say, that ye do approve of, and consent cheerfully to, the whole revelation of God's will, concerning that holiness and obedience

obedience which he requires of us in the scripture? Such as do indeed approve thus of the law of God, may it is like be perplexed about it, while others, who are alienate from the life of God, will boldly pretend unto it. To these bold pretenders I shall only say, if they wilfully deceive themselves, they will one day smart for their folly: and if they do hold fast this mistake, it will issue in another, and that an irrecoverable one; it will make them stumble into hell, instead of going to heaven. As for such who know not well whether they do thus approve of the law of God or not, I shall endeavour their relief, by mentioning some of the ordinary ways whereby the soul is wont to express or discover its approbation of the whole of that obedience and holiness which God requires of us, and that even while it is at the lowest ebb of strength and comfort.

1. The believing soul looks at that change of its nature, and its renovation into a conformity to the law of God, with unspeakable satisfaction. None doubt, who know any thing of the gospel, that all believers are renewed and changed, born again of the water and Spirit, renewed after the image of God, being created again in Christ Jesus to good works, Eph. ii. 10. I do moreover suppose, that all who have undergone this change since they came to years, are in some measure conscious of it. I do not say, that every one can see distinctly all the lineaments and draughts of the new creature, every particular law written upon the heart; or that every one can even see so much of this change, know its renovation so far, as to be sure he is a new creature, created in Christ Jesus to good works. But few, if any, of the persons named, will be found, who cannot say, and who do not know, that once they had no liking to holiness, or to the law of God, but had an aversion from conformity to it; but now, if they see no more, yet they see a desire of being universally holy, and that they have no quarrel at it. Thus far they see and know. Now, this change is satisfying, in some measure, to the believing soul: it looks back with de-

light to it, and thereby discovers its love to the revelation of God's will concerning holiness.

2. The believing soul discovers its liking to the law of God, by cherishing and entertaining the motions that it finds in itself towards this law. In the renovation of our natures, we are made partakers of the divine nature; we have a principle of life, a new heart, implanted in us; and this, though it be not always discernible, yet is ever acting and exerting its power in motions and inclinations toward the law of God, and obedience thereto. Every believer cannot but feel these in himself, if he observe carefully. Now, the believing soul entertains and cherishes these, and takes a peculiar delight in so doing; he has peace and rest while he does it. "Great peace have all they that love thy law." Whereas, on the other hand, he has none when he does otherwise.

3. It conceives a particular satisfaction in such acts of obedience as carry in them any good degree of conformity to the law of God. When a believer attains to liveliness, spirituality, and concern, joined with self-denial, and a dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ for acceptance in any duty or act of obedience, then he is pleased therewith: and herein he discovers a great love to the law, respecting both the matter and manner of the duty performed.

4. The believer discovers his delight in the law of the Lord, by that sweet complacency and satisfaction which he will find in any measure of this holiness that others have attained to. Faith looks at the holiness required by the law transcribed into the lives of fellow-believers and is highly pleased therewith; and the more there is of it transcribed into the walk and life of any, the higher value it will teach us to put upon them. It makes us look on such as have any thing of this image of God as excellent and happy. If the believer cannot see himself conformed to this law, yet he is pleased to see others, and looks upon them as the excellent ones of the earth. If he cannot get his own heart so engaged as he would wish; yet he will look upon them as happy, if

who

whose hearts are the ways of God. This is a clear proof of the believer's being pleased with, and of his delighting in the revelation of the will of God concerning man's holiness, when he is delighted with the picture of it, wherever he sees it, in himself or others.

5. The believer discovers his liking to God's law, that enjoins holiness, in that he will not entertain the least dislike of it, when he is under the greatest temptations to do so. When he falls under apprehensions that he shall be ruined for want of a due compliance with the law, he may well be displeased with himself, but he will not be so with the commandment, Rom. vii. 10.—12. "The commandment which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death; but the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good." However it be with me, whatever becomes of me, though I die and perish, yet the law is good. The soul under the conduct of faith, though it cannot reach a full compliance with the will of God, yet it dislikes nothing in it. Though the law enjoins duties cross to its natural inclinations, attended with great difficulties, and interfering with interests in the world, yea, and such as expose to great hazards; yet it will entertain no dislike at any thing in this good law, nor desire to have any alteration or abatement. Itself it would have changed, and brought to a compliance with the will of God; but never will it desire any alteration in the law. It may desire some alteration sometimes in God's providential disposal of its concerns; but as to the commands which respect our holiness and obedience, it wills, it wishes no change; and this is a sure proof of its high esteem of the law.

6. That soul that is under the conduct of faith, will evidence its satisfaction with the law by its displeasure with itself, upon every occasion wherein there is any new discovery of its own want of conformity to the law in any notable instance. No sooner comes it to understand, that it has fallen short of conformity to, or swerved from the law, in any notable instance, but it is filled with self-abhorrence. Holiness it would be clothed with, and likes; and therefore, when it gets a view

of itself without it, in any eminent measure, it cannot be reconciled to itself.

7. Faith discovers its approbation of the law, by filling the soul with desires and longings after a conformity to the law. It puts that prayer of the Psalmist in the soul's mouth, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes," Psal. cxix. 5. That psalm is full of such desires, which are so many illustrious proofs of the Psalmist's faith.

8. To conclude, the soul under the conduct of faith shews its approbation of, and satisfaction with, the whole revelation of the will of God concerning that holiness he requires of man, by refusing to be satisfied with any condition, wherein it falls short of a full conformity to it. Tell such a soul, that God is reconciled to it; nay, though God himself intimate to the believer's soul, that he is reconciled to him, that he has forgiven his sins, that he means to take him to heaven, that it shall pass the power of devils or men to disappoint him of heaven; yet all this will not make him satisfied, till he obtain a full conformity to the law of God. The believer says, with Haman in another case, Esth. v. 13. "All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai:" so long as I see any sin, nothing can satisfy fully: "But when I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness," Psal. xvii. 15. Never will I be satisfied till I be like thee, says the believing soul. Now, if ye can say, that ye do thus approve the whole revelation of the will of God concerning duty, then ye do believe; if not, ye do not believe. We now proceed to a

Third mark, whereby ye may know whether ye do believe or not; and that is taken from the express testimony of the apostle Peter, "To you, therefore, who believe, he is precious," 1 Pet. ii. 7. Wherever there is faith, it raises Christ high, and places him on the throne, both in the mind and in the affections. Now, how is it with you? Is Christ precious to you? (1.) Have ye many thoughts about him? serious and sober thoughts, I mean. Few of you, I fear, have so; and a sure proof this is, that ye have no high esteem of, and
sincere

sincere love for him. (2.) Are ye at much pains to commend him to the esteem and affection of others, especially of those whom ye love most? What say ye to this, parents, children, husbands, wives? take ye care to commend Christ to one another? (3.) Do ye prize opportunities of seeing Christ, of getting into his acquaintance? Do ye prize the means of his own appointment, for getting discoveries of him? (4.) Can ordinances satisfy you without him? Can ye this day go home from this house, as great strangers to Christ as ye came, and yet go well satisfied with your day's work? Then I dare say ye do not believe. (5.) Do ye resolutely part with every thing that comes in competition with Christ? When you must lose the world or Christ, or disoblige the world or Christ, which of the two do ye make choice of? (6.) Can other things satisfy without Christ? If so, then truly he is not, and cannot be said to be, precious to you.

Other marks of faith I shall now pass; and shall reduce those three that I have given you, to three questions, which I crave leave to pose your consciences seriously upon: 1. Are you pleased with, do you rest satisfied with Christ Jesus himself? See ye any loveliness in his person? or is he to you one void of form or comeliness? 2. Do you renounce your own wisdom, righteousness, and strength, and venture your all upon his wisdom, righteousness, and strength? 3. Are you pleased with his yoke? do you really think his burden light, and his yoke easy? If ye dare assert, then, that ye have seen, and are pleased with the person of Christ, that ye are satisfied with his provision for your salvation, and with his yoke; then I dare, in Christ's name, assert you believers.

I shall conclude this use, by speaking a little to several sorts of persons among you. We have now been laying before you some marks or characters whereby ye may know yourselves. Let me therefore seriously, as in God's sight, inquire of you, Have ye applied those characters to yourselves, that ye might know what your state is, whether ye do believe or not? Some, I

hope, have made conscience of doing so, out of a real desire to be at a point in this great matter: others, I fear, have not been at pains to be satisfied in this matter, either out of carelessness, or out of fear that possibly the result of the trial might not be satisfying; or out of a vain presumption that it was needless.

To the latter sort, I say, (1.) Is it not worth your while to know whether ye do believe on the Lord Jesus Christ or not? Care ye not whether ye be saved or damned, whether heaven or hell be your portion? (2.) Have ye no regard to the command of God, that bids you "try yourselves, and prove yourselves," that bids you "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure?" (3.) Though ye be afraid to know the worst, and endeavour never so industriously to hoodwink yourselves, ye will be made at last to know what ye are. (4.) Supposing the worst, whether will the knowledge of the worst now or hereafter, when there will be no remedy, be most unpleasant and terrible? (5.) Are ye so sure, that ye need not a trial? Have not others thought themselves believers, and yet have found themselves in a mistake? (6.) Your carelessness and neglect of trying, is a sufficient trial; it plainly shews, that you are not sincere, that you are unbelievers; and therefore we shall list you amongst them. Believers not only try themselves, but do, moreover, apply to God that he may try them, Psal. cxxxix. 23. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts."

As for those who have been at pains to apply these things to themselves, I shall put this question to them: Do ye believe on the Lord Jesus, or do you not? Ye may be cast all into three sorts and ranks.

1. Some of you are found *unbelievers* with a witness; and your sin is written in legible characters, even as it were with a sun-beam.

2. Some have endeavoured to know, but *scarce can determine*, whether they do believe or not.

3. A third sort there is, who can say *they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*.

I shall speak shortly to each of these sorts of persons, and then conclude this subject.

First, I shall address myself to *unbelievers*, who make, I fear, the most considerable part in this auditory. To this sort belong all the openly profane, swearers, drunkards, liars, unclean, fornicators, and adulterers, profaners of the Lord's day; and, moreover, all grossly ignorant sinners, all self-righteous sinners, all habitual neglecters of duties, secret, private, or public; in one word, all who do not approve of God's contrivance for the salvation of sinners, who approve not of the law of God, to whom Christ is not precious. I shall speak to you, as shortly as may be, of your sin, your danger, and your duty.

1. I begin with your *sin*. I shall not insist in discoursing of the nature of unbelief in the general; I shall only name some of the ingredients in your sin. If one be accused of murder, adultery, incest, or the like, his name is presently odious, and every one looks on him as a monster, and that justly. Yet your sin goes a step beyond any or all of these: It has no parallel. While ye view it in bulk, it appears little: I shall therefore give you a view of it in its parts, and expostulate with you in reference to your guilt.

(1.) Is it a small thing to you, O unbelievers! to trample upon the *authority* of God, to condemn it in the most signal instance? God has put a special stamp of his authority on the command, to believe on the Lord Jesus, 1 John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ;" and will nothing less serve, than to attack that command which God has declared his most special regard unto?

(2.) Is it a small thing with you, unbelievers, to charge a *lie* upon the God of truth? And this is your sin, 1 John v. 10. "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Nay, you seal this monstrous untruth, that the God of truth is a liar; for as he that believeth putteth his seal to the faithfulness

of God, so the unbeliever calls God a liar, and sets his seal to it.

(3.) Ye impute *folly* to the only wise God, and that in the most signal instance of his wisdom. All the treasures of wisdom are laid out in this contrivance. Here is manifold wisdom, wisdom in a mystery, the admiration of angels, the wonder of the world for wisdom. Is it then so light a matter for you to charge God, as ye do with folly? Unbelief calls it foolishness in the abstract; while faith calls this contrivance wisdom, and even a master-piece of wisdom.

(4.) Ye charge God with a *defect of goodness*, and reject, yea, trample upon his love, grace, mercy, and kindness. This is the glass wherein alone all these things are to be seen; herein appears the love, the kindness, the mercy of God: this is his name, whereby he desires to be known, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious;" this is his blessed face which he has discovered to us under the gospel. Unbelief breaks the glass wherein God's goodness is to be seen, blurs this title and name which God values himself upon, spits in the very face of God, and contemns that discovery he has made of himself. In a word, it makes an attempt upon the very life of God, in this matter. It endeavours to rifle his cabinet, and carry away the most precious crown-jewel in heaven, that glory which he will not give to any other, that is dear to him as his life. The believer, like Abraham, Rom. iv. gives glory to God; and the unbeliever takes it away as much as possibly he can.

(5.) Ye who are unbelievers call Christ *accursed*, whom God has blessed, in whom all the elect ones are blessed, whom all the angels and saints above do bless and eternally praise. Was it not enough, that our Lord, while on earth, did suffer of this sort from his unnatural countrymen, that ye must add to their wickedness? It may be, ye may think to refuse the charge; but this is a vain attempt, it cannot do. Where Christ has once been preached, every one either says, that Jesus is the Lord, or calls him, at best, practically accursed,

curled, and rejects him as an horrid impostor. And is this a small sin to treat the Lord of glory so?

(6.) As if this were not enough, ye *imbrue your hands in the blood of God*, crucifying to yourselves afresh the Son of God, and practically owning and avouching as yours the cursed impiety of the Jews. Believe it, not upon my word, but upon the testimony of God's word, that they may have a hand in crucifying Christ, who never saw him in the face. Those we find charged with this guilt, by the apostle to the Hebrews, Heb. vi. 6. We have no reason to suspect that most of them ever saw Christ in the face.

(7.) But may not all this suffice? Has not the Son of God suffered enough at your hands, when ye treat him as a *curled deceiver*, and, with the wicked Jews, cry out by your practice, "Crucify him, this fellow is not worthy to live:" But must there be some further evidence of your spite against the Lamb of God? Ay, more, every unbeliever tramples under foot the blood of the Son of God. It is not enough that Christ is maligned, and by your practice refused as an impostor; but ye must crucify him: and, as if your spite could not terminate with his death, ye trample his blood under foot. Ye have already in practice rejected Christ; there wants but one step to involve you in the guilt of those of whom the apostle says, Heb. x. 29. that they "trode under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing." All unbelief has something of this in it.

(8.) And that nothing might be wanting to enhance your guilt, all this is done under the *pretence of friendship*; ye cry, Hail Master, and then crucify him; ye betray the Son of man with a kiss. Ye wear his livery, eat his bread, call him Master; and yet lift up the heel against him: a crime not to be paralleled by any, but that of Judas; the Jews owned themselves his enemies. See Heb. x. 19.

(9.) That the whole Trinity may bear its proportion in your cursed opposition to it, ye do *despite unto the Spirit of God*. What can be an higher contempt of

the Spirit of God, than to refuse his testimony, resist his strivings, and thereby grieve him ; and this every one of you has done many a day.

(10.) Ye declare a *gospel-ministry useless* ; ye call not only ministers, but all who have owned Christ, fools : ye justify their persecutors, and mock both God and man in your professed adherence to the name of Christ, and profession of religion. In one word, ye reject Christ, resist his Spirit, and maltreat his ambassadors.

Thus far have we shortly laid before you your sin. With the like brevity, I shall,

2. Represent your *danger*. Unbelievers, ye sit secure, ye fear no ill. Ye do perhaps promise yourselves peace, and, with the fool in the gospel, have long ago sung a *requiem* to yourselves, Soul, take thee rest. Well were it for you, could ye always deem so : but think on it, this will not do ; I assure you, your hazard is great beyond thought, as secure as ye sit. That I may, if possible, awaken you, I shall shortly tell you, what it is ye are in hazard of, and then shew wherein your hazard lies. And if, after a just consideration of these two, ye think it not worth your while to provide for your own security, then sleep on.

If ye ask what ye have to fear, I shall give you a short account of it, from four scripture-expressions.

(1.) It is *damnation* ye have to fear : “ He that believeth shall be saved ; he that believeth not shall be damned.” So says the scripture, Mark xvi. 16. Damnation, though jested at by some, is yet a very grave and momentuous thing. A sentence passed by the great Judge, before so solemn an assembly as that of angels and men, adjudging poor sinners to hell, by an irrevocable sentence, and unalterable appointment, is sure no light matter.

(2.) It is *wrath* the unbeliever has to fear, and is in hazard of : “ He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him,” John iii. 18. 36. And “ who knows the power of God’s wrath ?” Who can endure the anger of an incensed God ? This expression is designed to point forth

forth the severity of the sentence. It is borrowed from men, who, though they may sometimes calmly, without any anger, punish; yet, when they are in wrath, they deal with greater severity, and are not influenced with these mitigating considerations, which sometimes bind up their hands. The angry man designs not the good of the person he punishes, as the other does, but his ruin. So when God designs to ruin impenitent sinners, he is said to deal with them in wrath, 2 Theff. i. 8. 9.

(3.) It is *destruction*. This tells the event. They who fear not God, know him not, and obey not the gospel, are doomed to everlasting destruction, 2 Theff. i. 9. Ruin or destruction is the doom of unbelievers. Their hopes for the future, as well as their present enjoyments, are entirely destroyed, and that with an everlasting destruction.

(4.) It is called *punishment*; and this points out the nature of that which ye are in hazard of. It is a punishment, and that a sore one, proportioned to your crime. The love of God, as great as it is, is contemned, by rejecting the gospel-proposal, for the salvation of sinners; even the love of the Father, which is so highly commended in giving his Son, and the love of the Son that is so highly magnified in giving himself. This punishment will be proportioned to the value of that blood that is trampled upon. If ye be charged with so great a debt as is the price of the blood of God, it will not be soon paid. It is great in proportion to the means enjoyed, whereby ye might have obtained an interest among God's chosen ones, had ye managed suitably. In fine, it is great in proportion to that salvation which is slighted, the greatness whereof we did illustrate at some length formerly. "If the word spoken by angels, was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was afterwards confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" Heb. ii. 2. 3. "He that despised Moses' law, died

died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, and I will repay, saith the Lord."

But wherein lies our hazard, will ye say, of all these evils ye speak of? I answer, Ye are indeed in imminent danger. For,

(1.) The *nature* of God makes your punishment necessary. Sin, every sin, is the "abominable thing which God hates," Jer. xliv. 4. Much more is unbelief so, which, on the account formerly mentioned, has something in it beyond other sins.

(2.) God has threatened unbelievers with wrath, damnation, destruction, and punishment; and when once he threatens, all his attributes stand *engaged for the execution*. Has he said, and will he not do?

(3.) He has *impartially* punished others: and is not this proof enough of the measure ye may expect to meet with? The carcases of the Israelites fell in the wilderness, for unbelief.

(4.) There is no *possible remedy* for your sin. Such as reject Christ, reject the only remedy; and if "we sin wilfully, after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," Heb. x. 26. 27.

(5.) To make all sure, the *oath* of God is engaged for your punishment, Heb. iii. 18. and to "whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" Had we time to discourse of these things at length, your danger might be easily manifested.

3. I shall now shut up what I have to say to you, in a short account of your *duty*, having already laid before you your sin and imminent danger. The sum of
this

this is that which is contained in the words of our text, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*. Before we come to press this duty upon you, we must acquaint you, that we come not in our own name to treat with you upon this head; but under the character and notion of Christ's ambassador, cloathed with a commission from him. We do come to you in his name, and shall treat with you according to the instructions received from our great Lord and Master. According to our instructions, then, we do in his name demand and require several things, all comprehended in that short one, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*.

(1.) That ye do own and acknowledge yourselves fools, blind and ignorant sinners, utterly void of, and incapable by your own endeavours to attain to, any measure or degree of the saving knowledge of God; and that ye do receive, rest, rely, and believe, on the Lord Jesus Christ, for instruction, wisdom, and understanding of all things that are needful to be known, in order to your acceptance with God, and partaking of his salvation: "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thine own understanding," Prov. iii. 5. "Let no man deceive himself; if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise," 1 Cor. iii. 18.; which he can no otherwise be, than by trusting entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made of God, to all them that believe, wisdom.

(2.) We do, in our great Lord and Master's name, demand and require, that in your appearances at the bar of God, or of his deputy your own conscience, to answer for your sins, ye do never once look to, or in the least expect to be absolved, acquitted, or justified, on account of any righteousness of your own; but that ye shall here disclaim and refuse your own righteousness entirely, without offering to plead in your own justification, your own doings or sufferings, resting and relying only upon that righteousness which Christ has wrought, pleading only that Christ has suffered all the punishment that the law did threaten you with, and has yielded

yielded a full and complete obedience to all its demands in your name ; to which righteousness, active and passive, ye trust, as that only whereby ye can be absolved at the bar of God from the charge laid against you, and have a title to that life and happiness which is the promised reward thereof. Ye must, with the apostle, Phil. iii. 9. " count all but loss and dung, that ye may win Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

(3.) Whereas ye have by your sins rendered yourselves justly obnoxious and liable to the displeasure, anger, and wrath, of the holy and just God, we do require, that ye shall never offer to him your own faith or obedience, your doing or suffering, your prayers or tears, as a satisfaction for the offence done him, or a propitiatory offering to atone him, and turn away his anger ; but that ye do trust only to the Lamb of God, whom we set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, in whom alone God is well pleased with, and accepts of sinners.

(4.) We do further demand, in Christ our Master's name, that ye believe on and receive him as your absolute and sovereign Lord ; that ye readily and cheerfully obey all his commandments, that ye willingly submit to his providential disposal of you.

(5.) We do require, that ye believe on and receive him as the Author, Preserver, and Maintainer of spiritual life, and of the whole work of sanctification, to whom alone ye are to trust, for the beginnings, progress, and completion of a work of sanctification, he being made of God sanctification, as well as righteousness, to all them that believe.

(6.) We do further demand, that ye do all in the name of Christ, Col. iii. 17. and that ye attempt no duty, go forth against no enemy, but in his name and strength, and under his conduct ; trusting to him only for strength, protection, throughbearing, and acceptance.

In fine, to sum up all, we do, in our great Lord's name,

me, require a *present ready compliance* with all and every one of these demands. We have no instructions to allow you one hour's delay: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation; and to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." We have no commission to speak of to-morrows. Nor will we, nor can we, nor dare we, part these demands. Comply with all or none. That short one in our text implies them all and more, which we shall not now insist upon, having at length opened the nature of this duty in our explication of that doctrine which we are now improving.

This is the substance of what we do in our Lord's name crave; and we are instructed to press those demands, and urge your compliance with them, 1. By intreaties; 2. By commands; 3. By threats.

1. Know then, O unbelievers, though our blessed Lord and Master might peremptorily require obedience to, and acceptance of these demands, and, upon the first refusal, turn you all into hell; yet such is his condescension, that he has given us in commission to beseech and intreat your compliance. Therefore, as ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God;" which can no otherwise be, than upon an acceptance of the terms we have proposed to you. We want not motives to enforce our petition; we are rather straitened with the number of them than with want. We have so many in our view, that we know not where to begin, nor how to end.

(1.) We earnestly, in Christ's stead, beseech your falling in with the demands made upon you, which are in themselves worthy of all acceptation. We crave no unreasonable thing, when we bid you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The request is suited to all the principles of reason. What more suitable than for the creature to grant the request, comply with the desire, (pardon the expression) of the Creator? What more suitable to that rational principle of self-preservation, and allowable self-love, than for a captive to accept of

a deliverer, a slave to receive a Redeemer, a condemned malefactor to welcome a pardon, a sinner to entertain a Saviour, a wanderer to lay hold upon a guide, a poor man to accept of riches when offered, and a pursued offender to betake himself to the city of refuge? Nothing sure can better quadrate with that principle that is interwoven in the very frame of our natures. Again, what more suited to our interest than this? This is a rational principle, when kept within just bounds; and it has a great influence, for ordinary, upon the actions of men. Interest, real or mistaken, rules the world; and never did it more appear than here, pleading strongly for your acceptance of, and compliance with, our desire. A compliance will take you from the dunghill to the throne, will enrich beggars with all the fulness of God; will make the children, nay, the slaves of Satan, heirs of heaven, and advance them to the estate and dignity of being sons of the Most High. It is not a few things, but all things, that ye may make yours, by accepting of this offer. If ye believe, all things are yours, things present, and things to come, grace and glory; "all are yours, and ye are Christ's." Once more, nothing more suitable to that principle of gratitude, that is judged to be so much suited to the nature of man, that he cannot forego it without sinking himself a degree below the very beasts. Nothing, I say, is more agreeable to gratitude. He who gave you all that ye possess, to whom alone ye must owe all that ye shall to eternity enjoy, asks this small and reasonable boon, this just desire; and we, in his stead, beseech, intreat, and obtest your compliance. Shall we get a refusal, when our demand is so highly reasonable? Reason, self-love, interest, gratitude, all second our request. If ye refuse in this, if ye will not hear these seconding and urging our earnest request, then we take God, angels, and men, to witness against you, that rather than comply with the desire of the ambassador of Christ, supplicating you in his name, you will not stand to counteract all the principles of reason, self-preservation, interest, and gratitude, to hear whom ye will not refuse in any other case.

(2.) We beseech you, in Christ's stead, to accept of him; for, we dare say, he is worthy of your acceptance, worthy for whom ye should do this thing. He is the "only begotten of the Father," and is possessed of all the glorious perfections of the Father; he is the "express image of his person," the "image of the invisible God." And as upon account of his personal excellencies, so upon account of the good offices he has done you, he deserves good treatment at your hand. He has honoured your nature, by joining it to his own, in a glorious and mystical personal union. He has given the most pregnant proof of matchless love to lost sinners: he left the Father's bosom, to bring them there; he died, that they might live; he suffered, that they might be saved. In a word, all the perfections of the divine nature, all the perfections of your own, all the wounds, every drop of the blood of the crucified Saviour of the world, all the tears he shed, all the drops of blood he in his agonies did sweat for the relief of poor sinners; all cry with one voice, Sinners, we beseech you, believe on the Lord Jesus. Can you refuse what is craved by such an one?

(3.) We pray you, by the "mercies of God," in the "bowels of our Lord Jesus," believe on him, accept of him; for his heart is upon this request. Nothing more acceptable to him, than a compliance with this call; he laid the foundation of this offer we make to you, in his own blood; he wept at sinners folly, that would not comply with it; he has institute a gospel-ministry for this very end, and has been, if I may so speak, at a vast expence of gifts and grace for the maintenance of this his own ordinance. He has given them most peremptory orders, to call you, to beseech you, to command, to threaten, nay, to compel you to a compliance. Will ye refuse our Master that request he has so much at heart?

(4.) We beseech you, accept of him now, grant our request, as ye would have yours granted by him, at that day when ye shall be obliged to supplicate him, standing before his bar, as pannels before the Judge of all the earth.

earth. None shall have their request granted in that day, who will not grant ours now. Will ye not then hear our Master now? If ye refuse him now, how will ye think to obtain any favour from him then?

(5.) We beseech you, in the name of all the glorious Trinity, to grant our demands. We are ambassadors for Christ, and God doth beseech you by us. God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, do all join in the supplication. Never were there such three names at a supplication, never such three hands at a petition. O sinners! what hearts have ye, if ye can refuse the desire, the supplication, the intreaties of a whole Trinity? All the love of the Father, all the grace of the Son, and all blessings that are enjoyed by communion with the Holy Ghost, all plead with you for your compliance. Can ye refuse us, then, O sinners, O rocks, O hearts harder than rocks?

(6.) Once more, we beseech you, be ye reconciled to God, accept of, and believe on our Lord Jesus Christ; for we assure you, in our great Master's name, he is no ordinary suppliant. He never came with such a supplication to the fallen angels: he never came with it to many nations of the world, who would, we make no doubt, welcome it, if they knew it, and had it. Kings are not ordinary petitioners, and therefore it is no wonder they take ill with a repulse.

Now, O sinners! what answer shall we give to him that sent us? what return shall we give to our Master? Shall we say, that we came to the congregation of Ceres, that we shewed his commission, told our errand, in his name supplicated for a compliance with his demand? But that ye would not hear him, though we besought you in his name, by all the ties of reason, self-preservation, interest, and gratitude, by the glorious worth of Christ, by all the marks of his love to mankind, by all his concern for sinners; that we had a whole Trinity seconding us, and that yet we meet with a refusal? Are ye willing that we take witnesses upon this refusal, and, in our Master's name, protest, that this our reasonable, nay, advantageous request, was refused?

It is a wonder that ever the commands of a God should be disobeyed ; but it is yet a greater, that ever the request, the intreaty of a God, should be denied. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, God beseeching ! and man refusing !

2. If this will not prevail with you, then know, that we are instructed by our great Lord and Master, to make use of his authority, and in his name to command your compliance. We do, therefore, in the name of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, command every one of you, young and old, rich and poor, high and low, to believe on him, and receive him. Beware of despising his authority. If ye be wise, obey his command. For,

(1.) Never was there a command given by any king, that deserved more respect, upon account of the matter of it. If ye look to it, ye will find it nothing else but this, Christ commands you to be happy, commands you to heaven ; and will ye, out of hatred of God's authority, damn your own souls ?

(2.) Obey this command ; for it is his, who is " King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Prince of the kings of the earth," the high and only Potentate, who, on account of the supereminent excellency of his nature, his interest in us by creation and preservation, has the unquestionable right to our obedience, without any reservation.

(3.) Dispute not this command ; for it is his who did command you out of nothing, and who can, with the like facility, command you into hell, which is infinitely worse than nothing.

(4.) If ye will obey this command, we have an allowance, in his name, to make offer of himself, and of all his glorious purchase ; and, according to our commission, we do here, in the name of our great Lord and Master, offer him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ; we offer him, and all he has, to every one within these doors. Whoever ye be, whatever your sins are, though as great as ever were the sins of any of the sons of Adam, we do here offer Christ
to

to you, and do promise, that, if ye will accept of him, he will "in no wise cast you out;" nay, he shall save you, make you sons of God, nay, heirs, yea, and joint-heirs with himself. *Believe on the Lord Jesus, and ye shall be saved.* Take him, and have him; take him, and have with him all things; all the blessings that the infinite, eternal, electing love of the Father, designed for his chosen ones; all the blessings that the precious blood of God, one drop whereof was of more value than ten thousand worlds, did purchase; all that the great and precious promises of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, are able to grasp or comprehend; all that quick-sighted faith, that looks from one eternity to another, from eternal electing love, projecting mercy, to eternal salvation, flowing from that fountain, can set its eye upon; all that the enlarged capacity of a perfected soul can hold or desire to all eternity: in one word, all that a God can bestow, or a creature receive; if ye receive Christ, all is and shall be yours.

3. But if we can neither prevail by commands nor intreaties with you, then we give you to understand, that we have it in commission to urge you to a compliance by threatenings.

(1.) If ye believe not, now in the accepted time, in this your day, then the things which belong to your peace will be "hid from your eyes." Our Master will give over treating with you, call home his ambassadors, or give them commission to turn to others; as we find he did when the Jews rejected the gospel-offer, Acts xiii. 46. "Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles; for so hath the Lord commanded us."

(2.) We do, in our great Lord and Master's name, proclaim war against you. Unbelievers, finally rejecting Christ, are to him as Amalek, with whom the Lord has sworn he will have war from generation to generation.

(3.) We are bid tell you, in our Lord's name, O unbelievers ! that though ye disobey one command, ye shall be made to obey another, nothing so much to your comfort and advantage. If ye obey not that command, 'Believe, and be saved ;' then ye shall be obliged to obey that, " Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now, chuse you which ye will obey. This day ye have had life and death set before you ; either then ye must chuse life, and live ; or chuse death, and die. An answer we do, in our Master's name, demand. If once he call us back, and forbid us to treat any more with you ; if he give up dealing with you, then we may say, Wo to you when he departs from you. When he calls home his ambassadors, he will send his armies in their room, who shall destroy those rebels, " who would not that he should reign over them." Ye have life and death before you, chuse which of them ye will.

Having thus addressed myself to unbelievers among you, I shall now,

Secondly, Speak a word shortly to you, who, after search, are in *doubt* about yourselves, whether ye do believe or not. Waving many things I once designed, I shall address you in a few words.

1. I must confess, your case is very sad and deplorable. Nothing more woful, than to be thus in suspense, without knowing what your case is. You hang betwixt heaven and hell : if ye be concerned about your state, a sad conflict betwixt hope and fear will torment you. You can have no comfort in any enjoyment, if ye continue so. O what a lamentable case are ye in ! for ye run a risk for eternity, and lose the comfort of time.

2. Think on it, I assure you, it will be a work of difficulty to get satisfaction about your believing. The words whereby this is set forth in scripture, do all import pains. It is not just to look, and to be at point ; but there is searching, proving, trying. The candle of the Lord must be lighted, and ye must search ; the touchstone must be brought, and ye must
prove

prove yourselves; the furnace must be kindled, and ye must abide the trial; ye must put yourselves in the balance, which he holds, who is a God of judgement by whom actions are weighed.

3. Rest not in this state: "give all diligence to make sure your calling and election." God's authority; your own comfort, the credit of the gospel, the glory of Christ, bid you all haste out of this state.

And, for your direction, I shall lay before you the few particulars following, which, if ye observe, will do much to rid you out of all your doubts, through the blessing of God, by the interposition of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Conclude not that ye want faith, because ye do not *see* or *find* all these things in yourselves which others have found, either before, in the time, or after the Lord's working faith in them, whereby they are united to Christ. Some have a strong law-work, a long continuance, before conversion; some have much distinctness, confidence, and clearness, at the very time of conversion, which enables them to give a distinct account of the time, place, and means of their conversion; and some have much joy and high manifestations afterwards. But though ye come not therein length, ye have no reason thence to conclude yourselves unbelievers, since in some the exercise is neither so intense, nor of such continuance, as that of others, only it is such as is sufficient to take them out of themselves to Christ; and this is all the sense of sin that is absolutely necessary. Some cannot, amidst the mist raised by their own corruptions, Satan, and the world, see God working upon their souls; nor can they reach that joy and comfort in believing, which others do; nor are they admitted to see Christ upon the mount, in high manifestations of his glory.

2. Conclude not that ye are unbelievers, because ye see not all things as they *should be* with you. Sin in its being, sin raging and tyrannizing, sin in the heart drawn out to some acts of impiety, and prevailing in various degrees, are no sufficient evidences of the want

of grace, or of the want of faith. Yet let none sin because grace abounds.

3. Study the *nature* of the covenant of grace well. This will be exceedingly helpful to you; and remove many rubs out of your way, and answer many of your doubts; particularly, study to know the ground of your acceptance with God, and of your admission and access into a covenant-relation: it is not your freedom from sin, it is not freedom from gross sins, nor is it any thing wrought in us, or by us, but only the sovereignly free grace of God in Christ, which glories in removing the greatest offences, in bestowing the choicest mercies upon the chief of sinners. Therefore none can be ruined, whatever his sins be, who is willing to owe salvation to free grace in Christ. The greatest sinner may be saved in this way, as well as the least; there is no odds with free grace; it is no more difficult to forgive the worst of sinners, than to forgive the least sinner. Nay, the greater persons sins be, as they have greater need, so they have the greater encouragement to come, in regard that God has declared, that the design of all his dealings with sinners, is the glory and advancement of his grace in their salvation; and that the greater the sins of such as do apply to grace for salvation are, the more is it glorified. But beware that ye sin not, because grace abounds. There is here great encouragement to such as are great sinners, but none to any to be so. "Shall we sin, because grace abounds? God forbid."

4. Study the *condescension* of the covenant to the state of believers, who carry about with them still a body of sin and death, while they are here in this house of their pilgrimage. It accepts of sincere obedience, it provides influences for enabling believers to perform it, it provides pardon for failings.

5. Study acquaintance with the *springs* of that covenant-peace which believers enjoy in their walk with God. It is not their own merit, but God's mercy; it is not their own blamelessness, but the efficacy of Christ's blood to take away spots; it is not the even-
ness

ness of our walk, and our freedom from trips; but it is the testimony of a good conscience, bearing witness, that it is our exercise to have and "keep a conscience void of offence, toward God and man," by continual dependence on God in Christ, for mercy to remove sin, and grace to help in time of need. Endeavour to understand these things well, and you will then be soon eased of many of your fears.

6. Acquaint yourselves with these marks of grace, which point at its *being*, rather than its *degree*, and are to be found in the soul, under all its temptations. Such are these which we named already, and cannot now stand to repeat.

7. Pray for the *influence of that Spirit* which searcheth the deep things of God, and can let in such a beam of light into the soul, as will clear to you fully what is your state.

8. Once more, I say, wait upon the Lord in the *use of all means*, and then ye shall know your state. There is much of sovereignty in God's way of dealing with people, about this assurance now sought after. "When he giveth quietness, who can give trouble? and when he hideth his face, who can behold him?" Job xxxiv. 29. Therefore wait his time. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain," James v. 7. "Light is sown for the righteous," Psal. xcvii. 11. Impatience, frowardness, sloth, and weariness, are indications of a soul not in a very good state: therefore wait, for it is "good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God," Lam. iii. 26.

Thirdly, We come now to speak to such as can upon *solid grounds* say, to the praise of the glory of God's grace, that they *do believe on the Lord Jesus*. We had once some design to hold forth your duty at length from another scripture; but this we shall wave, at least for some time, and only at present bespeak you very shortly.

1. Has God wrought the work of faith with power in

you? then *blefs* his name. "Take the cup of salvation, call upon the name of the Lord," and offer praise to him, "who remembered you in your low estate, because his mercy endureth for ever."

2. Walk *humbly* with your God. Pretences to faith, without humility, are most vain. It is peculiar to faith, to lay man low, that God alone may be exalted.

3. Ye are by faith ingrafted in Christ, then *bring forth much fruit*; for hereby will he be glorified, and hereby will ye make it appear, to your own satisfaction, and the conviction of others, that ye are ingrafted upon that Root of Jesse.

4. Ye have by faith acknowledged Christ your head; depend on him for influences of light and strength, that he may be all and in all to you.

5. Be *tender of his honour and glory*. The honour of your blessed Lord and Master should be dear to you, and will be so, if ye be indeed his disciples.

6. Pity those ye have left behind you in black ignorance, "without God, and without Christ, and without hope in the world."

7. Endeavour their salvation. Commend Christ and religion to them, by your *practice* and by your *conversation*.

8. Sympathise with, and seek the good of God's people, to whom ye are joined in society, under the blessed Mediator's conduct and government; that it may thereby appear that ye are members of the same body, of which Christ is the glorious and exalted Prince and Head.

Conclusion. We have now, for the space of eight Lord's days, laid before you who are in a state of nature, your sin, misery, and hazard. We have for fifteen or sixteen Sabbaths more, insisted on the way of your escape, and have urged you to betake yourselves to it.

Now, I shall conclude all with that question of the prophet, Isa. liii. 1. "Who hath believed our report? to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

What man, what woman, is there in this congregation that has believed our report, in the discovery we made either of sin, or of the Saviour of sinners? Are there none at all? Have we spent our strength in vain, and laboured in the fire? Have we cast the gospel net often, and caught nothing? Shall we give this melancholy account of our embassy to you? Lord, we came to the congregation of Ceres, and displayed thy terror before their eyes; yet none was alarmed. We proclaimed a Saviour, but none received our report. They would none of thee, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Must we, with Elias, be made to intercede with God against you? If we be put upon this, we have a heavier charge against you, than he had against Israel. "Lord," says he, "they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars, Rom. xi. 2. 3. But we may say, Lord, they have killed thy Son, rejected thy gospel, and mocked thy servants.

Now, as for you who have *not believed* our report, I have two three words to leave with you. (1.) Ye are the plague of the church, the burden of the land, the Achan in our camp. No sin has so great a hand in the Lord's quarrel, as unbelief. (2.) Ye are the cumberers of the ground; and who can tell but God who has spared you long, and dugged and digged about you, may issue forth that command, "Cut down, why cumbereth it the ground?" (3.) The Lord be judge betwixt you and us. We have warned you, and ye will not take warning: we have offered Christ, and ye have refused him. What will ye answer at the bar of God, when ye and we shall be sifted together, and we shall tell, Lord, we offered thee to these wretches; but they would none of thee. (4.) "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world has blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of this glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them," 2 Cor. iv. 3. 4.

To you, if any such there be, who *have believed*

our report, we say, (1.) We bless the Lord who has given you counsel, and desire to join in an eternal song on your behalf, and to bear a part in that blessed consort, where your salvation will come in as one of the grounds of the song. (2.) Whatever God has done for you, ascribe the glory of it to him, and to him alone; for from the laying the corner stone, nay, from the first wound of the ground in digging a place for it, to the putting on the cap-stone, all is his doing, and his only. If we have been instrumental, pray for us, that we may be found of him in peace at his appearance, and may be helped to a faithful discharge, and a successful management of our work, to the good of souls. (3.) Dearly beloved in our Lord, since we "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," from heaven, "who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself," stand fast in the Lord: for what is our hope, our joy, our crown, our glory, in the day of the Lord? Are not even ye, if ye stand fast in the Lord? Prepare for sufferings. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must travel through hardships and difficulties. It is the character of the glorified saints; they are a people "come out of great tribulation, who have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb." Prepare, stand fast; and he who is able shall "present you faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy," Jude, ver. 24.

To him be glory in all the churches. *Amen.*

END OF PART SECOND.

THE
GREAT CONCERN OF SALVATION.

PART III.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY, WITH RESPECT TO BOTH PERSONAL AND FAMILY RELIGION.

Josh. xxiv. 15.—*And if it seem evil unto you, to serve the Lord, chuse ye this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your father served that were on the other side of the flood; or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

THIS verse is a part of the last discourse, where with Joshua, the famed captain-general of Israel, entertained that people at Shechem, whither he had called them together, that he might speak his mind to them before his death, as we may understand from the beginning of this chapter.

And in this farewell discourse, he first reminds them of the humbling story of their forefathers idolatry, before the Lord called them, in the 2d verse; and thence to the 14th verse, he entertains them with a short rehearsal of the Lord's remarkable kindness, in the whole course of his providence to Abraham, and to his seed, for near the space of five hundred years; that

that is, from the time of Abraham's being called to the present time, wherein his seed were put in the peaceable possession of the land of Canaan, according to the promise made to Abraham. After this, in the 14th verse, he infers, from the whole, a serious exhortation to serve the Lord, of whose goodness they and their fathers had so ample proofs, and to abandon those idols whom their fathers served on the other side the flood, the river Euphrates, and in Egypt.

And in the words we have read, he presses this exhortation,

1. By an argument. And,
2. By a declaration of his own resolution.

The argument lies in the first part of the verse, *And if it seem evil, &c.*

For opening it, we are,

1. To see what the argument is.
2. How it is expressed.
3. Why it is so expressed.

As for the *argument*, it is shortly this: If, while I exhort you to serve the Lord, and abandon strange gods, I press you to nothing but what is evidently your interest, as well as your duty; then surely ye ought cheerfully, and of choice to comply. But so it is clearly; for what can be more evidently for your good, than to abandon idols, which your fathers found it their interest to leave, and which were not able to deliver you from your slavery in Egypt; and idols which were not able to defend their worshippers against you, and to cleave to that God of whose goodness ye have had large proofs, and your fathers also for a long tract of time? This is the argument.

Next, We are to look, how it is expressed; and we find that it is proposed,

1. By laying down a supposition, *If it seem evil, &c.*
2. By a sort of concession upon that supposition, *Chuse ye this day, &c.*

First, We say, he makes a supposition, *If it seem evil unto you, &c.*; that is, if, after all that ye have heard and seen of the vanity of idols, and the advantage

tage of the Lord's service, ye can find just reason to think it for your hurt, I am not to hinder you from chusing where ye may do better. Now, this supposition imports the evident absurdity of the thing supposed, as much as if he had said, If ye seriously consider things, it cannot but seem just, reasonable, and for your interest, to serve the Lord.

Secondly, We have, as it were, a concession, *Chuse ye this day whom ye will serve*; that is, if there be any with whom ye may be better, look out for them, and serve them: and this, as the supposition, implies also a strong insinuation of the absurdity of that which seems allowed, as much as if he had said, it is clear as the sun, if ye leave the Lord, ye can no where be so well; and therefore, were ye left to your choice, and did chuse well, ye must serve God; reason and interest bind you to it.

That which we are to consider, is, why this form of expression is used; why is one thing in appearance said, and the contrary meant? He supposes, that it may seem evil to serve the Lord, when he intends it highly absurd that it should do so: he refers it to them to chuse another, when he means, that it is foolish to think of such a thing. For answer, this way of expressing it gives the argument several advantages.

1. It clearly proposes a very advantageous and engaging discovery of God, as one that, in the proposal of duty, has such a regard to man's advantage, that he would bid him do nothing but what is for his interest; as if he had said, If this were not for your good, and what may evidently appear to be so, I would not press it on you. Again,

2. This expression sets in a clearer light the absurdity of that which he dissuades from. Had he pressed them only by a plain proposal of the advantage of the Lord's service, they might have heard this without a due impression of the evil of the contrary course; but now they cannot miss to see how hateful it is, when it is, as it were, proposed to them to consider and chuse.

3. Thus, by proposing what at present must appear detestable,

detestable, it not only obliges them to an acceptance of God's service, but to a plain and suitable declaration of their abhorrence of the service of idols. This effect we see it had upon them; for they usher in their answer with a *God forbid*; which expresth a detestation of the way refused.

4. This serves to insinuate a suspicion of them, which might oblige them to declare themselves with more plainness, and with more vehemency and concern; which might be a standing witness against them and their posterity, when straying from God. Now, having opened this argument, we shall next offer a few observations from it, and so go on to the next part of the verse, which is the thing we design to insist on.

And, of many observations, we only offer the few following.

1. Every man is obliged to serve some god. This the argument not only supposes, but insinuates as a thing ridiculous, or so absurd, that it is not to be supposed, that any rational man can be guilty of rejecting all gods: they must serve God or idols.

2. The Lord binds no man to any thing but what is for his good, and what may, and will, upon due consideration, appear to be for it.

3. The Lord will have such as serve him, to do it upon a rational conviction of the advantage of his service; and therefore says, *If it seem evil unto you, go where ye may do better.*

4. The Lord fears not the issue of a fair deliberation, and the serious consideration and comparison, both of what may be said for him and against him; and therefore he bids them look if they could, upon a due consideration, prefer idols to him.

5. Such as look well to idols, will soon see the folly of them. It is but look to them, and ye must abhor them.

6. To be satisfied who is to be preferred, God or idols, requires no long time to deliberate; it is but look, and ye shall be satisfied, *Chuse ye this day.* Ye

may be clear on the point, says he, this very moment, before ye leave the spot.

Thus far have we considered the argument. We have next Joshua's own resolution: *But as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

This being that which we had the principal regard to in the choice of this text, we shall more particularly notice every thing in it. And,

1. We have the thing resolved upon, and that is the Lord's service; service, though it be sometimes more strictly taken in the scripture, yet here is, no doubt, to be taken in its full latitude, for the whole of that obedience that the Lord Jehovah, who has the only indisputable title to our obedience, requires. He is Lord; and we are universally in all things, in all respects, subject to him, and therefore obliged in all things to serve him, to whom we are accountable. Whence by the bye observe, (1.) God has an unquestionable title to man's obedience; he is the Lord, in a way of eminence, to whom obedience is due from all. (2.) There is something engaging in God's service, sufficient, when known, to engage man to make it his choice, notwithstanding that strong inclination he has to command, and that eager desire he has of liberty.

2. We have, in the words, the resolution itself: *We will.* There is no constraint in it. It is our choice: not only do we look upon it as our duty, that which we are bound to do, but we look on it as our privilege, and our will is set upon it as good. Whence we may again note, (1.) People should serve the Lord willingly: this is a binding example, one approven of God, and proposed to our imitation. (2.) Such as know the Lord's service will make it their choice.

3. We have the person by whom the resolution is taken, Joshua, an old man, who had followed God through a wilderness, and many trials; and Joshua, a great man, a great general. Here it may be remarked, (1.) That a long trial of God's service, even when attended with no small outward disadvantages, will not make any forego it, but rather engage them to it. (2.) It derogates nothing

nothing from the character of the greatest to serve the Lord. (3.) As the head of a family may prevail much upon those in the family, so his whole interest in them, and influence on them, whether children or servants, ought to be employed, in order to engage them to serve the Lord.

4. We have in the words the firmness of the resolution insinuated, partly in the declaration of it, and partly in the adverbative particle *but*: *But as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.* *But as for me*, this form of expressing it seems to import these three things. (1.) That he himself had considered the matter seriously. (2.) That he was come to a firm resolution. (3.) That whatever way their choice should fall, it would have no influence upon him, to alter him. Whence observe, (1.) Acquaintance with God fixes people immoveably in his way. (2.) Such as do in earnest engage in God's way, from their own acquaintance with it, will not depend upon others in their resolutions.

5. In the words, we have the extent of his resolution: *As for me, and my house*; which imports, we conceive, (1.) A desire of the people's engaging to do so, and is as much as if he had said, I would have you resolve upon it; and were ye as much under my influence as my house is, I would use my utmost interest to persuade you. (2.) A direct declaration of his own resolution to keep firm to God's service. (3.) An engagement to improve his utmost interest, whether by authority, persuasion, or example, to engage all his own family to follow the Lord; as if he had said, if I cannot prevail with all whom I would have engaged in the service of God, yet I shall want none of those whom I may have any influence on. Whence observe, (1.) Real religion will make men careful that they themselves serve the Lord. (2.) It will not rest there, but will lead us to do our utmost for engaging others.

6. We have in the words, the order; he first speaks of himself, and then his family: whence we may note, (1.) True religion looks first inward to a man's self. (2.) Where a man is right engaged himself, he will use his
 O 6 utmost

utmost endeavours to have his family engaged also in the service of God.

Now, the design of this resolution, we may from the whole see, is to enforce the duty exhorted to in the former verse; and it has a considerable influence this way,

1. In that it speaks the thoughts of a wise man to favour the way of God.

2. It contains the thoughts of a dying wise man in favours of God's service; and, finally, of one that they stood under many ties to have a special regard to.

We design not to discourse all these truths; we shall therefore take up the sum of this resolution in three truths, which, if the Lord will, we design at some length to insist on.

Doctr. I. "Such as engage in the service of God, ought to do it deliberately, resolutely, and willingly."

Doctr. II. "True religion begins at home;" or, "A man must be himself a servant of God, before he can engage others aright."

Doctr. III. "Where a man is himself engaged in the Lord's service, he will endeavour to have his family engaged also."

The rise of these truths from the words, we shall not insist upon, because it is sufficiently clear from what has already been said in opening them.

We shall now begin with the first of them, "That such as engage in the service of the Lord, ought to serve him resolutely, deliberately, and willingly."

That we ought to serve the Lord, innumerable scripture-precepts require, and even the light of nature testify.

And that we should do it deliberately and resolutely, our Lord, in the parable of the foolish builder, who counts not the cost, Luke xiv. 28. plainly enough teacheth.

Nor is it less plain, that willingness is required in order to acceptance, since it deserves not the name of service

service that is constrained. Where the will is wanting, nothing can be accepted: and where this is, many imperfections will not hinder acceptance, 2 Cor. viii. 12. For if there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

But that we may further clear this truth, we shall,

I. Shew what it is to serve the Lord.

II. Shew what it is to do it deliberately, resolutely, and willingly.

III. We shall inquire, why we are obliged to serve the Lord willingly, deliberately, and resolutely.

IV. In answer to an objection that may be moved from the doctrine of faith in Christ, as we have formerly preached it, we shall endeavour to shew, what place there is for such service in the second covenant, and what necessity of it even to believers.

I. We are to begin with the *first* of these: and, that we may open unto you this head, we shall comprise that account we are to offer of the Lord's service in a few remarks. And,

1. Though, by the service of God, the scripture means many things, and uses the expression in several senses, yet there are three things principally and mainly called the service of God in the word. (1.) There is the solemn service of God in the duties of his worship; so we may understand our Lord's words to the tempter, Matth. iv. 10. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (2.) There is the ordinary service of God, in the course of our walk with him: Of this it is the apostle speaks, Heb. xii. 28. "Let us have grace to serve the Lord with reverence and godly fear." And, (3.) There is the extraordinary service of God, in some notable duties, called for of some persons, in some special seasons; and from their compliance with those duties, they are called the servants of the Lord: and thus Moses, Rev. xv. 3. is called the servant of God, in a way of eminency. They who got the victory, are said to "sing the song of Moses,

Moses, the servant of the Lord, and the song of the Lamb." All these three significations are here intended, at least none of them can be secluded. We must serve the Lord in the duties of his worship, in the whole course of our walk, endeavouring to do always the things that please him; and when called to extraordinary duties, we must not decline them.

2. There are three things requisite to fit a man to serve the Lord, or to do any thing that can justly challenge that name. Men are not naturally fit for the Lord's service; and they far mistake it, who think that they may, just when they please, put their hand to the Lord's work, and do it right. Nay, before ever we can do any thing that God will own as service, we must, (1.) Give up with our old masters. We are all by nature the servants of Satan and sin; "for their servants we are to whom we obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness," Rom. vi. 16. And no less sure it is, that we all naturally serve and obey divers lusts: but now we must renounce these, before we serve the Lord; for we are assured, that there is no serving two masters. The Lord will not halve it with sin, Matth. vi. 24. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon." And I assure you, this is no easy matter to 'get a sinner and his old master fairly parted; no less than the mighty power of God can do it. Sometimes there may be outcasts, but matters are quickly made up betwixt them, and all agreed again, until God himself effectually persuade to a separation. (2.) There must be a fair engaging to Christ as our Master. We must accept of him for our Lord. A master will not allow one to come in, and put to his hand to his service, unless he first covenant and engage to own him for his lord; and this is no easy matter, to bring a sinner, who is naturally an enemy, to come this length. To call Christ Lord, is something more than to resolve, under a conviction, to live better, and serve the Lord; nay, it is somewhat more

more than, under some work on the affections, to go to a corner, and make or write a personal covenant. A fear, personal covenanting, however good and justifiable in itself, yet is far mistaken, and much abused by some, while it is made a ground of hope by some, who never understood what conversion meant, never were humbled, and taken off their own bottom, and engaged to the Lord by the power of his grace. If any man think this an easy matter, to call Christ Lord, he has never yet done it to purpose. I am sure, the great apostle thought it no easy matter, but a thing so far above the line of nature, that the work of the Holy Ghost is required to bring us to it, 1 Cor. xii. 3. "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (3.) Before any can serve God, he must have a heart suited to the work. The carnal man is not subject to the law of God, but opposite to every duty. Before the fruit be good, the tree must be good. It is one of the many mad attempts that a deceitful heart, and deceitful devil, put people upon, under convictions, to serve the Lord, in newness of life, with old hearts: But they who have learned of Christ, Matth. vii. 17. that the tree must first be made good, before the fruit can be so, will know other things. First we must be created in Christ, and then we may walk in good works, Eph. ii. 10. Now, not one piece of service that is acceptable can any perform, without these three pre-requisites.

3. That ye may understand what it is to serve the Lord, we shall offer you this remark, that, before any piece of work performed by us can justly challenge this honourable name of service done to the Lord, it must have these six qualifications.

(1.) It must be a thing commanded, otherwise it is serving our own fancy, and not the Lord. The master's precept is the measure of the servant's obedience. We never find the Lord approving any for doing what he did not command them; nay, we find him, even when he

be

he has forbid things, rather challenging the doers, because they did what he commanded not, than because they did what he forbade, Jer. vii. 31. "They have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart." And to the same purpose is chap. xix. 5. "Who hath required this at your hand?" Will one day be the entertainment of such services as are done without a command? And there is one command that puts them all to the door, Deut. xii. 32. "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

(2.) There must be a regard had to the authority of the command in the doing. If men shall, upon sinister motives, as very oft they may, do the things that are commanded, God will not reckon this for service done to him: men who cannot pry into the hearts of the doers, may; but such deceits take not with God. It is not obedience, that is not done because commanded. It is frequently repeated in the erection of the tabernacle, that every thing was done "as the Lord commanded Moses," Exod. xvi. 34. and xxiv. 4. &c. and that to intimate, that Moses in every step had his eye upon the command; and so should we, in every thing, eye the command.

(3.) Every duty, that it may be service to God, must be done in the name of Christ. God will accept of no service but what is offered on this altar, Col. iii. 17. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him." In the name of Jesus is, [1.] By the command of Jesus, Matth. xvii. 20. Nothing, I am sure, can be done in his name, that has not the warrant of his command. [2.] In the name of Christ, is in the strength received from Christ, Luke x. 17. It was the name of Christ, that is, the power of Christ, that cured the lame man, Acts iv. 10.: and it must be this that must enable us to duty. [3.] In the name of Christ, is in a dependence upon him for the acceptance

our service; for all our sacrifices must be offered upon this altar, which sanctifieth the gifts that are put on it. [4.] In the name of Christ, is to the glory of Christ. Nor will any service be accepted that runs not in this channel.

(4.) Every piece of service, that God will own as such, must be done in faith: "For without faith it is impossible to please God; for whatever is not of faith is sin." Now, faith looks at the promise as its only security, both for through-bearing, acceptance, and reward.

(5.) Service must be done in the manner that is required. It is not enough that the thing be done, but it must be done in the manner that is commanded; for even this comes in as a part of the command, Psal. xix. 4. "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently."

(6.) Service must be done in the proper time. God has filled up our time with work, and every duty has its own time, and we must do every thing in its season. "Every thing is beautiful in its season;" and, "to-day, if ye will hear his voice." If the command be, to-day, obedience to-morrow will not answer it. If any of these be wanting, then God will own no duty or service done to him.

4. To add no more, we offer this one remark, for clearing what is meant by the Lord's service; and that is, that one may be called a servant of the Lord, or claim this title, it is not enough to do some one piece of commanded duty; nay, nor is it enough to multiply duties. But, (1.) There must be an equal respect unto all God's commands: "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commands," says the Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 6. The heart must be reconciled to all, and count them to be right concerning all things. (2.) There must be fixed benfai of will towards a compliance with them all. A servant must have it to say, with the apostle, Heb. xiii. 18. that he is "in all things willing to live honestly." And, (3.) There must be a constant and permanent endeavour

your

your to comply with them. We must "shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end," Heb. vi. 11. And surely, if these few things were duly weighed, most who have hitherto looked upon themselves as good servants, would begin to be jealous of themselves, as mistaken in this matter.

II. We are next to shew you what this *deliberation, resolution, and willingness* is, which ought to accompany an engagement in the Lord's service. As for the

First of them, *deliberation*, we shall open its nature in the few following observations, in as far as it respects our present purpose. That what we do in matters of great moment, ought to be done deliberately, is what none will deny; and therefore none can question the necessity of acting deliberately, when we engage ourselves to the service of God. Only some may be at a stand concerning the meaning of it, which we shall endeavour to open.

(1.) When we say that men should engage in the service of the Lord deliberately, we do not mean, that they should take a long, or indeed any time, to consider, before they do engage in the service of God, whether they shall do it or not. This is only requisite in cases where it is hard to discern what is adviseable, and where duty doth not oblige to do any thing presently, without loss of time. Here all things are quite otherwise: we are born under an obligation to serve the Lord; and the reasonableness, as well as advantage of it, are so obvious, that to be ignorant of them, is to be culpably blind. Nor,

(2.) Doth this deliberation import any doubt or hesitation, whether we may do better elsewhere: this were wicked and highly faulty. But,

(3.) To engage in the Lord's service deliberately, is to engage upon knowledge of that service, which we devote ourselves to. It is the sin, the folly of many, especially, when some way convinced of sin, and the bitter issue of its service, that presently they resolve they will serve the Lord; but in the mean time they know not what it is to serve the Lord, either as to
matter

matter or manner. Most part think, that to serve the Lord is only to perform some of the external duties of religion, and that without respect to any of those circumstances we have mentioned. But all ought to know who are in case to serve the Lord, what service he requires, what way he will have it done; and all the particulars mentioned formerly, when treating of the first general head, for explication of this truth.

(4.) That one may be justly said to have been deliberate in this undertaking; it is necessary that he know so much of his obligation, both by duty and interest, to undertake this service, that nothing that may afterwards fall in his way may be able to make him think he has acted cross, either to duty or interest, in the undertaking, or that he might have employed himself to more advantage otherwise.

(5.) A man that engages deliberately, will look to all the disadvantages, real or seeming, that attend this undertaking, and know when he engages, that the advantages will outweigh the disadvantages. And,

(6.) A man that engages deliberately, will know that what he engages in is practicable, and how it may be done. Upon the whole, to engage in the Lord's service deliberately, is to do it, after we are acquainted with the nature of the work, and have so much knowledge of the advantage and practicableness of the undertaking, that nothing that falls in or may occur afterward, may be able either to make us repent our undertaking, or quit it as impracticable.

Some know not the service they bind themselves to, and therefore engage rashly; and when they come to understand it, they find it not suited to their expectation, and therefore they quit it. Some know not the advantage of it, and therefore when the service of sin seems to bid fairer, they rue their bargain; others look not at some seeming disadvantages that attend the service of the Lord, and therefore they begin upon sight of them to wish they had not engaged in it: the Psalmist came near to this, Psal. lxxxiii. 13. And, in a word, some bind themselves, without ever thinking
what

what strength the work requires, and where it is to be got; and after experience tells them, it requires more than they have, they are fair to quit it; but deliberation prevents all these. And thus much for deliberation.

2dly, We must engage in the service of God *resolutely*; that is,

(1.) We must lay our account with difficulties, not indeed from the service itself, for the Lord's "yoke is easy, and his burden light;" but from our own corruption and enemies, that oppose us in the undertaking. Every one that puts his hand to the Lord's work, must lay his account with fighting, as well as working; he must be like the builders upon the wall of Jerusalem, Neh. iv. 17. work with one hand, and hold a weapon with the other.

(2.) To engage resolutely, is to resolve not to quit the work upon account of difficulties, or say with the sluggard, "There is a lion in the way, and I shall be slain in the streets;" but to hazard all, and so surmount these difficulties, or die in the quarrel.

(3.) To engage resolutely in the Lord's service, is to do it upon a conviction, that we are not at liberty, upon the account of any real or seeming difficulty, to quit it; but that of necessity, we must not only engage, but in the Lord's strength we must, in spite of all difficulties, persevere to the end. But now,

3dly, This is not all; but further, we must engage *willingly* in God's service. Some do serve, but the want of this spoils all. Now this willingness,

(1.) Excludes constraint. We must not, like the slave that's bound, engage in the work for fear of the whip. Some multiply performances, others seriously, as they think, under awakenings of conscience, or sickness, resolve to serve the Lord; ay, but it is only fear, either of hell, or the lashes of conscience, that obliges them to it, crosses their inclination: take these out of the way, and they would not serve the Lord.

(2.) Willingness excludes selfish regards, such as only eye the advantageous consequences of God's service.

vice. Some serve the Lord, like Jehu, because they see it makes at present for their interest; but if it were not so, they would act otherwise; and some, out of hopes to get heaven for their service, do the same. But this will not do: this is indeed a sort of constraint; for, could the service and its consequences be parted, the service would not be chosen.

(3.) Willingness imports a liking of the service, as well as the consequences, a suitableness in the will to the service, which makes even the service itself the object of our choice, and makes it, even when the consequences are not eyed, appear agreeable and pleasing; and this can never be where the heart is not renewed; for "the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. And therefore, till a day of God's power change the heart of man, and create him in Christ Jesus to good works, there is no possibility of engaging willingly in the service of God, Psal. cx. 3.

III. We are now come to offer some reasons why we should engage in the service of God, deliberately, resolutely, and of choice. Of many we name a few.

1. It is suitable to the rational nature; for we debase ourselves, and act not like rational men, if we act not resolutely, deliberately, and willingly, in a matter especially of so great moment. Not to act deliberately, speaks us foolish; not to act resolutely, speaks us weak; and not to act willingly, speaks us slaves.

2. The nature and honour of God makes such service necessary. That service which is unbecoming a rational nature, cannot surely be acceptable to God, who is the highest reason. What is reproachful to the nature of man to perform, must surely be so to the nature of God to accept. If man cannot act indeliberately, irresolutely, or unwillingly, without reproaching his nature, surely the holy God cannot accept of what is so done, without reproaching his own; and if it be dishonourable for man to perform such service, as is not the fruit of deliberation, choice, and resolution,

resolution, surely it is also dishonourable for God to accept it.

3. The nature of the service requires it; for it is called, Rom. xii. 1. "Our reasonable service." It is so by way of eminence; and surely, without those three properties mentioned, it cannot deserve that name.

4. Unless it be done thus, we are not like to continue in it; and this will be both dishonourable, and disadvantageous. What is rashly undertaken, is usually quickly given over; what is irresolutely engaged in, is easily hindered; and what is the fruit of constraint, cannot be permanent: and this spoils all; for unless it be continued in, we lose what we have wrought, and all the length we have gone will not be remembered, Ezek. xviii. 24. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."

IV. The only thing remaining, is to shew, what place now, under the gospel dispensation, is left for this service; and that in answer to a common objection that is made against it, upon supposition of admitting the doctrine of faith, may some say, "If we believe, what ye not long ago taught, that we are to be justified only by faith, then what need of serving the Lord? what need of holiness? If the obedience of another must be our righteousness before God, we may spare our pains; there is no need that we obey."

This objection is old indeed, and I may say it is new also. It is one of the many artifices that the enemies of the grace of God have made use of for discrediting the justification of sinners before God, by the imputed righteousness of Christ; and at this day, it is mightily urged by Papists, Socinians, and especially Arminians, who swarm in these lands; and therefore,

Therefore, before we come to answer it, we have two or three things to say in reference to it. And,

1. We do indeed confess, that any doctrine that has not a favourable aspect upon holiness, is to be suspected; and we do profess ourselves willing that our doctrines shall be tried by their influence upon holiness: and further, we do solemnly protest, that as soon as the charge laid against the doctrine of faith shall be fairly proven, we shall abandon it. But,

2. We are not resolved to quit it, because some men, whose lives and pens smell not over much of holiness, are pleased to alledge that it favours not holiness.

3. We must say, it seems very hard to alledge, that Calvin's doctrine of justification is an enemy to holiness, while the opposers and enemies of this doctrine, at the same time, nickname the maintainers of it, Puritans, Precisians, and I know not what, because they will not take so great a latitude in their practice as themselves; nay, frequently, because they cannot at their walk condemned, they pass a judgement upon their hearts, and usurp God's prerogative, calling them hypocrites.

4. We hope to show sufficient reason for holiness, and to give it a very useful room, though we allow it not that place which is due to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What place, will you say, has it? of what use is it? answer by shewing,

1st, What place it has not: and we say,

(1.) It is of no use in order to merit any thing, either in time or eternity, at the hand of God; it cannot merit or deserve the least temporal blessing; far less can it deserve heaven, and those glorious spiritual privileges that are there enjoyed: "What can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" Job xxii. 2. 3. "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art,

art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man, Job xxxv. 7. 8. Our goodness extends not to him and therefore it becomes us when we have done all, to own that we are unprofitable servants.

(2.) Our service we do to the Lord, is not that upon the account whereof we are justified before God. When we stand at the tribunal of God, to be tried for our life, our plea must not be, Lord, we have served thee according to thy law; this will stand us in no stead, "for by the works of the law will no flesh be justified," Gal. ii. 16. Our service, if weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, will be found wanting.

(3.) Our service will not be so much as a part of that righteousness, upon the account whereof we are to be justified before God. Christ will not halve the matter so, either he will be our entire righteousness, or not at all. He will not compound the matter, for so we should have somewhat to boast of, and should not glory only in the Lord.

(4.) Sincere service, by the gracious acceptation of God, is not put in that same place, under the covenant of grace, which perfect obedience had in the covenant of works. This is contrary to the whole tenor of the scripture. But what need, will ye say, can there be of this service, since it is not allowed to have any part in our justification? We answer by shewing,

2dly, And positively, That it is of very great use and there is an indispensable necessity of it; and that,

(1.) Upon the account of the command of God. Now, this binds still, and would have bound, though there had been no reward annexed to it; and this is still in force, for "this is the will of God, even our sanctification," 1 Thess. iv. 3.

(2.) It is indispensably necessary, in regard of the believer's voluntary engagement to it. When faith once gets a view of Christ, it says to him, as Thomas did upon another occasion, "My Lord, and my God;" and if once we call Christ Lord, we thereby bind ourselves to be his servants.

(3.) It is necessary from the new nature, regeneration

ion. Believers are "created in Christ Jesus to good works," Eph. ii. 10. They are born again; they are partakers of the divine nature. Now, our Lord assures us, that a good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit. Now, "whosoever is born of God sinneth not," John i. 18. It is as natural for the new man to be holy, as for the old man to be otherwise.

(4.) It is the necessary result of these principal graces of the new creature, viz. love and gratitude. Hear the great apostle Paul, 2 Cor. v. 14. 15. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

(5.) It is necessary that we serve the Lord, in order to obtain the great ends which all believers do propose to themselves; as, [1.] It is the way to glorify the Lord, which is certainly the believer's main end; and thereby certainly is God glorified, if we bring forth much fruit. Hence that exhortation, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matth. v. 16. Again, [2.] It is the way to be made meet for the enjoyment of God, which the believer aims at as one of his principal and most noble designs. Now, the more we abound in the service of God, the more meet we are for the enjoyment of God, who is of purer eyes than to keep up communion with those who are not holy. Justification is necessary to give us a right unto the enjoyment of God, and communion with him. Sanctification is necessary to make us meet for the actual enjoyment of it. Again, [3.] To serve the Lord, to be holy, is the way to perfect our natures, and to bring them to the highest pitch of perfection they are capable of. This is our wisdom and understanding, Deut. iv. 6. and consequently our glory and honour to serve the Lord. Further, [4.] To serve the Lord, is the way to be useful to others. And this is one of the believer's great designs, and it is gained by this; for

P

this

this is profitable, both for their conviction and conversion; nay, and many other ways not now to be insisted upon.

(6.) It is necessary that believers serve the Lord, in regard of the great provision that the Lord has made for them under the gospel, in order to fit them for this service: there is an abundant provision of grace to enable them to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. Now, upon these accounts, ye may see how necessary it is that we serve the Lord, though we are not to be justified by our service. And not a few other no less considerable grounds of obedience, under the New Testament dispensation, might be mentioned, were it not that we hasten to the application, which now follows.

It now remains that we apply this truth: and we shall, in the *first* place, draw some few general inferences, for information from the words. Is it so, that they who engage in the service of God, should do it of choice, resolutely, and deliberately? Then,

1. It is not so easy a thing to engage in the service of God, as some may think, to get the will of man, that is obstinately set against God, brought to a compliance with his will in all things, is very hard: "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." And O what a mighty difficulty is it, do ye think, to do this after a deliberate view of all the difficulties of this service, and a discovery of its opposition to corrupt nature? Such of you as think it easy to engage in the service of the Lord, are yet to begin.

2. No unregenerate man is aright engaged in God's service; for no unregenerate man, after a deliberate view thereof, and the consequences of it, will engage, or can engage in it; and therefore, Sirs, think upon it seriously, if ye be not born again, ye are not yet servants of God.

3. We may draw this conclusion from the doctrine, that God has no mind to cheat his servants. All the plot of Satan and sin is to get people engaged before they think: for if they think, they despair of carrying

rying their point : but God will have us deliberate. It is the peculiar glory of man, that he is capable of considering what he doth before he do it, and that he can weigh all the circumstances of actions ; but profane sinners dare not do so ; they dare not go alone, and consider what were the motives prompting them to what they did, what way they will make their account to God, what they have to expect after this life is done. To think of these things, and the like, would make them mad : but the godly man can go alone, and look to his whole actions, and do it without fear ; and can look to all things past, present, and to come, without discomposure ; and then he chuses the service of God ; he does it deliberately : the Lord will have him to do so, and therefore he knows he is not circumvented.

4. We may infer, that there is a vast odds betwixt the service of God, and the service of sin. We cannot become God's servants without acting like men, acting rationally, deliberately, and resolutely : but, on the other hand, there is none can engage, or continue in the service of sin, but he must lay aside the exercise of reason, and act like a beast.

Did we not design brevity, we might improve this doctrine many other ways than for information, now discussed, viz. for trial, reproof, conviction, and caution. But we shall wave all these, and only insist upon exhortation.

Is it so, that we should not only engage in the service of God, but that we should do it deliberately, resolutely, willingly ? Then, my friends, we intreat, and, in the fear of the Lord, exhort you all this day, to make choice of the Lord for your God and Master, and cheerfully, resolutely, and deliberately, engage yourselves in his service ; and, with the people of Israel, say, and hold by it, *We will serve the Lord*. This exhortation comprises the whole of our commission from the eternal God to you. If we prevail not in this, we gain nothing, nor can we do you any service, nor can ye do us any real kindness. If we prevail not in this, then ye are for ever ruined, and we have lost our la-

hour as to you, your damnation is sure; the gospel will aggravate your sin, accent your misery, and we shall be witnesses against you: surely, therefore, it is of moment, and worthy of serious consideration, what ye will answer, what ye resolve to do. Instead of many motives I might use on this occasion, we shall answer some questions that will readily cast up in the minds of such among you as entertain any serious thoughts about the matter, in the answers to them, we shall couch motives sufficient, if the Lord breathe upon them, to persuade the most obstinate enemies; and, if the Lord breathe not, nothing will be able to effectuate this.

There are six questions will readily employ the thoughts of such as are in earnest about this matter. 1. Who is the Lord, that we should serve him? 2. Will he accept of service at our hand? 3. Upon what terms will he admit of us? 4. What work will he employ us in? 5. Whom shall we be joined withal? 6. What wages will he allow? These are the most material concerns of one that means to list himself a servant; if he get a satisfying answer upon all these heads, he must engage. Now, of each of these in order; and,

1st, Some of you will think, *Who is the Lord, that we should serve him?* We know him not; and we would fain be some way acquainted with him before we engage, at least we would know who he is.

For answer to this, we say, It is very reasonable that ye know him, to whom ye submit yourselves, before ye do it; and would to God this method had been still followed by you, and then I am sure Satan had not this day had so many servants, nor Christ so many enemies. We cannot pretend to tell what God is; for none can search out the Almighty to perfection. But only we shall tell you, he has all the qualifications of a master that a servant that is wise could wish.

1. He is *great*, whom we call you to serve. Most kings on earth are but slaves; and to serve most of them, is but to serve them who are slaves to the basest of lusts; But “the Lord is a great God, and a great King,

King, even the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the high and only Potentate, the Prince of the kings of the earth." None may compare with him for the excellency of his person. Thus saith the Lord, Isa. xliv. 8. "Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God, I know not any." None is equal to him in the magnificence of his habitation. "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool," saith the Lord, Isa. xvi. 1. None equal to him in wisdom; he is the "only wise God." And as for power, who can compare? For "what pleased the Lord, that hath he done in heaven, and in earth, and in all high places." And, in a word, he is the only Master, and all are his servants.

2. As he is great and honourable, so he is *good*. "The Lord is good and upright," Psal. xxv. 8. and in other places of scripture innumerable. The goodness that a servant would desire in a master, lies in three things, and they are all eminently in God; he is peerless in them all. (1.) He is a good Master, that puts his servants upon no work but what is suitable and reasonable. (2.) Who bestows upon them, when careful, vast largesses, or great proofs of his bounty. And, (3.) Who is indulgent, compassionate, and merciful to the failings of his servants, when they do not willingly commit faults, nor obstinately persist in them. And in all these three respects the Lord is matchless.

That his work is easy, we shall afterwards shew at more length: at present it is enough to tell, that he who cannot lie or mistake, has told us, that "his yoke is easy, and his burden light." And who knows not his bounty? who feels not the effects of it? His bounty is great above the heavens, and all share largely in it; for whatever there is of goodness and mercy in the lot of any, that is the fruit of his bounty. But, besides the common effects of it, he has particular favours he bestows upon such as are eminently faithful. Look what marks of his respect, and what glorious tokens of his bounty, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, and the rest got, and that both in spirituals and

temporals. Nor is his mercy less to them that fear him, because of their infirmities. Though he has taken all imaginable care to caution his people against sin, yet he will not narrowly mark iniquity with them, nor enter into judgement. "Little children, these things write I to you, that ye sin not: but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father," 1 John ii. 1. The covenant of grace is not behind with the covenant of works, in forbidding sin, and providing against it; the whole of it was revealed, preached, and written, that we sin not: but this is the peculiar glory of the gospel, that while the law leaves sinners sinking under the curse, the gospel sends and relieves them, and shews that there is "an Advocate with the Father."

3. The Lord is a *faithful* God; what bargain he makes, he will keep. Has he promised you a great reward? ye may depend upon it: "He is not a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent." If he make himself known to you by the name of God Almighty, as he did to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, see Exod. vi. 2. to make them believe that what he promised he was able to perform, I assure you, he will not fail to make himself known to you also, as Jehovah God, that gives a being to his promise; as he did to Moses, when he called him to see the accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham, in the deliverance of his people out of Egypt. But, being satisfied that the Master is worthy beyond compare, the

2d Question will follow, *Will he accept of us for servants?* A question truly not impertinent, after the former answer; for it is no wonder though any that knows God, or knows himself, doubt whether he shall be admitted a servant of the Lord; and they that never saw any difficulty here, we fear not to tell them, that they serve an ill master to this very day, even the god of this world, the Spirit that works in the children of disobedience. But to the question we say,

1. The Lord has taken some servants, and owned them as such, even out of the race of fallen man. We hear him speak of his servant Abraham, his servant Moses,

Moses, and David ; and that is encouragement to thee : men they were, sinful men they were ; and even the father of the faithful, Abraham, was an idolater.

2. The Lord wants neither work nor wages for you ; the work he gives his servants is even to shew forth his glory ; and this is enough to employ innumerable millions more than have any being. And hence it is, that his servants many times find the work too great for them, and therefore call in all the creatures, to praise the Lord. 'So we find the Psalmist calling upon fire, hail, snow, vapours, &c. to praise the Lord, Psal. cxlviii. ; and he concludes the book of Psalms thus : " Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord : Praise ye the Lord," Psal. cl. 6. Nor is there any scarcity of wages : as he has work for you, so his treasures are inexhaustible ; there is no want of any good thing to them that fear him, for in him dwells all fullness.

3. We have this more to say for your encouragement, he will not cast at or reject you because ye are sinners. Hear what such an one, a sinner, a great sinner, has to speak to this purpose, 1 Tim. i. 12. " I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." See a sinner made a servant, and one of the first rank made a prime minister.

4. We have this further to answer, he calls you to his service ; be then of good courage ; arise, for the Master calls thee. Matth. xi. 29. " Take my yoke upon you," says our Lord : there is an invitation. The encouragement follows, " And ye shall find rest to your souls." And the reason is subjoined, " For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

3dly, Ye may next inquire, *Upon what terms?* I see he will admit ; but, may be, the terms are too high. Nay, this shall not hinder, if ye have a mind ; for there is nothing more engaging and reasonable than they are. And I shall shortly lay before you these six particulars, as the terms whereon he will admit you.

1. Ye must renounce your old masters. Ye cannot serve two masters; and therefore, if ye chuse the Lord, ye must abandon the gods whom your fathers served on the other side the flood, and the gods of the Canaanites, among whom ye dwell; that is, in plain terms, Ye must not serve Satan, ye must not serve divers lusts, ye must not serve the world, ye must not serve men; all other masters you must forsake, for "ye cannot serve God and mammon." And sure this is no hard condition, but what every servant must lay his account with; and none have reason to do it with so much cheerfulness as they who quit sin.

2. Ye must be reconciled to him upon the gospel-terms. A master will not admit his enemy to his family as a servant: who would keep in his house one that has a formed design to ruin him? Reasonable it is, then, to the highest degree, that before ye be admitted to the family, ye lay down the enmity that your hearts are naturally full of against God, and be reconciled upon the terms prescribed in the gospel, which are comprised by the apostle to the Philippians in two words, "Having no confidence in the flesh," and "rejoicing in Christ Jesus;" which are indeed equivalent to other two words made use of by our Lord, "Deny himself, and follow me." "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and follow me." For what he adds about taking up the cross, is included in the latter words, "Follow me." And of the same force are the first two words mentioned, Phil. iii. 3. "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Here shortly are the gospel-terms as to acceptance with God, and justification before him; there must be no confidence in the flesh, no expectation thence. But what is that, the flesh, ye will say, on which we are not to rest, in which we are to have no confidence? I will tell you some things called so by the apostle, in the following verses of that third chapter to the Philippians.

(1.) He calls church-privileges so, external privileges:

ages : "Circumcised the eighth day ;" that is to say, it is not enough that a man was baptised, that he got his communion, that he is a hearer of preachings, and the like.

(2.) Church-membership: "Of the stock of Israel." A man may be a Christian, and sprung of godly progenitors, and go to ruin. There are many who may cry, Father Abraham, may be of his seed, and yet go to the pit themselves for all that. Again,

(3.) It is not enough to be a member of the purest church on earth : this is flesh also. Paul was not of one of the tribes that degenerate ; but of "the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews." A man may not only be a Christian, but a Protestant, not only a Protestant, but a Presbyterian ; but if he lean to either, he is no servant of God, were he in principle never so staunch to both ; it is flesh, and must not be trusted to.

(4.) To be of the strictest party of the purest church, is not to be trusted to ; it is not enough that ye are one of the strictest among the Presbyterians, even one whom the world accounts a puritan. Paul was of the purest church then on earth, and one of the purest and strictest party, "concerning the law a Pharisee."

(5.) He not only was of the strictest party, but he excelled most of them, "concerning zeal, persecuting the church." It is not enough to be really of the strictest party, and even to outrun most of the strictest in duty.

(6.) He was not one that was concerned only for religion, and the honour of his profession, but he was blameless concerning the righteousnesses of the law. His religion led him to respect all God's commands ; and his practice came so near to his principles, that no body could lay any thing to his charge ; great attainments, but he counts them all flesh ; and they are so, upon a triple account : they are things, most of them performed by man, who is flesh : they are tainted all of them with sin, which is the work of the flesh ; they are done in subserviency to a carnal design, opposite to the spiri-

tual design of the gospel: so that by flesh is to be understood whatever is done by man, or whatever is tainted with corruption, and that even after as well as before conversion; for the apostle excludes from any share in his dependence for justification, even attainments after conversion, while he says, "What things were gain to me," that is, while a Pharisee, "those I counted loss for Christ;" and then he subjoins, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss." The first expression, "What things were gain," was too narrow, because it comprehends only what he had before; and therefore he adds this more comprehensive one to supply that, "all things;" and that is the same with his own righteousness, which he would not be found in, in the following verses. In one word, to have no confidence in the flesh, is to trust in nothing that can be called our own, because done by us that can be called flesh, as tainted with sin, and done by sinful man. It is not that we are not to prize church-privileges, nay, certainly it is a great advantage to partake of the ordinances, to be of the purest church, and the strictest party, and the most zealous of that party, and to be blameless, to be, as we said, a Presbyterian, and the strictest, is duty, and our honour too: but yet we are to have no confidence in this; but we are to "rejoice in Christ Jesus." If conscience challenge, we are to flee to the blood of Christ, and sprinkle conscience by that. If we be carried to the bar of God, and there accused, all that is laid to our charge Christ must answer for it. If the law require perfect obedience, Christ has fulfilled all righteousness, and is made of God "righteousness to them that believe;" and this is our joy. If conscience accuse, and lay a great charge against us, Christ has died; and this is our joy. If any be so bold as to condemn the believer, God has justified him, while he raised Christ from the dead, as being fully satisfied with what he paid on the account of sinners. And, in a word, wherever we are straitened, there is still found ground of sorrow in ourselves, but joy in the Lord Christ, "in whom believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable,

speakingable, and full of glory." Now, if ye mean to serve the Lord, ye must, upon the said terms, be reconciled to him: ye must "have no confidence in the flesh; ye must rejoice in Christ Jesus."

3. He will admit you to be his servants upon these terms, that ye comply with all his commands. Ye must take up his cross, hate father and mother, (that is, reject them with disdain, when they come in competition with him). Ye must cut off the right-hand, pluck out the right-eye. But ye will say, This is hard. I answer, No master will admit a servant, but such as will obey him; and that these things are not really hard, is plain, if we consider, (1.) That all these things he will have us to part with, are prejudicial to us: if we must hate father and mother, it is only when they come in betwixt Christ and us; and we are bid cut off the right-hand, pluck out the right-eye, when they offend, and offend so, that we must part with heaven if we keep them. (2.) We are only bid do these things, when the very doing of that which seems prejudicial to us, turns hugely to our advantage; for if we part with any thing for Christ, we are to expect a vast income, even to an hundred fold in this life, and life eternal after it. And, further, this will appear both reasonable and easy. For,

4. A condition on which God will admit us to serve him, is, that we do his work upon his own expence. If we go in God's way, we must go in the strength of the Lord. If we need, we must come boldly to the throne of grace for grace; and, in a word, if we mean to serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, we must have grace to do it, Heb. xii. 28. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." We must do all in the name of Christ, and that is, in his strength; for the apostle elsewhere tells us, that he "could do all things through Christ strengthening him." And Christ tells also his disciples, that they can do nothing without him; and sure I am, this is a very fair condition,

for it makes the hardest work easy ; it is all one to call a man with his present strength to a work easy to him, or to call him to a work far above it, and increase his strength in proportion to his work. And thus it is in this case ; the strength of God's people is still kept equal to, if not above their work.

5. He will admit you to his service, but ye must wear his livery, and that in general is holiness ; for “ holiness becometh the Lord's house for ever ;” but more particularly humility ; we are bid “ be cloathed with humility,” 1 Pet. v. 5. The seraphs have wings to cover their feet and their face, that is, a cloathing of humility in a sense of God's glory, and their own imperfections ; and we must wear the same garb ; we must not glory in ourselves, or our ornaments ; but “ let him that glories, glory in the Lord.”

6 He will admit you to his service ; but then ye must serve him for ever. He will have his servants to be for him for ever, and not for another ; and when all things are as we would wish about his service, sure we have reason to say, that we love our Master, and we love his service, and we will not part ; but every one of us say, I and my seed, I and my house, and all that will take my advice, shall serve the Lord for ever. Upon these terms the Lord will accept you.

4thly, Will ye say, *What work will he set us to ?* We cannot tell you all the particulars ; and such as are engaging in service do not expect this ; but I will tell you all that ye can desire about it.

1. It is *easy* work, in that forecited Matth. xi. 29. “ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” The service of sin is labour, and toil, and a heavy load : so in the 28th verse, “ Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden ” The service of Christ is easy, and in it his people find rest ; a work that is a rest must be very sweet, and such is the Lord's work. Would to God we could make you understand that sweet
repose

eternal and blessed rest there is in the service of God !
 How engaging would it be !

2. It is a *pleasant* work: "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace," Prov. iii. 17.; and in keeping God's commands, as well as for keeping them, there is great reward, Psal. xix. 11.

3. It is *honourable*. All the works that the Lord commands, as well as these which he does, are honourable and glorious, Psal. cxi. 3.

4. It is *profitable*. Godliness is truly great gain; it is profitable for all things; it has the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come. If he call us to any piece of service, all the profit comes still to our account. If he call us to suffer, "then our light afflictions, that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17. And, in a word, the man "that is righteous is profitable to himself," Job xxii. 2. But,

5thly, *Whom shall we have with us in this work?* This is a very considerable point, and of great concern, because servants are not alone in the work, and very much of their comfort depends upon their fellow-servants. Now, as to this, all is encouraging. For,

1. The glorious *Mediator* is not ashamed to serve the Lord: "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. xlii. 1.

2. *Angels* join in serving the Lord; hence the angel took occasion to prevent John's worshipping of him, Rev. xix. 10. "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus."

3. The *saints*, the excellent ones of the earth, are joined in this work; all the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. So that we see, as the work is pleasing, so the society is very engaging.

6thly, But if we say, *What reward may we look for?* I answer, though there were no reward, what is said is enough. But yet we say,

1. There is a *reward*, Psal. xix. 11. "And he that comes

comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6.

2. This is a *sure* reward, Tit. i. 2. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world was."

3. It is a *durable* reward; it is eternal; and we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, who serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, Heb. xii. 28.

4. So *great* a reward it is, that "eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive," 1 Cor. ii. 9. "In keeping them there is great reward," Psal. xix. 11. Upon the whole, we conclude, that whatever ye can desire, ye have here for your encouragement. A Master, great, good, and faithful; sufficient security of acceptance, the terms reasonable, the work desirable, the company incomparable, and the reward great and inviting.

But may some say, We fear the preciseness of the way, ye oblige us to an intolerable strictness and rigorousness in our walk. We answer,

1. The way of God is indeed strict, and we can make no allowance for you to indulge any lust, not so much as to bow in the house of Rimmon.

2. If this affright you, truly we must say, that all is not right, the heart is not changed; for when once this is done, the difficulty is over here. But,

O then, I fear, says the soul, that I shall not get a perverse heart kept in this sweet way, which is indeed a way of peace and pleasantness. And therefore,

3. Ye must look to God, that he may take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart to fear him; for there is a necessity for it, that the tree be good, and then the fruit will be so, and never till then. But,

4. It may be, the strictness you fear is not real, but imaginary; as, (1.) It may be, ye imagine it will not allow you to be joyful: but this is a fond vain delusion. Religion gives a man the most solid ground of joy; it gives him allowance to rejoice, it directs how to make joy run in the right channel, which makes it double; and then it superadds a command, "Rejoice in
the

the Lord always : and again, I say, rejoice," Phil. iv. 4 (2.) It may be, ye think it will not allow you the use of lawful comforts : but this is a vast mistake ; it will not allow you to abuse them ; but it bids you use them : "Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works," says the wise man, Ecclef. ix. 7. (3.) You suspect it will not allow you to be civil and well bred. This is a shameless mistake : true religion makes men the most pleasant company in the world ; it makes them gentle, meek, affable, not soon angry, loth to give offence, careful to please all men in all things lawful, fills their hearts with love, and makes them edifying in their discourse.

But again, may ye say, I will never be able for this service, it is too great a work for me. I answer,

1. It is truly said, ye can do nothing. "Without me, (says Christ), ye can do nothing," John xv. 5. Ay, but,

2. It is said to no purpose, unless ye say more, viz. That the Lord cannot make you able ; if ye be willing, the Lord will make you able.

3. God is able to strengthen you with all might, according to the glorious working of his mighty power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, to perfect strength in weakness, and to make the weak as David, and David as an angel of God.

Now, upon the whole, to re-assume my exhortation, my friends, in the bowels of our Lord Jesus, we obtest you this day, comply with our exhortation, "Serve the Lord, and chuse him this day ; and if not, tell me. All things are fair, the service, the Master, the terms, the reward ; and if ye have a mind to serve, there is nothing can come in your offer like this. This is what we seek, God is our witness ; it is not yours. but you. Through his grace, were we sure to carry this, we would have it at any rate, and nothing will please but this. And now, if ye refuse, we take God to record against you, that ye have had a fair offer, and have fit it.

Thus far for the first doctrine.

We

We come now to the second, which you may take thus, to be somewhat more clear than in the first proposal of it.

DOCT. II. "Such as have any true and sincere regard unto the Lord, and his service, will make their own religion, or personal religion, their first and main care." *But as for me, &c. first me, and then my house.*

I say, they will make it their first care, they will begin with it. Before they look what others are doing, they will first observe how all is with themselves. Again, they will make it their main care, they will be concerned mainly, and most deeply, that they themselves be well stated with respect unto the Lord, and his service: but we do not say, that they will make it their only concern. Nay, they will be deeply concerned with the state of their families, and with the state of the church; but they will begin here at home, and look how they in their own service are stated. We say, they will make their own religion, or personal religion, their first and main care. When we speak of their own service, or personal religion, we call it so, to distinguish it from family religion, and from the yet more public service of God in our church-assemblies. We shall not spend time in proving this truth. What we offer, when we come to the reasons of the doctrine, will sufficiently confirm it. Now, then, in discoursing this truth, we shall shortly,

I. Tell you what it is in their own religion, or in their own serving of the Lord, that such as have a sincere regard unto him and his service are first and mainly concerned about.

II. We shall offer you some reasons of the doctrine, and shew you why they are first and mainly concerned about their own religion.

We begin with the

I. And, among other things, such as are truly sincere,
and

and have any real concern for the Lord and his service, they will be *deeply concerned*,

1. About the *reality* of their engagement in the Lord's service: a question it will be that will lie very near, and be much upon the heart of every one who is truly in earnest in this matter, Am I yet entered in the Lord's service? Have I accepted him upon his own terms, as my Lord and Master? Have I yet felt that powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, without which none can in sincerity say, "that Jesus is the Lord," 1 Cor. xii 3.

This is the foundation of all; for if we be not in every deed his servants, in vain look we for his servants allowance, their acceptance in, or their reward for their work. This, I say, is the foundation; and therefore the wise builder will lay it surely, will dig deep, Luke vi. 48.; that is, he will use his best and most vigorous endeavours to remove and take out of the way the rubbish that intervenes betwixt him and the Rock; and he will be sure to see it, and see that his foundation be laid exactly on the Rock. This is the first and great concern of a sincere soul, that they be not deceiving themselves, but that they be really engaged in the Lord's service.

2. Sincere souls will be deeply concerned about the *soundness* of their hearts in the way of the Lord. No heart can be sound in the way of the Lord, that is not renewed; and therefore this will be the care of every one who has any real regard unto the Lord, or his service, that they have a heart to fear and serve the Lord, according as the Lord has promised unto his people, Ezek. xi. 19. 20.; and which we find the saints earnestly praying for, as being under the greatest concern to have it, Psal. cxix. 80. "Let (says the godly Psalmist) my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed." And no wonder though they be brought under a deep concern as to this, since the Lord, who searches the heart, hath frequently missed and quarrelled the want of this, under the fairest pretences, nay, and the most sincere engagements; I say, sincere as to any thing discerned, either by the persons themselves,
or

or onlookers, as we find, Deut. v. 27. 29. The people in the 27th verse, engage fairly to serve the Lord; and we have no reason to doubt their being so far ingenuous that they really meant what they said. Say they to Moses, "Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." A fair engagement! But, ah! there is a lamentable want! A sound heart is wanting, and that will spoil all. This, I verily believe, they understood not. Moses scarce understood; ay, but God misses it, ver. 29. "They have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children, for ever." Some of you think, and some of you will not stand to say it, Whatever faults be in our practice, yet, blessed be God, we have good hearts to God. O hellish delusion! He that thinks his heart is good, is blindfolded by the devil, and has a heart no better than the devil's; for "the heart," by the testimony of God, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. xvii 9.

3. Such as have any thing of a real regard unto the Lord's service, will be mightily concerned about the *singleness* of their eye. Of how great moment this is, our Lord tells us," Matth. vi. 22. 23. Our Lord, in the preceding part of the chapter, had been directing them to whom he preached, as to the ends they should have; he tells them, that self should not be their end in their prayers and fastings; and their end should not be to amass earthly treasure and riches, but that it should be God's glory, and the enjoyment of him, which is heavenly treasure indeed; and here he teaches the importance of being right as to the end: (1.) Plainly, ver. 21.; and (2.) By this similitude, ver. 22. wherein he compares the main end, or the soul's intention, unto the eye of the body, and shews, that the direction of the whole life, and rectitude of all the actions of life, depend upon the sincerity and rectitude of the end, as the direction of the whole

whole body doth upon the sincerity, and singleness, and earnestness, of the bodily eye. Nowonder, then, that such as are in earnest about the service of the Lord be concerned about this, since the whole depends upon it. A squint look as to the end will quite spoil, and render altogether useless, the most fair and specious performances. "Take heed," says blessed Jesus, in the first verse of this same chapter, "that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them;" otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Many of you multiply duties, but, God knows, few look to their own ends and aim in duties. But take heed; ye see, a squint look to the applause of men will make all to no purpose.

4. Sincere souls will make it their first and great care, that, in their serving of the Lord, they have a *safe rule*, as well as a single eye. Much labour may be lost to no purpose, if this be not looked to. And hence it is we find the saints in scripture mightily concerned about this, and looking, and that deservedly, on the word, as a "light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths;" and hence are they most earnest for instruction in the word, as the only sure and safe rule, directing us how we should serve the Lord. How earnestly, and how frequently, does the Psalmist press this desire, in that 119th psalm throughout! wherein we have the mighty concern of the Psalmist, about the rule, clearly evidenced: and no wonder, since the Lord may justly send us, both for our sustenance in working, and our reward for it when it is done, to those who prescribed us our work; for surely to serve the Lord is to do whatever he commands us. We may not add unto the word which he commands us; from this we are bound up by an express prohibition, Deut. iv. 2.

5. Such as are indeed sincere, will be, in the first place, and principally, concerned about the *diligence* of their hand in the work of the Lord. What our hand finds to do, we are to do it with our might; and he is cursed with a curse that doth the work of the Lord slothfully. Much, therefore, it is upon the soul to evite, and how he may evite that curse, Jer. xlviii. 10. "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully," or *negligently*,
as

as the word is rendered in the margin of some of our Bibles.

6. To add no more, they will be much concerned about their *acceptance*, and their *pleasing* him who hath called them to his service. If God accept, then all is well with them, and if he reject, then nothing can compensate the loss they have by his hiding; and therefore they lay aside all entanglements, that they may please him who hath chosen them to be his soldiers and servants, 2 Tim. ii. 4. Thus have we performed what we promised in the first place, and have shewed you what it is in their own service of God, or in their personal religion, that gets the first and chief room in the care and concern of the Lord's people; and it is the reality of their engagement, the soundness of their heart, the singleness of their eye, the diligence of their hand, the safety of their rule, and, finally, their acceptance in it. Before they look to other things, they first look to this, and this is first in their thoughts and concern. We are now,

II. To shew the *rise* of this concern, and to tell you *why* such as have any sincere regard unto the Lord, in his service, make their own religion their first and main concern. Now, of this we may take the following reasons.

1. They will do it, because the *command* of God has a first and principal respect unto our own religion, personal religion. The commands are directed to particular persons: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make graven images; remember thou the Sabbath-day." And not only so, but their first look is to what concerns these particular persons immediately; it first binds thee as to thine own practice, and then calls thee to regard it with respect to others: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images;" and first thou art to "remember the Sabbath," and then to look that thy servant and stranger do so. We must begin at home, cast out the beam out of our own eye, before we look to the mote in our neighbour's.

2. Such as are sincere will look first and mainly to their

their own religion, because it is *doubly important*; important in itself, and important, because without it we are not in a capacity to serve the Lord, either in our families or in the public. If the tree be not made good, none of the fruit can be good. If we be not really the Lord's servants, if our hearts be not sound, our eye single, and our hand diligent in our own personal and private work, walk, and way, it is utterly impossible we should be so in the more public duties of religion.

3. They will be, and are, first and principally concerned about their own religion, because a due concern about our own religion is, if not the spring, yet one of the *principal inducements* unto, and effectual means for engaging to vigour and diligence in the other more public duties of religion; yea, so necessary is the connection betwixt diligence in this and in the other, that public religion rises and falls, ebbs and flows, abates and increases, according as our personal religion rises or falls. When saints are in a good case, Zion will be much upon their hearts.

4. The truly sincere will make their own religion their first and main concern, because it lies most within their *own reach*. We cannot get our families, congregations, and far less churches, as we would have them; but what we may through grace reach, that we are obliged not to want. Though Joshua cannot get all Israel engaged in the service of the Lord, yet himself he may; and therefore, what his hand finds to do, what he may be able, through grace, to go through, is that he is engaged to do, and to do it with his might, Eccl. i. 10.

5. Sincere souls will make their own religion their first concern, because, upon their success in this, they have the greatest venture. David, though his house be not so with God, if he himself be right, may have peace. Ministers, who have been faithful, may through grace have peace, though Israel be not gathered. But there is an indispensable necessity that we ourselves be personally religious; "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

6. I may add, sincere souls will begin with, and lay out their main concern about personal religion, because *the footsteps of the flock lead this way*. And we are bid, when in search after the Lord, go our ways out by the footsteps of the flock: now, we may see others who have gone before, and who through faith and patience have inherited the promises, taking this way. So we find Joshua doth, so we find David resolved to do, Ps. ci. 2. where first he resolves upon a perfect heart, and then a perfect way, and then to go to what was most public. And thus much for the doctrinal part.

We come now to make some application.

Use 1. Of information. Is it so, that such as have any sincere regard to the service of the Lord, begin their own religion? Then,

1. We may conclude it a dangerous perverting of the order enjoined by the Lord, and followed by his people to *begin* with a concern about the public. Some there are, and not a few there have been, who have lived either profanely, or at best in an estrangement from the power of religion, who all of a sudden, either from openly profane, careless Gallios, or dead and lazy formalists turn mighty zealots, and, Jahu-like, outrun others in mighty concern for the public, taxing all that is amiss severely: but none knew how they came by it; they were never exercised about their own souls. This is a perverse method; and Satan is here, though cloathed in an angel of light. And this is exceedingly dangerous,

1st, To the person *himself*; because, (1.) It might strengthen him in a proud and vain conceit of himself while he sees not what is at home, but only sees himself abroad, where he runs before others; and sure growth in pride is growth in all sin. God gives grace to the humble; and if so, sure I am, the proud advance in gracelessness, and sin gathers strength. Again (2.) It is dangerous to the persons, because this runs them commonly to such heights, that they can neither go forward, nor stand the ground they come to; and therefore they must fall, and some of them fall into utter ruin, make shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience, and are lost for ever.

2dly, It is dangerous to the *cause* they espouse: for,
 (1.) They take wrong means; and the more we tam-
 er with improper means, still the worse, and the fur-
 er we are from our end. (2.) Their end is not right
 id, their views not single; and this, with the wrong
 eps they take in the way, is found really to do reli-
 on more injury, than ever their forwardness did it
 rvice.

3dly, It is dangerous to those who *embark with them*
 the same work: For, (1.) It sets them off from the
 ne way of reaching the most excellent aims. And,
 2.) It lays them open to a hazard of apostacy, and fail-
 g, when their leaders fall. Beware, therefore, of per-
 erting the Lord's order.

2. We may draw this conclusion from the doctrine,
 at all concern about the public, that *takes us off* from
 concern about our own souls, in the first and principal
 ace, is dangerous, and to be suspected. It is dangerous
 spend all our time, and talk, and thoughts, about
 hers, while we are careless about ourselves.

3. It is a dangerous and terrible *issue* of exercise about
 or own souls, to lose it quite, before any real outgate
 e got in the Lord's ordinary way, in a great deal, a flood
 concern about the public; and this is the issue of some
 exercises at this time. Some are for a while somewhat
 concerned about their own souls; but all of a sudden this
 ears off, we cannot tell how, and presently there is
 thing but zeal about the public. We are obliged to
 eak of this upon a double account: (1.) To prevent
 e offence, and guard against the evil, that the falls of
 ch persons may do, and give to such as are less esta-
 lished in the Lord's way; and, (2.) To guard people
 ainst a dangerous mistake, which is really dangerous,
 cause it is a mistake, and a mistake in a matter of very
 gh concernment, and most of all, because it is such a mis-
 se so well masked with a white veil, that it is hard to
 learn it.

4. We may draw this conclusion, that such of you as
 are never concerned about your own religion, and that
 some purpose, whatever ye think of yourselves, or
 whatever

whatever others may think of you, ye never struck *fair stroke* about the public: if ye have done any thing there, ye have begun at the wrong end, and ye have no reason to expect acceptance at the Lord's hand.

Use 2. Is for trial. Is it so, that such who have an sincere regard to religion, to God, or his honour and service, do make their own religion their first and greatest concern? Then surely we are all concerned to try whether we do make our own religion our main concern. If we do not, then surely we are naughty and therefore it is of the highest importance to us, to be satisfied as to this, and to be distinct in our thoughts about it. Now, that we may some way help you here we shall enter upon a search for this concern, that we may know whether really we have been under any concern about our own religion, yea, or not. Now, perhaps all peradventure, if we be indeed concerned about our religion, this will be found in our thoughts, in our affections, in our words, and in our actions; and therefore in all these we shall search for it.

1. We say, if ye be concerned about your own religion, then surely this concern will appear in your *thought* about it. And we shall therefore put a few serious questions to you, with respect unto your own thoughts.

(1.) Have ye any thoughts about what concerns your own religion? Some of you, I fear, dare scarce say that ever ye think about God or his service, save only when ye are in the church, hearing the minister speak about such things; nay, I fear, that not a few of you do scarce even then think about your own religion. Do not many of you allow your thoughts to rove, ye know not where? or if ye listen to what is said, ye apply nothing of it; or if ye do, it is only to others? Is it not thus with many of you? Well, I assure you, ye have no religion, nor have ye any concern about religion; the wicked atheist's character is yours, "God is not in all his thoughts," Psal. x. 4. If ye think not of religion, of your own religion, not only when attending ordinances, but also at other times, ye have no concern about it.

(2.) Though your thoughts be some way and sometimes employed about this, yet ye may have no such concern as that which we inquire after; and therefore we pose you, in the next place, do your thoughts run naturally, and as it were of their own accord, in this channel? Some people think about their souls, and the concerns of their own salvation, but never except when they are compelled to it; but surely this speaks them not suitably concerned about it. What a man is concerned about, his mind runs to it, as it were, without bidding. Ye are many of you concerned about the things of the world; well, if ye have a bargain of any moment which ye are concerned about, ye will not need to force your thoughts toward that; nay, Mat. vi. 21. "Where the treasure is, there the heart will be," and therefore the thoughts will run that way; nay, they will run over the belly of all impediments. Is it so about your religion? Do your thoughts still run thither? If it be not so, then surely ye have no concern about your own religion. He that never thinks about his own religion, is never poring in his thoughts (except when driven to it) to know how matters are with him, whether he be a servant of God or not? I fear not to say, he is none, and is not concerned to be one.

(3.) Do your thoughts dwell upon this? Is the reality of your own engagement in the Lord's service, the soundness of your heart, singleness of your eye, &c. the subjects to which not only your minds run naturally, as it were, and of its own accord, but also that which your thoughts fix on? As our minds do readily run to the thoughts of that whereabout we are concerned, so they are strongly inclined to fix there, and the mind loves to exercise its thoughts about that, Isa. xxvi. 3. The mind or thought is stayed upon God. The man that trusts in the Lord, will desire to have his thoughts thus stayed. Is it so with you? If it be not so in some measure, then truly you have reason to think that ye have never been in earnest concerned about your own religion.

Object. But here may some poor exercised soul say,
 Q Now,

Now, indeed, ye have found me ; for I could never all my days get my thoughts fixed upon any thing that is good ; still my mind gets away, and is carried off sometimes after one vanity, and sometimes after another.

To such I have a few things to offer for their relief. [1.] Is this straying of thy mind thy burden and grief? If it be, then surely it speaks thy soul is desirous of fixing here. Again, [2.] Dost thou strive to keep thy thoughts fixed? Dost thou endeavour to fix them, and cry to God to fix them? If so, then undoubtedly thy mind is carried away violently by some enemy, and that is not thine own deed. Thy soul is desirous to fix, but something forces it off; either the power of thy domestic enemy, that enemy that is in thine own bosom, I mean sin, or of some foreign enemy, Satan or the world, shakes you; and this makes nothing against you. Therefore, I say, [3.] Do ye, as oft as your mind is away, bring it back again, and that with grief and sorrow for its departings? If so, then surely ye have no reason to doubt your concern upon this account. Having thus obviate this exception, we proceed in our search; and,

(4.) We say, Do ye think frequently upon this subject? They who are deeply concerned about any thing their thoughts will be frequently employed about it; so, if thou be concerned about thine own religion many a thought it will cost thee. They will ever anon look to the singleness of their own eye, the diligence of their hand, and the soundness of their heart; if they cannot get long dwelt, yet they will oft come to it, who are in good earnest in the matter. The religious man “meditates day and night in God’s law,” Psal. i. 2. He is ever thinking about the Lord’s testimonies, and how far he is framed into a suitableness to them, or how far it is otherwise with him. Now, if it be not thus with you, truly ye have never been brought under any concern about religion to any purpose.

(5.) Are your thoughts about your religion distinct? Some there are, who have sometimes thought about their souls, but they cannot tell well what they mean by

them, they are so confused: they think and think, and after, may be, twenty years thinking, they are as far from any distinctness as before; but still they go on. Now and then they will have some thoughts, issuing in some work upon the affections, full uncertain and indistinct: Is it thus with you? But that ye may know yet more clearly what we mean by this question, I shall break it into a few other questions. And, [1.] I say, Can ye tell what that is in your religion that takes up your minds and thoughts? Many of you have, it may be, some thoughts, but ye cannot tell about what they are employed. Is it about singleness of your eye, about the sincerity of your heart? or, can ye tell whereabout it is that ye employ your thoughts? If not, truly your concern signifies but very little, it will not stand you in much stead. Again, [2.] Have ye any distinct end in your thinking about religion? what design ye by thinking about it? Is it only to think, without thinking to any purpose? Some people both think and speak about religion, but I fear they are not aiming really at any distinct end; see Psal. xvii. 4.; and the concern of such is but little worth. Do ye think about your religion; well, what do ye expect or propose to have by your thinking about it? Would ye know your case, or what way to come out of it? what is the remedy of it? or how to apply it? Aim ye at such ends? If not, then truly all your thoughts are to little purpose. Once more, [3.] Get ye any distinct issue of your thoughts? Are ye like the door upon the hinges? Ye think, and ye never can tell what ye have got, or what ye have done, by all your thoughts. If this be all, then truly I cannot well tell what to think of your thoughts; I think, I may say, ye can have but little comfort of them.

(6.) What sort of thoughts have ye? People may have thoughts enow, and even about religion, and, it may be, such as do some way respect their own religion, and yet they are not much concerned about it, while their minds are only busied in applauding and flattering thoughts of their own case: but now, is it otherwise

with you? Do you apply yourselves to searching and trying thoughts? have ye many jealousies and suspicions of yourselves? do ye often make diligent search into your own case? have ye many doubts and questionings? If your thoughts be not in some measure exercised this way, it is a sad evidence that ye are nor have ever been, under any true concern about your own religion: for such thoughts have the saints had who have been in earnest in the matter; of whom we have a large account in scripture-history, particularly Psal. cxxxix. 23. 24.

2. We shall search for this concern about our religion, in the *affections*. Wherever we are concerned, all our affections will be employed about that, upon it, or set against what is opposite to it. Now,

(1.) We pose you on it: Are your affections employed about your own religion? do ye grieve that things are wrong with yourselves? do they fear that ye may so? do ye hate what is prejudicial to your own religion? do your souls cleave to any thing that may in any way contribute to the bettering things with you? Say my friends, is it thus with you? or is it not? I fear, I fear, that many of you who can sorrow and lament bitterly, if any worldly thing frame with, or fall out to you otherwise than as you would wish, yet never all your life-long knew what it was to be grieved indeed for sin, or that matters were not right with respect unto your spiritual case. Ye have no fears, no joys, no griefs, no zeal, nor any affections about these things. Surely then religion, your own religion, is not the one thing with you, your main thing; it is not: Naturally you have no concern about it: "Where the treasure is," or any part of it, "there will the heart be," Matth. vi. 20. 21.

(2.) Are your affections frequently employed about your own religion? have ye frequent fears, griefs, joys, and other affections from this spring? Man, woe man, if thou art concerned about thine own religion to have it right, thou wilt be oft looking to it; and every look will set thy affections to work one way or other.

her. If thou findest thyself wrong, the soul will reach its affections, like its wings, to fly out of that; and if otherwise, it will, if I may so say, clasp them about what it has, to hold it fast. So David, when he thought upon his ways, and found them wrong, made haste and delayed not to turn his feet to God's testimonies," Psal. cxix. 59. And the spouse, Cant. 4. when she found the Lord in her embraces, "she held him, and would not let him go." He whose affections are not frequently employed about his own soul's life, surely he was never concerned about it as he ought.

(3.) Whereabout is the edge of thy affections, the fervour and zeal of them employed? If this be not about thine own soul, thine own religion, truly thou art not concerned. Where there is any thing of true heat and warmth, ye know that which is nearest will meet with most of it, and partake most of it. If thou hast thy affections about religion at all, then the heat of them, the fervour of them, will be employed about thine own religion; if there be a fire of zeal against it, it will consume the beam in thine own eye, before it reach to the mote in thy neighbour's, Matth. 7. If it be not thus with thee, thy affections are not about thine own religion.

(4.) Hast thou any rest, whilst either thou seeest ground to think thyself wrong, or art in uncertainty about thine own religion? Canst thou live quietly and easily while not settled as to the everlasting concerns of thy soul? If thou canst, thy affections are not set on, nor art thou truly concerned about, those which do belong unto thy peace. I know not what to say of some people, who have no more assurance of salvation than of damnation, and yet can rest secure, and be quiet and very well content in that case: I can assure such, that they were never aright concerned about their own religion. Some doubt, and they never seek to be satisfied: May be I may be saved, sayest thou; may be thou mayst be damned, say I. What ground hast thou to hope that thou shalt be saved? If ye will speak what is true,

ye will say, truly I have none. But I have somewhat to say, as a ground of my conjecture: *1^{ly}*, Thou deservest damnation. *2^{dly}*, Thou who canst sit still quietly in that case, thou wast never concerned to be saved and I never knew one get to heaven who laid not salvation to heart, Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

(5.) Thou hast, it may be, some affections about thine own religion; but when is it that they are moved? and what gives rise to them? Hast thou never these affections but when thou hearest a preaching or when thou meetest with some awakening providence? Truly, if thou never hast any concern about religion save when thou hast some external cause exciting thee, then thy concern about religion is of no great value. True concern about religion will turn the soul's eye inward, to commune with itself, and take counsel in our own heart, how to get what is amiss amended; and this will set thy affections a-work; "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?" Psal. xiii. 2. But, to go on,

3. Having searched the mind and affections, we come now to inquire for this concern in your *words*: and there be any thing indeed of a real concern upon the soul about religion, herein it will appear; for, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," Matth. xii. 34. Now, that we may bring this matter to some issue, I shall put a few questions to you in reference to your words or discourse. And,

(1.) I pose you on this, Do ye ever keep up any converse, any discourse with yourselves? and if ye do, whereabouts is it? Do ye never commune with your own hearts? If not, then surely ye do but little regard your own interest. He that never converses with his own heart, is not under any concern about the state of his own soul, and will undoubtedly be found among those who, while they are busy about many things, do yet neglect the one thing necessary. The Lord commands it, and our soul's case requires it, that we commune with our own hearts, Psal. iv. 4. and lxxvii. 6.

(2.) What discourse have ye with the Lord? Have ye

ye any converse with the Lord; any converse, in prayer, in meditation, or ejaculation? If ye have none, surely never were ye under any concern about his will; and if ye have any converse with him, if ye speak to the Lord, and this be not the thing ye have in speaking to the Lord about, it speaks you not under any concern: for we find saints have been ever concerned about this; and, in the account we have of the saints exercise, we see clearly the most of their words employed about this.

(3.) What converse, what discourse have ye, when ye meet with the Lord's people? Is it what may be some way subservient to this glorious end? Are your words employed in telling what God has done for your soul, or in learning what he has done for your soul, or in learning what he has done for others? "Come here, altho' thou fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul," Psal. lxxvi. 16.

(4.) What sort of discourse like ye best to keep up? is it about this great concern? or is it about any thing else? Look to it, that converse that ye like best, is like to speak what your soul is under the greatest concern for: if it be converse about the world, ye are lovers of this world; if it be about the faults of others, and the public, pride predominates; if it be mainly about your own souls, it speaks somewhat of concern about them. But now, in the

And *last* place, we shall look to your *deeds*, that we may see what it is that lieth nearest your hearts, and whether ye be under any due concern for religion, and your own religion. And here,

(1.) I would ask you, What work put ye your hands to? Is it the work of your salvation? we are bid "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. ii. 12. Now, is this the work ye employ yourselves about? or, are ye busy about other works, while this is neglected? I fear, with most this is but little heeded: ay, but if ye were under a true concern about your own religion, then, [1.] There would be much time employed about that which di-

rectly tends to, and, one way or other, has somewhat of an immediate influence upon your salvation. And, [2.] All your works would be done in a subserviency to this end. Now, is it so with you, or not? Do ye pray hard, and wrestle earnestly with the Lord about your soul's state? Are ye much in believing, much in mortifying sin, holding under the body of sin? Is this the work ye are busied about? Some of you, we fear, never thought about this work; and as for you, it is no hard matter to tell what your case is, ye are yet strangers to any real-concern about religion.

(2.) What work are ye most diligent about? what is it that ye apply your might to? Do ye "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure?" 2 Pet. i. 10.; or, are there not among you, who in any other business will work hard, toil sore about it, but if once ye be put to work about this matter of the highest importance, ye presently fall dead and lifeless, to such a degree, that all is presently out of case with you; ye are weary, before well begun, of any work that has any near relation to your own salvation. If this be your case, then ye are under no real concern about your religion.

(3.) What work are ye most concerned to have carried forward, and brought to some comfortable period? Can ye not be well enough pleased, if your other business frame well with you, and go right in your hand, though the work of your salvation lie behind? or, dare ye say, that no attainment in salvation-work is able to satisfy you, till you reach the recompence of reward? Do ye indeed forget the things that are behind, and press forward unto this? Can nothing short of assurance, as to your calling and election, please you? If so, it bodes well; and if otherwise, it makes a sad discovery of want of a suitable regard to that which ye indeed ought to be mainly concerned about. Surely he that can rest satisfied, though salvation-work be far behind, provided other things go well, is not under an equal concern for salvation and for these things; the other things are certainly preferred by him.

Now,

Now, if ye have been using your judgements in any measure, ye may know whether ye be, or have been, under any real concern about your own salvation, or whether ye have made your own religion your first and great concern: and therefore we shall proceed to speak something in a more particular way, to the several sorts of persons of which this assembly may consist. And here we shall speak,

1st, To those who are under no real concern, whether about their own religion or that of others.

2^{dly}, To those whose religion lies *much*, or *mainly*, in a concern about others, and about the public.

3^{dly}, To those who are indeed under a *deep* and *special* concern about their own religion: the public they would fain have right; but their exercise is, first, to be sure that they themselves are so, and then they contribute their share to put matters otherwise right.

4^{thly}, We shall apply this truth to all, in some *exhortations* suitable to the scope of the truth insisted on.

Now, of each of these we shall speak very shortly. And,

First, We are to begin with those who are under no concern about religion; and to such we shall speak some things, 1st, For conviction. 2^{dly}, Expostulation. And, 3^{dly}, Terror.

And to follow this order, 1st, We shall speak some things for your *conviction*; though this be the case of most of you, yet we fear few of you will take with it; and therefore, notwithstanding all that has been already said for your conviction, we shall yet offer two or three words more. And,

(1.) We say, men and women, did religion ever take up your hearts and heads? was is it ever really your exercise, to know whether ye were right or wrong? Did ye ever put it to the trial, whether ye were Satan's slaves, the devil's vassals, or the servants of the Lord? if not, to this very day ye are Satan's servants, and never had any concern about religion.

(2.) did ye ever lay down this conclusion, I am lost, undone,

undone; miserable, wretched, blind, and naked, I want faith, I want grace, I want God, I want Christ, I have destroyed myself? If not, then ye never have been under any concern of a right sort.

(3.) Did ye ever resolve upon it, that go the world as it will, and come what will, I have no concern like my soul; and therefore I shall never be at rest, or take ease, or be quiet, until I get matters in some measure right betwixt the Lord and me? If ye have not been brought under some such resolutions as this, from a conviction that all is of no avail to you, if ye lose your soul; then surely to this very day, ye are perfect Galilios in God's matters, and your own most precious interests.

(4.) Can any thing give thee content, while thou livest altogether at peradventures about salvation, about Christ? Then yet hast thou reason to fear, that thou hast never been concerned about that which thou canst be pleased without, I mean salvation, and an interest in Christ.

2dly, Having offered some things by way of conviction, we shall now a little *expostulate* with you. And,

(1.) Can ye be, were ye ever concerned about any thing? Did ye ever think seriously, speak seriously, or act seriously about any thing? If not, thou art certainly a fool, a mad-man. If thou hast, then,

(2.) Man or woman, is there any thing equally worthy of thy concern, as the salvation of thy soul? What art thou profited if thou gain a world, and lose this? And mayest not thou be happy if thou save this, though thou lose a world?

(3.) Thinkest thou, then, to save this without concern? Think it not: for not only must thou strive, must thou run, but every running, and every striving will not do the business; and therefore thou must strive, and so run, that ye may obtain.

(4.) Is it not thy wisdom to prevent that, which if once it come, cannot be remedied, I mean the loss of thy soul? Know "the soul's redemption is precious and ceases for ever," Psal. xlviii. 9.

(5.) Canst thou, wilt thou sit as unconcernedly, when God is sinking thee into a sea of brimstone, as now thou dost when he is threatening to do it? If not, bethink thyself in time, ere it be too late.

(6.) Are ye not ashamed to be unconcerned about this, about which all others are so deeply concerned? and yet none of them have so great an interest in the matter as ye. The devil is concerned; he goes about seeking whom he may destroy. Will not ye be concerned about the preservation of that which he and all his instruments are so much concerned to destroy? Ministers are concerned; they preach, they pray, they sweat, they think, they toil, many a trembling heart have they for fear of your ruin. They spend their time and strength about your salvation, while many times they fear, that by this means their own salvation be neglected. And now, whether, I pray, have ye or they most concern in this matter? They may, if they be faithful, yea, they will go to heaven, whatever come of you; are ye then mad, so far to overlook your own great interest? God is concerned: can ye doubt of it, while he is held forth in the gospel, as bleeding, dying, weeping, sweating blood, and all to prevent your ruin? Can ye doubt of it, while he is heard inviting, calling, intreating, promising, offering, protesting, nay, and even swearing, his concern in the matter: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God," Ezek. xviii. 32. and xxxiii. 11. And what need has God of any of you? "Can ye be profitable to him, as he that is righteous is profitable unto himself?" Consider this, and be ashamed, and horribly confounded, O careless unconcerned souls!

3dly, We now come to speak a word for *terror* to you: know then for certain,

(1) That soul which ye will not be concerned to save, ye shall lose: and will any thing make up the loss? what will all the world profit you, while ye have lost a precious soul, without hope of recovery?

(2.) That damnation which ye were not careful to prevent, shall be your portion; and who among you

“can dwell with everlasting burnings? who among you can dwell with devouring fires?”

(3.) These things which now ye are concerned about, and pursue with so much eagerness, shall be your everlasting tormentors, and what profit will ye have of these things, whereof then ye will be ashamed?

(4.) When all this misery shall come upon you, there shall not be any concerned for you; when this shall come upon you, then who shall be sorrowful, or lament for you? God will “laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying, Lo this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness,” Psal. lii. 6. 7. But we proceed.

Secondly, The next sort of persons to whom we promised to speak, are they who are indeed under *some* concern for religion, but their *main* concern seems to be about public matters, the carriage of others, and miscarriages of those who are in any public trust; and they relish converse about this most of all, and spend most of their time this way. What we are to say to those, is not to dissuade any from a due regard to the public, but on design to obviate some dangerous extremes. Now, to such we say,

1. Whatever any may account of you, ye have reason to suspect and be jealous of yourselves: we have shewed, from the word of the Lord, that where there is any thing of a sincere regard to the Lord's service, it will shew itself, (1.) In a deep concern to have, and keep matters right at home; and since your main concern lies another way, truly your religion, though your pretence be never so high, or the thoughts of ministers or others never so favourable, is deservedly suspicious, and you have reason to doubt it; and I will tell you some of the grounds whereon. (1.) I am sure your hearts are, as well as these of others, “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” and would willingly deceive you. (2.) I am no less sure, that while you are much abroad in obser-
ving

ving others, and little at home in self-judging, self-searching, and self-condemning, they have a special advantage for deceiving you, which they, no doubt, will not lose. (3.) Your dislike or light esteem of those things which speak a spiritually healthy constitution, with your liking to those things that discover a vitiate spiritual palate and senses, gives me ground to fear you are not right. When people love not so well to hear the sweet and plain truths of the gospel, as continual reflections upon public failings, it discovers a spirit embittered and rankled, and not under due impressions of its own deep concern in the plain gospel-truths: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 2. 3. When once people begin to weary of the preaching of Christ, and him crucified, and of hearing the way of salvation, the means of salvation, the marks of grace, and soul-exercise, the Lord's work and way of translating souls out of darkness into his marvellous light, and of carrying on the work of salvation to a blessed period; when once, I say, this cannot be heard, and nothing is relished but debates, though about truths, and precious truths of God, I must say, their religion is, if not quite wanting, yet very low. (4.) I am much afraid of such, because pride is strong in them, and is encouraged in both its parts. It consists in low thoughts of others, and high thoughts of ourselves: Now, both these parts of pride are strengthened; for, [1.] What way can be more effectual to sink others in our own esteem, than always to pry into, discourse of, and judge them for their faults, real or supposed? Again, [2.] What can raise us higher in our own conceit, than to look little into our own hearts, these filthy finks of sin; to look at ourselves, when, like Jehu, we appear very far beyond others in zeal for the Lord, and to compare ourselves with others, when we have debased them as low as we can? Thus is pride fed; and where it grows strong, all grace will languish: "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble," James iv. 6. Much
more

more might be added, upon the most clear scripture-evidences : but we go on.

2. We say to such, How ever specious like your services have been, you have reason to be jealous of them, and to fear the want of an ingredient that will spoil all, I mean, singleness as to your aim. Many are deceived as to this matter ; and ye have reason to be afraid. If the tree be naught, assuredly the fruit is so too ; and what ground ye have to suspect the former, we have hinted just now ; fear therefore the latter. A squint look to a by-end, will be a dead flie ; it will make the finest ointment stink ; and God knows there is ground to fear, that there may be some such by look. What we might offer for clearing of this must be passed by ; for our design will not allow us to enlarge upon those particulars.

3. We say to you, Look to yourselves ; for whenever trying times come, you will be meet tools for the devil to make use of, to ruin the church of God. The church has ever suffered more by false friends, and the mistakes of the really godly, especially when going to this extreme, than by open enemies ; and I will tell you several grounds upon which I am apt to think, that ye will err and wander from the way, and that to your own wounding, and to the wounding of the church. (1.) Your carriage casts you without the reach of God's promise, of guiding in such times. It is the humble, and not the self-conceited Christian, that the Lord will guide : " The meek will he guide in judgement, the meek will he teach his way," Psal. xxv. 9. (2.) You will be easily persuaded to neglect the means of guidance, I mean, an attendance upon Christ's faithful ministers. This sort of people have many prejudices against ministers, and it is easy to drive them to the height of deserting their ministry ; and then surely they are an easy prey to every seducer, and to every fancy. Christ's direction to his spouse at noon, that is, in times of adversity ; and when it is hard to know who is right, who is wrong, is to keep close by faithful ministers. " If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way

way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds tents," Cant. i. 9. (3.) In that time offences will abound : and if thou wilt break thy neck upon the faults, either of ministers or of Christians, thou wilt not want stumbling-blocks, and the devil will be sure to improve them all, to nurse you up in the good conceit thou hast entertained of thyself, and in undervaluing thoughts of others. Many more of the like sort we pass.

4. I shall leave you, with this one awful warning, who have any hankering toward this extreme : Beware lest, while ye expect to be rewarded of the Lord for your public zeal and concern, ye be damned for want of personal godliness. Read, consider, and tremble, at that awful beacon of the Lord's holy jealousy in this sort : "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity," Matth. vii. 22. 23. Here are men far forward in public appearances, and yet damned for want of personal godliness. For the Lord's sake, remember, and fear that ye fall not into the like condemnation. Neglect not the public : but O begin at home, and employ your first and great care there ; and when ye go abroad, be sure ye keep within your own sphere. But,

Thirdly, Leaving this sort of people, I come, in the next place, to speak a word to such as are indeed under a *deep* concern, and that first and mainly about their own souls, though they dare not forsake Zion ; with Joshua, they would have all Israel chuse the Lord : but whatever come of this, one thing they take care to be sure of, that they themselves are God's servants. Now, to such we have only a few words to say.

1. Sirs, what ye have, hold fast. Say against this order who will, we dare say it is God's, and will be owned by him ; and if ye hold on, I dare in God's name say unto you, that ye shall be helped, and honoured to stand by him, when others, whose pretences are high, will
turn

turn their back on him : ye shall bring forth your fruit in its season, as the tree planted by the rivers of water, Psal. i. 3.

2. I say to you, Beware of such as would divert you from this course : hold at a distance from such whose conversation has any tendency to beget prejudices against a gospel-ministry and ordinances. Assuredly their steps take hold of death, and lead to it, pretend what they will : God never ordained his babes to live without milk, and some to feed them also. If once ye be prevailed with to disgust your food, all will quickly grow wrong with you : if you want it a while, hunger will go off, and you will be filled with wind, and will not be aware till ye just die. If ye have got any good of ministers and ordinances, I say to you, hold by them, and beware of any thing that may deprive you of the advantage of them, or lessen your benefit by them. Deserting ordinances will entirely deprive you of the advantage of them, and prejudices nourished against them will make your advantage less.

3. Beware of spending your time, and of such as would draw you to spend your time, in love-killing, and prejudice-hatching debates : “ Only by pride cometh contention, but with the well advised is wisdom,” Prov. xiii. 10.

4. For the Lord's sake, make earnest of growing in religion. What ye have happily begun, take no rest till it come to a blessed issue : “ Press forward toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. Forget the things that are behind, and press forward. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. Work out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure. And ye shall undoubtedly reap in due time, if ye faint not. I now proceed,

Fourthly, To shut up the whole, in a few words of *exhortation* to all. We had some thoughts of branching this exhortation out in several parts ; and we indeed
justly

justly might do so: but designing to conclude this second doctrine presently, we shall wrap all up in one.

Is it so, that such as have any real regard unto the honour of the Lord, do make their own religion their first and great concern? Then, my friends, let me, in the fear of the Lord, beseech, intreat, and obtest you, to be concerned about your own religion: make this sure by any means; serve ye the Lord, take others what course they will; and even begin at this; make this your first and great care. For,

1. This is the foundation of all; and as the foundation is right or wrong, so it will fare with the whole superstructure. This is the root, and as it is good or evil, so will the fruit be; this is the spring, and if any thing be amiss here, all the streams will partake in the evil and hurt; O therefore by any means make all right here.

2. Make this your first and great concern, for it will be herein, and with respect to this mainly, that ye will be tried; all the trials that the Lord brings on his people, do still try this, how matters are here, whether the foundation be right laid, and how far the work is carried on.

3. Death and judgement will be comfortable or bitter, as it is right or wrong with you in this respect. Your salvation and damnation depend upon it: "He that believeth not shall be damned; he that believeth shall be saved." He that for his own part betakes not himself to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, in the gospel-method, shall assuredly be damned, come of others what will.

4. Make this your first and great care; for truly the defect of this is the spring and true source of that lamentable defect of family-religion, and of a due concern for the public, which is matter of deep concern to all that fear the Lord this day. What! is it any wonder that the man that takes no care of his own soul, be unconcerned about the souls of others? How can he, that is posting to the pit himself, take care of others, and endeavour to preserve them from running to their
own

own ruin? Never will any reasonable man believe, that he who goes on in sin himself, will, in his station, be really zealous for repressing it in others. Unless we prevail with you to be concerned about your own souls, we despair of getting you any way serious in reforming your families.

5. Make this your first and great care ; for this will help you to employ your zeal the right way, in reforming others ; it will make you first concerned for their souls, and to have them built upon the sure foundation. It is the folly of some professors to be always for debating, when they come into conversation with persons that they suppose, and it may be not without ground, are strangers, nay, and enemies to religion ; and that not so much to bring them to acquaintance with the power of religion, but to be of their judgement, in some points of controversy that are tossed in the day we live in, which I do confess are of very great moment. But here they mistake ; for they should first endeavour to bring the man under a real concern about his soul ; and then you have brought him one step towards the embracement of any principle or practice that is according to godliness : and if ye gain not this point with a graceless man, a man that is not exercised to godliness, it is of no great consequence what his profession he, Papist, Prelatist, Presbyterian, or any thing else ; for he will be true to no profession : it is not a real principle that holds him ; and he is ready to be, upon any temptation, a scandal to that way which he cleaves to. O make your own religion your first and great care, and this will learn you where to begin with others.

6. O make personal religion your first and great concern ; for, alas ! here it is that the main defect is among you. We have oft complained, and we have daily new reason to complain of you, that many at least among you are going in the broad and most patent roads to the pit, some in that of ignorance of God, others in that of drunkenness, some in that of abominable oaths, and swinish lusts, and others in that of
devilish

devilish revenge and contentions, always leading down to death and destruction, and that openly. I know most have long since laid down a conclusion, that they shall have peace, though they walk in the way of their own hearts, adding drunkenness to thirst, one sin to another. But assuredly ye are deceived: "Be not deceived: thus saith the Lord, Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9. 10. And the same shall be the fate of cursers and swearers: "Then said he to me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side, according to it, and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side, according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name. And it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof," Zech. v. 3. 4. Now, are there not such among you? Are there not unclean persons, swearers, drunkards, and the like, among you? And ye who are such, have not ye need to be concerned to be religious? Sure ye have none as yet. And now, to bring this home to you, let me pose you upon three things. (1.) Do ye believe that the words ye have heard are the words of God? If not, then be gone, you have nothing to do here. If ye do, then, (2.) Do ye hope to get to heaven, when God has said, ye shall never get there? If ye do, ye are mad; and if ye do not, ye are mad: if ye hope to get heaven in spite of God, assuredly ye are mad; and if ye believe there is a heaven, and yet live in that which ye know will debar you thence, ye are mad indeed. (3.) If God, by a gospel-dispensation, prevail not so far with you, as to make you leave the open road to hell, is he like to prevail with you, to bring you over to a compliance with the gospel-call entirely? No, no, surely

ly no. My friends, look in time, be concerned in time; for, as the Lord liveth, ye are in imminent danger, danger greater than ye are well aware of; and whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear, know, that if ye die, your blood is on your own heads; ye have got warning. Take warning, and make personal religion indeed your first and great concern.

7. O make your own religion your first and great care; for here many are deceived; many have a name to live, who are dead, and appear to be something, who yet, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, will be found wanting, and have a *Tekel* writ upon them.

8. To add no more, consider seriously how sad a deceit in this matter is. O terrible deceit, to mistake heaven, and instead of it slip into hell! To mistake the broad road, and think it the narrow! How terribly will the poor deluded souls, that swell with the hopes of heaven and glory, look, when, instead of falling into the rivers of pleasure, they shall sink like lead in the mighty waters of God's holy, just, and terrible indignation against sin! As ye would not meet with this terrible disappointment, look to yourselves; make sure your own religion; lay the foundation well, and then ye may have peace, and the Lord will establish it. Now, for your direction, I shall only offer two or three short words.

1. Bring yourselves to the light, to the standard of God's word, and try yourselves by that which is the true test, the balance of the sanctuary, the counsel of the Lord, which shall stand.

2. Whatever judgement the word passes on you, though it read your name amongst the black roll of those who are doomed to the bottomless pit, hear it, and believe it, for assuredly the scripture cannot be broken.

3. Cry to the Lord, that he may give his Spirit to open your eyes, to know how matters are with you.

4. When God, by his word and Spirit, has wounded you, wait upon him for cure, in the same way; for it is thence also you must have your acquaintance with
the

the blessed Physician, Jesus Christ, in whom alone your help is.

Having thus finished the second doctrine, I now proceed to

DOCT. III. "Such as are sincerely religious themselves, will take care that their families, and all whom they can have any influence upon, be so too." Or shortly thus: "Such as are sincere will be really careful to maintain family-religion:" *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

Which shews us, (1.) That God requires household religion, even that we and our houses serve the Lord. Now, what is not required, or commanded, cannot be service done to the Lord. (2.) That we, and our houses or families, should join in, or perform jointly, some part of service to the Lord. (3.) That a master of a family is called to take care of, and may engage some way for his house or family their serving the Lord.

Now, in the further prosecuting of this point, we shall shew you,

I. Wherein family-religion *lies*.

II. Whence it is, that such as are sincere are *so much concerned* about it, as we here find Joshua, and others of the saints in scripture.

I. Now, we begin with the *first*; and shall only here observe, that family-religion consists of three parts, or is comprehensive of the three following particulars. 1. Family-instruction. 2. Family-worship. 3. Family-government, or order. And about these it is that a religious master will be concerned; and he that is not in some measure carefully exercised in these three, there is reason to fear he has no religion. Now, we shall a little open these three unto you. And,

1. We say, that *family-instruction* is that which such

as

as are sincerely religious will be careful of. Affuredly there will be nothing that will lie nearer the heart of a conscientious master of a family, next to the salvation of his own soul, than the salvation of his family, his children and servants; and one great part of his care will undoubtedly discover itself this way, in a deep concern to have them accurately instructed in the knowledge of their duty toward God, their neighbour, and themselves; and, in a word, the whole of that knowledge which is necessary, in order to their walk with God here, and their enjoyment of God hereafter. And this part of family-religion we find the Lord very punctual and express in commanding, Deut. vi. 6. 7. 8. 9. "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up: And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." In which observe, *1st*, Personal religion enjoined: "They shall be in thine heart". *2^{dly}*, Domestic religion: "Thou shalt teach them diligently." Here also we have a plain account of this first part of family-religion, and a clear command for it; we see who they are about whose instruction we are to concern ourselves; it is our children, and those who are in our house, that is children and servants; for under the notion of children servants are frequently comprehended, as particularly in the fifth command. There it is agreed by all, that under that of parent and child, all relations, and particularly master and servant, are comprehended. We see also the manner how this duty is to be managed, and that is diligently. And this is yet more particularly opened, as to the ways and seasons wherein we are to evidence our diligence, and special care of the instruction of those under our charge. Now, two ways we ought to manage this piece of family-religion. And,

(1.)

(1.) By precept: (2.) By our walk. We ought to teach them diligently both ways; we ought to inculcate and carefully press upon them the knowledge of the Lord; and what we thus teach them by word, we ought strongly to enforce by a suitable walk. Parents and masters should be in case to say to their children and servants, with Gideon in another case, "Look on me, and do likewise," Judg. i. 17.; and with the apostle, Phil. iii. 17. "Be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample." Then are children and servants like to be won over to a compliance with the will of the Lord in his word, when it is not only clearly held forth to them in word, but when also it is pointed forth in a lively and speaking example. If the Spirit of God gives us ground, as it does, 1 Pet. iii. 1. to believe that a holy and shining conversation, without the word, may prove effectual towards the winning over of unbelievers toward the embracement of religion, what may we expect, if the word and such teaching be joined together! Surely we might think to see somewhat else than what is to be seen at this day. And O how hard will many find it to answer for their defects here, in that day, when they shall stand at the bar of God! Nay, would to God we might not say, for their direct counteracting duty, in both these respects, while instead of instructing them in the fear of the Lord, by example and precept, they run them forward, to a course of sin by both! O prodigious villany! and yet common among men, among Christians!

2. *Family-worship* is comprised under family-religion, as a principal part of it; every family should be a little church unto the Lord: and so we find mention made of the church of God in houses, or of families being churches unto the Lord, "Greet (or salute) the church that is in thine house," Rom. xvi. 5. and elsewhere; and, past all doubt, every family ought to be a church, wherein God should be solemnly worshipped, both on ordinary and extraordinary occasions; so Job's
house

house was, Job. i. 5. Now, of this family-worship, the more ordinary parts are three.

(1.) Solemn *invocation* of the name of God by prayer. Our Lord teaches us to join together in prayer, by putting the persons praying in the plural number in the Lord's prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven." Again, "Give us this day our daily bread." Our dependence upon God, not only in our single capacities, but as we are members of families, requires suitable acknowledgements of the Lord; and our want of family-mercies requires our joining in craving them by prayer from the Lord. Our guilt of family-sins requires family-acknowledgements, and applications for pardon; and therefore assuredly families, whether greater, as nations, or lesser, which call not upon the name of God, shall have the Lord's fury poured out upon them, Jer. x. 25. "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and on the families that call not on thy name." Where by families we are to understand all families, whether greater or lesser; for surely if nations, in their national capacity, be called to worship the Lord, and call upon his name, so also lesser families are; and for their neglect, are liable to the same vengeance.

(2.) Solemn *reading* of the word belongs to family-worship. What can be more plain to this purpose, than the command we have formerly quoted from Deut. vi. 6.; and this we are to do, that the "word of the Lord may dwell in us richly, in all wisdom," Col. iii. 16.

(3.) Solemn *praises* are also required, as a part of family-worship, and undoubtedly as family-sins and wants call for family-prayer, so family-mercies require family-praises, and brings us under the apostle's injunction, in that forecited Col. iii. 16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

3. It remains that we open the third and last branch of family-religion, viz. *family-government*; and this lies in several particulars: (1.) In commanding the family,

family, children and servants, to walk in all the ways of obedience. This is that which the Lord so highly praises in Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19. "I know him, saith the Lord, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," &c. (2.) In obliging, by reproof, admonition, and correction, such as are in the family, to abandon any thing sinful and scandalous in their practice, Gen. xxxv. 2. "Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." Here we have an eminent example, both of family-worship, and family-order; and indeed, as to the deportment, I mean, as to the outward man, and what is to be seen of servants and children, we see from the fourth command, that parents and masters of families are accountable for it to the Lord, who has not only enjoined them to keep the Sabbath-day, but to take care that all within their doors do. (3.) This lies in expelling such out of the family as do, notwithstanding the use of these means for their reformation, persist in walking contrary to God. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." Here is the spring. See what follows: "He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me: he that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight," Psal. ci. 2. 6. Here we see a lively character of one that has a true regard to the maintenance of family-religion. How rare are such instances in our day! But leaving this, we shall proceed.

II. The next thing we proposed, was to shew whence it is that such as are sincerely religious themselves will be careful to maintain family-religion. We might indeed, for the proof of this truth, have mentioned and illustrated the eminent examples of pious care about family-religion, recorded in scripture: but what we are called under this head will supersede that, and will

sufficiently prove the doctrine, and shew, that there is an indissoluble tie betwixt sincerity and a regard to this

1. Then, persons who are themselves sincerely religious, will be careful to maintain family-religion, because they have a *regard* to all God's commands. The authority of the Lord, wherever it is stamped, binds them to a compliance. Sincerity has for its inseparable companion, a respect to all God's commands: "Thou shalt I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commands," Psal. cxix. 6. And from this respect to the command it is that a care about family-religion flows; for undoubtedly it is a part of commanded duty. We are here told, it is a piece of service to the Lord; and what is commanded is only so. What he never requires, that he will never own as service done to him; but what has been alledged from the word of God, under the former head, puts this beyond dispute.

2. This regard to the maintenance of family-religion flows from the very *nature* of that supernatural principle wherewith all that are truly sincere are endued, which in scripture is called, *the new heart, a heart of flesh, a new creature, a new spirit, &c.* This principle being suited and framed to an universal compliance with the Lord's will, aims at this in all things. They who have it are said to be "created in Christ Jesus to good works," Eph. ii. 10. And particularly, as the old heart would be in all respects independent of the Lord, so, on the other hand, this new heart is strongly bent to acknowledge its dependence on the Lord, in the ways of his own appointment, in all its ways, in all stations and relations wherein it is put: and hence, as it leads us to own the Lord in our single capacity, so it leads us all, if we are possessed of it, to do so in our family-capacity, and, in a word, as it leads us to worship and serve the Lord ourselves, so it powerfully influences to lay on ourselves to have all others to serve the same Lord, more especially such as we may have influence upon, our children and servants.

3. Such as are sincere have an *entire* love to the Lord, and hence a delight in all ordinances, private as well as public.

public, and secret, wherein any measure of communion with the Lord may be reached. "Lord," says David, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, the place where thine honour dwelleth," Psal. xxvi. 8. The Lord's honour dwelleth in all his ordinances, and in every place where he records his name; that is, in every ordinance, there he meets with his people, and there he blesteth them. And indeed by family-religion the Lord is signally honoured; for thereby we, (1.) Acknowledge, that we hold our families of the Lord, that it is to him we owe them, and say by our practice what worthy Jacob said, Gen. xxxii. 10. "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." Again, (2.) We hereby own our families, and all that we are, to be still in the hand of the Lord, and at his sovereign disposal; while all the advantages and mercies we want, and would have or enjoy, and would wish continued with us, we apply to him for them by prayer; and all the evils we would have removed or prevented, we likewise look to him for their removal and prevention, acknowledging him the Author of all our mercies, in the continual ascriptions of praises to him. In this way we acknowledge plainly, that of him, and through him, are all things, in whose hand is the breath, and all the concernments of every living thing, who kills and makes alive, wounds and heals, makes rich and poor. And, in a word, hereby we own him the uncontrollable Lord of all: "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh, and blessed be the name of the Lord. He doth what pleased him; and who may say to him, What dost thou?" (3.) These acknowledgements honour God, in that they are public, whereby God's glory is manifested to others, and they instructed, and excited by example unto the like acknowledgements. Assuredly, therefore, they who love the place where God's honour dwells, and that which contributes toward its manifestation, as all sincere souls do, will not dare to neglect

glect this family-religion, whereby it is so signally furthered.

4. Such as are sincerely religious will be careful to maintain family-religion, because they have a *sincere* love to those in their house. They love their neighbour as themselves; and no way can love manifest itself more than in a due care for their salvation, leading to the use of all those means whereby this is promoted. Memorable to this purpose are the Lord's words concerning Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. Here we have a double connection, very remarkable. (1.) A connection betwixt family-religion, a due care of it, and its success. He will command, and they shall keep the way of the Lord; he will take due care, and his care shall not be in vain: "Train up a child in the way wherein he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Ordinarily an universal care this way is not altogether without some influence upon some in the family; and if we save one child, one servant by it, is not this a rich reward for all the attendance we can give to it? (2.) There is a connection betwixt the success and the promised blessings: "They shall keep the way of the Lord, and the Lord will bring on Abraham, and his seed, all the good things that he has spoken." So here we see of how great consequence it is to those in our families; it is the way to make them religious, and that is the way to make them happy.

5. Such as are sincere will be careful to maintain family-religion, from the *conscience* of the charge they have of them. Masters and parents have the charge of their families, and are in some measure accountable to God for them. Parents are commanded to train up their children, and masters to command their household to keep the way of the Lord, as we see in the Lord's testimony of Abraham. Thus we see, in the fourth command, the master of the family is obliged to see to the religious observance

observance of the Sabbath by all within his house, and so he has a charge for which he is accountable to the great God; and therefore a sincere person looks on himself as bound to be careful to maintain the worship of God in his family, and amongst those whom he has the charge of. This made holy Job concerned to sacrifice for his children; and the neglect of paternal duty in Eli provoked the Lord's displeasure.

6. The care of persons who are sincerely religious to maintain family-religion, flows from the *force* of their solemn engagements and vows to the Lord in their baptism, which are again renewed upon their offering children to the Lord in that ordinance. Here they are solemnly and deeply sworn to be the Lord's, and to walk with God, in and before their families, to instruct them by example and precept. And this surely cannot be performed where family-religion is not taken care of in all its parts. How terrible will it be to parents and masters of families, when their children and servants, from generation to generation, shall accuse them as faulty, and the cause of their want of family-religion? Indeed, say they, we never worshipped God in our families; why? we never saw the worship of God in our father's or master's families? How terrible will this be, when God shall say, Is it so? hast thou damned thy child, thy servant? Is this the performance of the solemn vows which thou tookest on before so many witnesses? How confounded wilt thou then look? Other things to this purpose we may have occasion to touch at afterwards. From what has been said, it is plain,

1. That all who are sincere will undoubtedly be careful to maintain family-religion.

2. Whence it is so. It is from the force of all these ties we have mentioned, and others of the like nature, we may afterwards have occasion to mention.

We shall now make some practical improvement of this point. And,

Use 1. For information. We may draw from it the few following inferences; amongst many. Is it so, that

such as are sincerely religious themselves will be conscientiously careful about family-religion? Then,

1. We have undoubtedly reason to suspect their religion who are triflers in this matter. Since a suitable concern about our own salvation, and the means leading thereto, leads to a due concern about the souls of our families, no doubt, when we see persons trifle here, it gives us ground to be jealous, that they are not under a due concern about their own souls. Now, of triflers in this sort, who seem all to fall under that heavy curse that is pronounced, Jer. xlviii. 10. against such as do the work of the Lord negligently, there are three sorts. (1.) Such as do the work of the Lord by parts. They will, it may be, read a chapter, but never a word of praying, or of singing praises to the Lord in their families; tho' there is full as much ground for the one as for the other, from the command of God, and from our own necessities. The reading of the word is not like to turn to any great or good account to us, if we join not prayer for the Lord's Spirit, to cause us understand what we read. And he well understood this, who spent so great a part of that long psalm in praying for light, Psalm cxix. 18. "Open mine eyes, that I may see wonders out of thy law," is a petition that should go along with the reading of the word. And indeed praises ought not to be forgot, and praise will be ever looked on as comely for the upright: "It is a good thing to give thanks to the name of the Lord;" and the true way it is to obtain much of him. Memorable, above many, are the words of the Psalmist to this purpose, "Let the people praise thee: O God, let all the people praise thee." There is the exhortation: well, what follows on it? The ensuing verse tells: "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our God, shall bless us," Psal. lxxvii. 5. 6. All the duties of religion, whether domestic, or public, or secret, have a mutual subserviency to one another, as well as a tendency to promote the design of all; and therefore one cannot be taken away, without a manifest injury done to the rest, and done to the very design.— Such who deal thus are undoubtedly triflers, and are

to be accounted contemners of the Lord's authority ; for assuredly, if it were regard to the Lord's command that made them careful of one part, the same regard and deference to the Lord's command would make them perform all the other parts. If we cut and carve, take and leave, as we see meet, in those things which are equally established by the Lord, we do the work of the Lord deceitfully ; and " cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully." And, (2.) Such are to be accounted triflers as do seldom worship God in their families : it may be, on the Sabbath-night they will read or sing, or so, but no more till the next Sabbath. They who confine all their religion to the Sabbath, I dare say, they never kept the Sabbath duly. No doubt, we ought to worship God in our families daily, we ought to confess our sins, cry to him for a gracious supply of all our wants, and to praise him for his mercy towards us. Surely, when we are bid " pray always with all prayer," Eph. vi. 18. ; this is at least to be understood that we ought to be frequently employed in this sort of prayer, as well as any other. No less can be meant also, where we are bid, 1 Thess. v. 17. " Pray without ceasing." Undoubtedly, therefore, triflers they are, who do frequently neglect, who, upon every trifling occasion, will baulk family-religion, while there is every day both a clear call to it, and fair occasion for it. The Lord's mercies are new every morning, and so are both our sins and our wants, and therefore so ought our applications to God. " It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises to thy name, O Most High : to shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night," Psal. xcii. 1. 2. (3.) Such are triflers, as, notwithstanding the clear command we have to be " fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," do yet, with a cold indifferency, and even as they were asleep, manage this work. Is this to serve the Lord with all our strength, with all our heart and soul, as we are commanded ? Nay, sure it is not. Let such take heed who thus offer to the Lord a carcase, a form, who please themselves with the mere performance of the duties, without considering

how they are performed; let such, I say, look with trembling and astonishment to that word of the prophet, "Curst be the deceiver, that hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing," Mal. i. 14.

2. We may draw this inference from it, that such as do entirely neglect family-religion are undoubtedly strangers to sincerity. Think on this, ye who to this day never bowed a knee to God in your families: undoubtedly, ye are under a mistake as to your case; and, be your thoughts of yourselves what they will, God looks on you as persons void of all religion. For, (1.) Is not family-religion a duty? sure it is; all the Lord's people, in all generations, have thought so; the Lord has approved them in it. Abraham, as we have heard, was highly commended for this. It is one of the noted evidences, Job i. 5. of the piety of Job, of whom God did in a manner glory. It is plainly enjoined in the fourth command, as judicious Durham solidly clears.—But what need I say more? It is so clear, that nobody denies it who has any sense of religion; and even they who neglect it must own it a duty. Again, (2.) Is not, then, your neglect of it a sin against light, that is, a sin of deeper than ordinary dye, a blacker hue, and consequently to be more severely punished by the holy and jealous God? "He that knows his master's will, and does it not, is to be beaten with many stripes." (3.) Is it a sin you are only once guilty of in your life? Nay, but it is a sin ye are every day guilty of. (4.) And is it consistent with any thing of the reality of religion, to live in the constant and habitual neglect of any duty, or the commission of any known sin? Nay, surely it is not; for the Lord is plain with us in this matter: "He that committeth sin (that is, who lives in a course of sin), is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," 1 John iii. 8. 9. Vain, therefore, are all your pretences to any thing of the reality of religion, who live in the neglect of family-religion.

3. We

3. We may from this doctrine learn, whence it is that there is such a sad neglect of family-religion this day. It is from a want of sincere personal religion. Few there are who are themselves under a due concern about their own souls; and hence it is that there are so few careful about the souls of their families. Now, that this flows from a defect of personal religion, is plain beyond contradiction, if we consider, (1.) That where there is that sincerity that will not make ashamed, there undoubtedly there is to be found a regard, and an equal respect to all God's commands: "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commands," Psal. cxix. 6. Again, (2.) Experience shews, that they who are negligent in this matter, are also careless about their own souls. Look to it, ye who neglect family-religion; I fear ye are not careful about personal religion. He that will easily baulk and neglect family-prayer, will be as ready to neglect secret prayer. This is well known in experience. (3.) The very excuses that they make use of for this neglect, speak the want of a heart to it; for-surely, when people are kept from a thing by frivolous and trifling difficulties, it is a sign they have no great mind to it.

Objeſt. 1. Say ſome, We cannot pray, we never were taught to pray.

I answer, (1.) If thou meanest that thou canst not do it as thou oughtest, very true; neither canst thou do any duty: wilt thou therefore give over all? (2.) Didst thou ever try it? did ye ever sit down with your family, and make a mint at it? What knowest thou, but it might have fallen out to thee, as to the man with the withered hand? If thou hadst made a fair trial to pray, thou perhaps mightest have got strength thou didst never expect. It is want of will and inclination, not of strength and ability, that hinders. (3.) Did ye ever cry to God to teach you? Did ye ever, with the disciples, cry, Master, or Lord, teach us to pray? If not, surely it is want of will that keeps you from duty. Ye have no mind to it. (4.) Can ye do any thing? Yes, will ye say, we can work at our ordinary employments.

Well, but could ye do this at first? Did ye not come to a skill in these things, after many fainter essays, and pains taken to learn? No doubt ye did. Even so ye must learn to pray. (5.) Have ye any sense of family-fins, family-mercies, or family-wants? If ye have, sure I am, what ye are sensible of, ye can speak. Can ye tell your neighbour? and may ye not also tell these things to God? But,

Object. 2. Say ye, When we come before God, we must speak well, and when we come before the great King, we must have words in good order; and now I cannot order my words aright.

Ans. (1.) It is not words that God seeks. Many a time he has rejected good words, for want of a correspondent frame of heart, Deut. v. 29.; but he never rejected a prayer, because it was not right worded. (2.) I say, If thy words express the real sentiments of thy heart, and thou be upon the matter right, God will pass by many indecencies and failings in thy words; so he did with Job: Job had many harsh expressions concerning God, both to him, and of him; and yet, because he was upon the matter right, he passes by these failings, while he reproves his three friends: "Ye have not spoken of me the things that are right, as my servant Job," ch. xlii. 6. (3.) In prayer, we address God as a Father, and we know parents will not quarrel their children in nonage, though they lisp and speak after their own way; nor will God be worse than our parents in this respect. (4.) Utterance is God's gift, and therefore, would ye have it? to the Lord ye must look for it. (5.) As far as thou understandest thy needs, or the Lord's mercies, and art affected with them, in so far ye will still find words to express your concern; and if any man teach you to speak beyond your understanding and concern, he teaches you to mock God. But, (6.) If this hold, it strikes as well against secret prayer, as family-prayer, and so we must quit all prayer.

Object. 3. But say ye, Ah! I cannot get confidence.

Ans. (1.) Will this excuse bear you out at God's hand? Dare ye make it to him? No, I am sure, ye dare

dare not. (2.) Whether will it require greater confidence to pray before your family, or to stand at the bar of God, and before angels and men, and tell ye had never confidence to pray in your families? (3.) This is horrible pride; ye think ye cannot pray, so as to gain repute; and because ye cannot gain your end, cursed self, therefore ye rob God of his glory. (4.) Whether is it that thou canst not get confidence to pray before men, or before God? If thou say thou canst not get confidence to pray to God, then ye should not pray in secret either, nor yet in public. If thou say, it is before men that thou art ashamed, then is not this horrible impiety, to be more influenced by a foolish regard to man, than by a regard to God? If thou hast confidence to appear before God, thou mayst easily appear before men. Place but thyself under the eye of God, and set thyself to prayer, and then all thoughts of men will quickly be gone.

Object. 4. But say some, We cannot get time.

Ans. (1.) For what has God given thee time? was it not to serve him, to save thine own soul, and the souls of thy family? (2.) Whereon spendest thou thy time? On thy business or family, wilt thou answer? Well, if so, this is the compendious, shortest, and surest way to carry all forward. It is the way to get God with you, then ye will be prosperous. Finally, It is not true, for there is none of you all, but idle away, either upon no business, or worse than none, more than this would require. Now this much for the third inference.

4. We may from our doctrine draw this inference, That ministers have not the only charge, or all the care and charge of the souls of people; masters of families, and parents, have also a charge. And think on it, God will require at your hands the blood of your children, and of your servants, if they perish through your negligence. Now, that ye have the charge, and are answerable to God for children and servants; is past all contradiction. For, (1.) Parents and masters of families have a considerable interest with servants and children.

Children and servants pay somewhat of reverence and respect unto their parents and masters, and allow them some interest in their affection. Now, all this interest with them should be improved toward their salvation, and their engagement in God's service. (2.) Not only have ye an influence upon them this way, but ye have a power of commanding them; and this should be improved likewise toward their engagement in the Lord's way. (3.) Ye have frequent opportunities of conversing with them, and ye are accountable for the improvement of these towards their good; God expressly requiring your care as to the improvement of these, Deut. vi. 6. 7. Finally, (4.) Parents have a charge directly given to them; it is enjoined, "that they train up their children in the way of the Lord;" and to them it is that the Lord enjoins the forming of the tender years of their posterity. God has placed his testimonies amongst us; and we are all, according to our respective stations and opportunities, obliged to propagate both the knowledge and the practice of them: "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children," Psal. lxxviii. 5. 6.

Use 2. Of lamentation. This doctrine may be improved for lamentation. Is it so, that such as are themselves sincerely religious will be conscientiously careful to maintain family-religion? Then surely we have reason to lament the woful neglect of this duty, and of a due regard unto it in the day wherein we live. That this is either entirely neglected, or lamentably trifled over by the generality of parents and masters of families in our days, is, alas! too, too evident. For, (1.) Their horrid and abounding ignorance of God speaks it out. Were parents conscientiously careful to train up their children from their tender years, in the knowledge of God, as they are commanded; were they speaking to them of the things of God, when they sit in their houses, when
they

they walk in the fields, when they lie down and rise up ; and were these beginnings cultivate by masters of families, when they get them home to be servants ; surely there would not be so much ignorance of God this day in the land as there is. Again, (2.) The abounding impiety that there is in the land, speaks few Abrahams to be in it, who will command their children and their servants to walk in the ways of the Lord. Magistrates are no doubt faulty, and ministers too ; but the rise of all is, the negligence of parents and masters of families ; and at their hand will the Lord require it. (3.) The impiety of young ones, in particular, speaks this aloud. O how sadly doth it speak the wickedness of parents, when their children do slip out oaths as soon as they begin to speak, when children talk obscenely as soon as they begin to converse ; it tells us, their parents have not done, and do not their part. Finally, It is what cannot be denied, it is what ye must confess, because there are too many witnesses of its truth, even as many children, as many servants, as many sojourners, as there are in many of your families, as many witnesses there are against most of you, that ye either perfectly trifle in this, or totally neglect family-religion.

Now, surely we have reason heavily to lament this, and to mourn over it. For,

1. It gives us a sad character of the present generation. It tells us what sort of persons most part of parents and masters of families are in the day wherein we live, even that they are destitute of any thing of real and sincere respect unto the Lord and his service ; and though they be called Christians, yet really they know not Christ ; nor are they careful to honour him, or engage others to do it ; nay more, that they are horribly perjured, because solemnly sworn to instruct by precept and example, and even to train up their children and families in acquaintance with the Lord ; and yet they make no conscience of performing what they have vowed to the Lord, the most high God.

2. We have reason to lament this, because it gives us a sad prospect of the rising generation. Who shall
form

form the rising generation? Who shall train them up in the knowledge of the Lord, and engage them to the way of the Lord? It may be ye will say, Let ministers do it. But, ah! if others do not their part, all that ministers can do will not prevail. Ministers are little with them; ministers have many to attend. Ministers are called to preach the word, to attend to the exercise of discipline, and this takes much of their work and time. But parents and masters of families, they have few only to look to, they are much with them, have more interest with them, and more access to notice them; and if they improve not these advantages, the rising generation is not like to transmit to their posterity a good account of religion. This generation is sensibly worse than the former; and we may expect the next to be worse; and God knows where this neglect is like to land us ere long, even in downright atheism.

3. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, because of the dreadful and heavy doom it is like to bring on us altogether. Eli's neglect cost him and his family dear. What sad things this may in time bring upon parents and children, families, congregations, and nations, God only knows. But sure I am, it will make the day of judgement a terrible day to many of them, when children and servants shall go, as it were, in shoals to the pit, cursing their parents and their masters, who brought them there. And parents and masters of families shall be in multitudes plunged headlong in endless destruction, because they have not only murdered their own souls, but also imbrued their hands in the blood of their children and servants. O how doleful will the reckoning be amongst them at that day! when the children and servants shall upbraid their parents and masters: "Now, now, we must to the pit, and we have you to blame for it; your cursed example, and lamentable negligence, has brought us to the pit. We never saw you worship God yourselves, and ye never worshipped God in your families. Ye did not instruct us in the way of the Lord, nor train us up to it, and now we are indeed ruined and damned for our sins; but our

our blood lies at your doors, who might have done much to have saved us; but did it not." And, on the other hand, how will the shrieks of parents fill every ear? "I have damned myself, I have damned my children, I have damned my servants. While I fed their bodies, and cloathed their backs, I have ruined their souls, and brought double damnation on myself. O let us mourn over this sad evil, that will undoubtedly have this dismal and terrible issue. What can affect your hearts, if this do not?"

4. Let us lament what none can seriously look upon, and not lament, even a perishing generation, a ruined and destroyed multitude, and that not without the most terrible aggravations of their misery. (1.) Is it not lamentable to see children and servants fettered in chains of darkness, and reserved in them to judgement, to see them driven, as it were, to damnation and death eternal? (2.) Is it not yet more dreadful to see them destroyed by those who are under the strongest ties to endeavour their relief? (3.) Is it not sad to see them, who pretend love to their children, and servants, hugging a bit of clay, their bodies I mean, while they are damning their immortal souls? Surely this is to be lamented; and that it is not more noticed and bewailed, will ere long occasion a bitter lamentation. But we proceed next to

Use 3. Of reproof; and that, 1. To such as *trifle* in this duty. 2. To such as *halve* family-religion. 3. To such as *totally neglect* it. 4. To such as, instead of family-religion, do live in *family-wickedness*.

1. Then, we say, this reaches a reproof to such as do *trifle* in family-religion: some there are who make the fashion, at least, of attending all the duties of it; but with such faintness, deadness, and coldness, as says their duty is their burden, and not their choice. They can scarce tell what advantage they make of it. Such our doctrine reprove, and faulty ye are. For,

(1.) This says personal religion is either altogether wanting, or under a sad decay. Personal and family-religion go together; as there is an increase in zeal, and carefulness

carefulness about the one, so there will be about the other. When David looked well to himself, when he behaved himself wisely in a perfect way, he then also walked within his house with a perfect heart, Psal. ci. 2. Surely your trifling in family-religion is the genuine fruit of trifling in private and personal religion.

(2.) Ye deprive yourselves of the comfort of family-religion. The Lord has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain;" nay, he is good to the soul that seeks him, to them that wait for him. "In keeping his commands there is great reward;" but they who trifle, miss this great reward; for he only "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6.

(3.) Ye miss the mark, ye do not reach the scope and intendment of these duties, the engagement of your families to the Lord. It will not be a coldrise and formal performance of duty, that will either please God, or profit yourselves, or gain others.

(4.) Faulty ye are to a high degree; ye provoke the Lord to anger. God is a spirit, and he requires those who worship him, to do it in spirit and in truth. We must be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. He spues the lukewarm out of his mouth, and has pronounced a curse against those who serve him with the worst: "Cursed be the deceiver, who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to God a corrupt thing," Mal. i. 14.

2. This doctrine teaches a reproof to such as *halve* family-religion. Some there are who will not entirely omit, nor yet will they entirely perform. They go a part of the way with God, but they will not go the whole. To such we say,

(1.) Ye disjoin what the Lord has joined. The whole law of the Lord is knit together; and all the parts of it are subservient to each other: and it is remarkably so with respect to family-religion; and particularly with respect to family-worship. Prayer obtains from the Lord influences of light, whereby we are made to understand his word: and discoveries of the
Lord

Lord in the word fill our mouths with the high praises of the Lord. Let no man, therefore, separate these which the Lord has joined.

(2.) Ye betray naughtiness of heart. A sincere heart counts God's commands all of them to be right concerning all things. They who have not a respect to all the Lord's commands, shall, when they are tried, be exposed to just shame and contempt, Psal. cxi. 6. Now, while ye thus pick out some, and reject others, ye practically declare how naughty your heart is.

(3.) Ye trample upon the authority of the Lord in the command: "He that breaks one is guilty of all." If the Lord's authority were the motive that induced you to do the one part of this duty, it would also prevail with you to do the other. If the true reason why ye read a chapter sometimes in your family, were because the Lord commands it, ye would, for the very same reason, pray in your families. It is not the authority of the Lord that sticks with you, otherwise it would be in all respects of the like and equal consideration and weight with you. This is not that which prevails with you, and therefore ye are guilty of signal contempt of the Lord.

(4.) Ye lose even what ye do. God will have all or none. Ye must either receive or reject all his laws. He will allow no man to pick and chuse; and since ye are not clear for all, ye will be no better of all the lengths ye go. Instead, therefore, of a reward for what ye have done, ye may expect to be sent to the pit for what has been left undone.

3. This doctrine teaches a sad and sharp reproof to the *total neglecters* of family-religion. And even of this sort there are not a few. Some there are hearing, it may be, who have lived, some ten, some twenty years and upwards in a family, and never a word all the while of any thing like family-religion. To such we say,

(1.) Ye are going in the clear way to destruction. You heard us prove, from the most solid scripture-evidence, that where there is heart-sincerity, any thing of
real

real personal godliness, there will be also a conscientious care to maintain the worship of God, and all the parts of family-religion.

(2.) As if that were not enough, ye do what in you lies to ruin the souls of your children and families. He as really is guilty of the murder of his son or servant, who neglects his instruction, as he is who stabs a dagger to his heart.

(3.) What in you lies ye do to frustrate the gospel, and make ministers lose their pains. Then is the gospel like to be successful towards the salvation of souls, when every one doth his part: but ye are so far from furthering the gospel, that ye join issue with the god of this world, in blindfolding the children of men, lest the glorious light of the gospel should shine into their minds.

(4.) Ye sin against the Lord with a high hand: ye say upon the matter, that he shall not dwell in your house, when ye refuse to invite him in, and to urge his stay.

4. To those this doctrine reaches a rebuke, who not only neglect family-religion, but who, I may say, maintain *family-irreligion*, and instruct their families to neglect the Lord and his service.

(1.) By the neglect of family-worship; children and servants who never see any thing like the worship of God in the families wherein they live, and who are not instructed in the way of the Lord, are thereby laid open to the conduct of their own hearts, and taught also to neglect it.

(2.) By example of many parents, children and servants are taught to go a greater length: not only see the worship of God neglected, family-religion trifled over and slighted, but they see their parents and masters living careless of personal religion, neglecting secret prayer, reading of the word; nay more, living in the practice of known sin, drinking, swearing, speaking profanely. Here is the example, and readily it is followed by corrupt nature. Children and servants are ready to write after this copy: "As for the word that thou

thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee: but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her; as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil," Jer. xliv. 16. 17.

(3.) Children are not only by many parents drawn on to sin, but by some even cherished in it. While they laugh at, and excuse, and sometimes tempt their children to iniquity.

(4.) Children are misled by parents not correcting them, and that severely for sin: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it away:" and therefore, "he that spares the rod hates the child." Eli stands a monument of the terrible consequences of indulging children in ill.

These and such ways do many in our day teach both children and servants irreligion. Now, to such we say,

(1.) Is it not enough that ye yourselves join issue with Satan, but will ye thus draw others into the confederacy? Ye are not only against the Lord, but ye are ringleaders in the way to destruction.

(2.) Not content to draw others, ye drive your children and servants to sin: and is it not enough to destroy your own souls, unless ye openly and evidently murder your families?

(3.) Is it not enough that ye banish God your house, but will ye banish him the world? This is the plain tendency of what ye do. Ye are as they who poison a fountain. By poisoning your children and servants, ye poison, it may be, those who are to be the heads of many families, and thereby spread, or at least contribute your utmost toward the spreading, destruction through the world, and that to all succeeding generations.

Finally, That I may shut up this use of reproof, we shall put all the four sorts of persons we have named together,

together; and we have a fourfold heavy charge against them.

1. We say, ye are guilty of horrid *cruelty*. He that doth not what in him lies for preventing sin in his neighbour, hates him, in God's account, in his heart: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him," Lev. xix. 17. And he that hates his brother in the least degree, is by our Lord accounted a murderer, and adjudged to punishment, Matth. v. 21. Now, according to this law, and righteous it is, ye are guilty of dreadful cruelty, not against an enemy, but against your friends; not against your neighbour, but your own children; not against their bodies, but their souls. To neglect a due care of them, is to murder their souls; and verily ye have the blood of their souls on you.

2. Ye are guilty of the most horrid *perjury*. How oft have some of you sworn, with hands lifted up to the most high God, before many witnesses, to serve the Lord, to worship him? Every child ye have baptised, ye solemnly vowed to serve the Lord, and to cause your houses to do so. But all the vows of God cannot tie you. Well, the time hastens on apace, when the breach of solemn vows of this nature will fall heavy upon you, and the Lord will avenge the quarrel of his covenant. And surely this will end in your utter destruction.

3. Ye are guilty of *denying the faith*, and are indeed worse than infidels, "But if any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. v. 8. Now, sure, if he who neglects the care of his house in temporals be guilty of this, much more he who is guilty this way in spirituals.

4. Ye are guilty of an horrid *rejection* of the Lord and his yoke, in that, (1.) Ye will not stoop to his authority in all his commands. (2.) In that ye openly contemn his authority, before children, and servants, and sojourners. And, (3.) Ye induce others to do the like,

like, and, at least by your example, do encourage others to condemn the Lord ; and that such as are most likely to be swayed by it, and even such as you are especially bound to train up in the Lord's service.

Now, surely, when these four are taken together, as they are ground of a just reproof ; so they will, if repentance prevent not, be a just ground for a terrible sentence in the great day ; and therefore consider of it in time, and betake yourselves to the Lord by the exercise of repentance. But this I leave.

Use 4. Of exhortation. It now only remains, that we improve this truth in a way of exhortation. Is it so, that such as are themselves sincerely religious will be conscientiously careful to maintain family-religion ? Then surely all, as they would not be thought either irreligious, or unsound in religion, are obliged to maintain family-religion.

Masters of families, I shall here address you in a matter of the highest concernment to your souls, and those of your family : Set up family-religion : make conscience of it in all its parts ; and be in earnest in this matter, we beseech and obtest you. For,

1st, The Lord commands you to do so. The authority of God, enjoining it in all its parts, will be motive enough to any who have subjected themselves unto the Lord, taken his yoke upon them, and surrendered themselves to his conduct. I need not stand to mention particular testimonies for proof of this, having already done it in the doctrinal part of this discourse : I shall only add that one exhortation of Moses, the man of God, to the people of Israel, " Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life ; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons sons," Deut. iv. 9.

2^{dly}, For your upstirring to this duty consider, that, as the whole of religion is a reasonable service, so this in particular is highly so. The Lord demands nothing that can be denied ; and to disobey him is the most unreasonable wickedness, and the height of injustice.

1. Surely

I. Surely there is nothing more reasonable than *family-instruction*. Dost thou think it reasonable to feed and cloath thy children and servants, and is it not fully as much reasonable that thou shouldest instruct them in the things that belong to their everlasting peace? Sure it is. But to clear this yet a little farther, take only these few particulars to consideration.

(1.) Your children are all born ignorant, like the wild ass's colt, Job xi. 12. Children, as when born they know not the ways and means of maintaining themselves in natural life, so they are ignorant of all that concerns their spiritual life. Nor can they understand how to live, without they be taught, far less how to provide for the life of their souls.

(2.) As they have not knowledge, so this their want of it must be ruining to them, if not made up by reasonable instruction: that the soul be without knowledge is not good. A man cannot be without the knowledge of what concerns the present life, without considerable prejudice; far less without the knowledge of those things that concern the life of his soul: "The Lord comes in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 8.

(3.) Some one or other, therefore, must instruct your families in the knowledge of God, else they perish eternally. Knowledge of these things is absolutely necessary, and how can they get this, unless somebody teach them? Nay, I may say, not only is instruction requisite, but a considerable care and diligence is necessary. Religion and the truths that concern it, are not all to be learned at one lesson. Nay, but it will require frequent instructions: precept must be upon precept, line upon line, and here a little and there a little. There must be a speaking of the things of God, when we go out and when we come in, when we sit down and when we rise up, as it is enjoined, Deut. vi. 6. &c. if we would have them to stick. So dull is man, that he is not taught the easiest arts or sciences without great pains, much less is it then to be expected, that he should

should learn supernatural and divine truth, without much care about his instruction.

(4.) As children want naturally the knowledge of God, which yet they must have or perish, and which they cannot obtain without they be instructed; so none are in such case, and so much concerned to instruct them, as parents. For, [1.] None are so nearly related to them as parents are. Man, woman, what is thy child but a piece of thyself? And who so much concerned to have every thing that is needful provided for thee, as thou thyself art and ought to be? [2.] None have such a fair opportunity as thou hast; for it is but little others can be with them, but thou art with them when they lie down and rise up, go out and come in, and so hast the most proper opportunities for this end. [3.] None else has such access to know the temper of children and servants; and this goes a great way in the instruction of children and others. They who know their tempers and capacities are in best case to deal with them. [4.] None are like to prevail so far with them, because none has such an interest in their affections. The more we love the master, the better will his lesson be learned. [5.] None are like to be so much the better for it, if thy children and servants be instructed in the way of the Lord, as thou. To whom will the profit, whom will the comfort come? Surely to thee: "A wise son maketh a glad father," Prov. x. 1. [6.] None are so much concerned, because none are like so to smart by, if thy children or servants miscarry: "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother," Prov. x. 1. And frequently, a son that causeth shame is the name given to such. Now, to whom doth he cause shame and sorrow, not to his parents? Surely it is: "For he that begetteth a fool doth it to his sorrow," Prov. xvii. 21. Many other considerations I might add, to shew none so much concerned, nor so much obliged as parents and masters of families, in regard of the dependence of children and servants upon them, and in regard of the access they have to

deal with children before they are prepossessed with prejudices. But I proceed.

2. Nor is *family-worship* less reasonable than family-instruction. For,

(1.) There is in every family, and I may say every day, a visible ground for it in all its parts. Every family is daily loaded with new mercies that are common to all the family, and redound to the advantage of the whole; surely, then, it is but reasonable that there should be an acknowledgement of the Lord as the Author of those mercies; and his goodness should be celebrated in songs of praise. Every day family-sins are committed; and therefore need there is of pardon, of confession, of repentance. Family-wants call still for family-supPLICATIONS; and the snares, dangers, and darkness of the way, require a daily attendance to the word, as the unerring guide of your way.

(2.) As there is daily reason for all the parts of it, so there is a reason for a joint and public performance of all those duties. [1.] All the family are witnesses of the Lord's goodness in his bestowing mercies, of his justice in inflicting strokes, of their own sins, and of their darkness: and therefore we ought publicly and together, to acknowledge God's goodness and justice, and our faith in his mercy and bounty; since if the family are witnesses of the one, they ought to be of the other also. [2.] Since, in your family-care, ye do rejoice for one another, and sorrow with another; since, I say, ye should bear a part with another, both in prayer and praises, there ought to be a public testimony of this, and ye ought to join together for this end.

(3.) Masters of families should undoubtedly acquaint all in their family with the God of their fathers; and no way so effectually for this end, as to bring them all to the Lord in the duties of his own appointment, in which his power and glory are to be seen.

(4.) All who have families should, before the world, acknowledge themselves every way dependent on the Lord, and pledge him in all their ways. And this is the way to answer their duty in this matter.

3. There

3. There is full as good reason for *family-government* as for any of the rest. For,

(1.) To glorify God, and to enjoy him, is the chief end of man, and that which he ought to aim at; as in all other things that he doth, so particularly in entering into family-society. Our families surely, and all our concerns should be so ordered as to contribute some way toward the furtherance of our eternal advantage.

(2.) This end can never be obtained, unless all in the family be tied to walk according to that rule which the Lord has given us as the way toward the enjoyment of himself.

(3.) Any in the family who walk not according to the Lord's will in this matter, they do counteract that which all the family should design; and therefore, if they will persist in that course, they ought to be expelled the family. In a word, to be somewhat more plain, what can be more reasonable, than that all who live in your family, should be obliged to look to the advantage of the family; and that such as will not do so, should be turned out of it? And surely every sin allowed has a visible tendency to bring down ruin on the family: Now this much for the second motive.

3dly, As the Lord's command, and the reasonableness of the thing, should have weight, so I would have you consider next, that this is a path the Lord's people have in all generations trode. If thou expect to have their end, thou must walk in their way, and go by the footsteps of the flock; and surely they will all lead you to a careful attendance upon the Lord in the whole of this duty. To which of the saints will ye turn, if ye mean to countenance yourself in a neglect of this? Sure none of them. You will find godly Abraham, we have frequently cited; Jacob and Joshua, Job and David, we have already mentioned also; and they are followed by the saints in all generations.

4thly, Consider, that a due care for the maintenance of family-religion is necessary. For evincing your sincerity, would ye be satisfied that the world look on you as either void of all religion, or not sound in it? And

what peace do ye, can you promise yourselves, while conscience has this to throw in your teeth, that ye live either in the neglect or superficial performance of a known duty? How can ye satisfy any other, or yourselves, that ye have any regard at all to that sum of the second table of the law, that requires you to love your neighbour as yourself? I say, who will believe that the man will love his neighbour as himself, who loves not his child, his servant? And who will or can justly believe, that thou lovest child or servant, while thou takest no care of their souls? It is impossible that thou canst satisfy either others or yourselves, that ye are in earnest about religion, while ye fail here.

5thly, For thy further excitement, know, that the vows of God are upon you to this matter. Ye are solemnly sworn, not only when ye yourselves were offered to the Lord, but when ye offered your children; and when ye were married also, then ye entered the relation, and then ye engaged to do all the duties that it doth draw after it. Now, can ye bear the reproach of perjury, of breach of solemn vows to the Lord? Now, here there is a signal defect; and here I would put a question to you all who have thus engaged to a performance of all duties. When ye did vow, were ye really resolved to do what ye promised? If not, ye have mocked God after the boldest manner. If ye were then, what has altered your resolution? Mind, God has no pleasure in fools; and the man who shall ascend to the hill of God, is he that sweareth, and changeth not.

6thly, Consider the great advantages which attend conscientious diligence in performing this duty, and that to yourselves, your children, your servants, and the public.

1. I say, Ye shall be gainers. Every part of religion has its own reward: "Godliness is profitable for all things;" and every piece of it is profitable for some valuable end and purpose. Now, this remarkable part of religion is profitable for thyself many ways. For, (1.) In all the duties of family-religion, thou mayest have

have communion with the Lord, “who said not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.” He never bids his people set about any duty, but that wherein he was to be enjoyed. And there are this day on God’s earth some who can say, as in the sight of God, that some of the sweetest opportunities they ever had on earth, were family-occasions ; and that never did they more remarkably enjoy the Lord’s presence, than in family-worship. Some of considerable quality we have known go into eternity, blessing God for family-religion, and others will do so. (2.) It is the way for thee to win souls ; and this is of great advantage to thee : “ He that winneth souls is wise ; and they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever.” And surely, if thou win a soul of a son or servant, thou shalt have the advantage and comfort of it doubly. To have contributed toward the salvation of any, gives much pleasure ; much more to have done so toward the advantage of a child or servant. Again, (3.) If thou art successful, and dost gain them, surely it redounds to thy advantage ; for it will conciliate and engage their affection much to thee, lay a powerful enforcement to obedience on them, and engage them to improve their interest at the throne of grace on your behalf, and procure a blessing from the Lord to thy family. (4.) If they be not engaged, yet thy respect to God, in witnessing for him, and cleaving to him, when tempted by so strong a discouragement as the universal backwardness of thy family is, shall not go without a reward. (5.) Surely, since the Lord, we find, would bless a family for the sake of a religious servant, as we find the Lord blessed Potiphar’s house for Joseph’s sake, Gen. xxxix. 5. and Laban’s house for Jacob’s sake, he will no less, if not more, bless a house on account of a religious master of a family. (6.) It is the true way to obtain honour and respect from the Lord, and even intimacy with him. This put Abraham on God’s secrets, Gen. xviii. 18. When God was to do a great work of justice, he would not conceal it from Abraham, because he was one that would, he knew, make conscience in particular

ticular of this duty. Finally, the true method to make dutiful children and servants, is to engage them to God's way. If once they come to have a due regard for the Lord, they will learn soon to pay a due respect to parents and masters.

2. This family-religion will be no less profitable to thy children; and, ye know, their gain should be accounted gain by you. Every parent should be of John's mind, third epistle, ver. 4. "I have no greater joy, than to hear that my children walk in the truth;" and that particularly because it contributes to their advantage, and that many ways. (1.) It is God's way, the means of his appointment toward their engagement in the Lord's way: "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6. The way to engage them to the Lord, is to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," Eph. vi. 4. And what can be so much to their advantage as peace and acquaintance with God, whereby good shall come to them, in time, and to eternity? (2.) If this be not reached, yet it is a way that will not readily fail of keeping them from running to the same excess of riot with others, whereby they make themselves a disgrace to their parents, and all concerned in them. It would be a check to them, whereby they might be kept from adventuring upon these bold heights that some run to. I remember, the noble Lord Ruffel, son to the Marquis of Bedford, in his speech on the scaffold, July 21. 1683, blesses God for religious education: "For (says he) even when I minded it least, it still hung about me, and gave me checks; and hath now for many years so influenced and possessed me, that I feel the happy effects of it in this my extremity." (3.) Though the advantage may never be seen by you, yet it may lay a foundation for their happiness, when far from you. Good education may be like seeds in the ground, which may lie dead till a shower come, and then it will bud and bring forth fruit. I may be, when thy eyes are shut, and thy children in some far country, God may tryft them with some awakening providence, that
may

may put life in the seed thou hast sown. It is the unhappiness of many in this day, that they are not acquainted with the first principles of religion; and therefore, when evil befalls them afar off, or among persons ignorant of God, whither their wickedness drives them, then there is nothing in them to work upon. Providences that are the most rousing, are like showers falling upon earth, without seed in it, that surely will have no product.

3. We have likewise an inducement to this, from its advantage to servants. Servants are called children in scripture: Naaman's servants call him father, 2 Kings v. 13.; and no doubt a fatherly care there should be of servants. They are undoubtedly at least to come in amongst the first rank of neighbours, whom ye should love as yourself. Now, they have a double advantage. (1.) It is the way to bring them to saving acquaintance with the Lord: "Abraham will command his house after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," Gen. xviii. 11. (2.) It is the way to make him useful as a servant to thee; and what he doth this way is both his advantage and thine. (3.) When he comes to be a master, it is like to engage him to the same course; and this will be not only his, but his posterity's advantage.

4. The advantage of this to the public, both church and state, should invite you. For consider, (1.) Hereby you train up persons fit to serve God and their country faithfully, in public employments, either in church or state. (2.) Hereby ye propose a good example to engage others to those ways that are for the good and honour of the state. They that are good Christians will ever be good subjects. (3.) Thou contributeest a notable part toward the maintenance both of church and state, in as much as thou endeavourest, as far as thy power reaches, to keep the subjects of either of them up in their fear of God, and their duty toward both church and commonwealth.

7thly, On the other hand, consider the sad and lamentable consequences of a neglect in this matter, with respect

respect to your children and servants, yourself and the public.

1. I say, Consider the sad disadvantages with respect unto the children themselves. They are left, (1.) Destitute of that which is most profitable and useful for them in time, and after time; for "godliness is profitable for all things, having the promises of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (2.) They are exposed, as it were, to wild beasts. If you will not educate them in the way of the Lord, the devil and their own corruptions will educate them in the way to hell; if ye will not teach them to pray, the devil will teach them to swear. A young man, void of understanding, is a prey to every destroying lust. See Prov. vii. 6. 7. &c. (3.) Not only so, but hereby they are, as it were, hedged and fenced against both ordinances and providences, through their ignorance of God, and the principles of religion; they can be bettered by neither of them.

2. It is sadly disadvantageous with respect unto the public; for, (1.) The public loses the use and advantage which either church or state might have had by them, if they had been duly educate. Again, (2.) Instead of being helpful, they are hurtful. (3.) Not only hurtful, but even destructive and ruining; for to corrupt a family, is in effect to corrupt a nation; because a family quickly spreads itself, and is like to carry this plague along with it.

3. It is sadly disadvantageous to you: for, (1.) It is not like that your children shall prove, as they otherwise might, the stay and comfort of your old age; it is not probable, that they who have not been dutifully used by you, shall use you dutifully. Lycurgus made a law, that children who were not well educate should not provide for their parents when old. (2.) They are like to procure thee sorrow, in as much as they are like to run to evil, and fall into mischief; which will be so much the heavier to thee, because thou art faulty in it. The Switzers have a law, that, when children are guilty of
any

any capital offence, parents are to be the executioners, to teach that they are to blame in this matter. (3.) They are like, not only to perish, but to sink you with them. They will be as so many millstones tied about your neck, to make you sink the deeper under the wrath of God: and your misery will for ever be increased, by the accession you have had to theirs.

Now, for your help in this duty, I shall conclude with two or three advices.

1. Would ye deal to any purpose in this matter? then be sure that ye be personally religious.

2. Begin early to be so: put off no time, but set about the study of it now.

3. Study much the worth of souls, the worth of children and servants souls.

4. Learn well the meaning of that command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

Finally, Study to be lively in religion, and then ye will go on without constraint.

Now, upon the whole, consider: "And if it seem evil to you this day to serve the Lord, chuse ye whom ye will serve:" but, through grace, the advice I give, I resolve to follow: "But as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."



9 11 66