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A

GUIDE TO CHRIST,

OR,

THE WAY OF DIRECTING SOULS THAT ARE UNDER THE WORK OF

CONVERSION.

COMPILED FOR THE HELP OF

YOUNG MINISTERS,

AND MAY BE SERVICEABLE TO PRIVATE CHRISTIANS, WHO ARE ENQUIRING THE WAY TO ZION.

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WITH AN

EPISTLE PREFIXED,

BY THE

REV. DR. INCREASE MATHER.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

SIXTEEN SHORT SERMONS,

BY A CLERGYMAN OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

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TO THE READER.

THAT *Preparation for Christ* is necessary, before the soul can be united to him by faith, is an undoubted truth. *He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Men must be convinced of their being sinners, or they will not be in bitterness for it: sin must be bitter to them, or they will not forsake it. As long as they love their sins, it is impossible that they should believe on Christ. John v. 44. Nor will they come to Christ for righteousness and life, except they have an *humbling sense* of their own unrighteousness, Rom. x. 3. These are truths which cannot be denied. But whether there is any *preparatory work*, which is saving before faith, has been controverted among divines. My learned tutor, (whom for honor's sake I mention) Mr. NORTON, (once a famous teacher in Boston) in his *Orthodox Evangelist*,* has elaborately proved the negative, with whom the worthy author of the *ensuing discourse* does concur. It has been an error (and a *tyrannical* one) in some preachers, that they have made their own particular experiences a standard

* Chap. 8.

for all others. When as God is pleased to use a great variety in bringing his elect home to Christ, although conversion as to the substance of it, is the same in all, that are brought into a state of salvation. Some have experienced such terrors, and distress of conscience, as others have not been acquainted with, who nevertheless are true believers on Christ. To that question, *What measure of preparatory work is necessary to conversion?* Mr. NORTON* answers judiciously, *As the greatest measure has no necessary connexion with salvation, so the least measure puts the soul into a preparatory capacity, or ministerial next disposition to the receiving of Christ. There is not the like degree of humiliation in all those that are converted, for some feel a greater measure of trouble, others a lesser, but all that are truly converted, are humbled.* Nor can it be determined how long a man must be held under fears and terrors, before he is truly converted. To affirm, that men must be so many years or months under a spirit of bondage, before they can believe on Christ, is contrary to the experience of many pious souls, and to the scriptures. The *preparatory work* of the converts mentioned in the sacred writings, was not of long continuance. That super-eminent divine, Dr. THOMAS GOODWIN,† observes, *That a man may be held too long under* John

* *Orthod. Evang.* p. 160, 161.
† In his Preface before Mr. HOOKER of Preparation.

Baptist's *water*, and that some have urged too far, and insisted too much on that, *as preparatory*, which includes the beginning of true faith. Such authors as have asserted, that men cannot be sincere converts, except they have been some considerable time under great legal terrors, have caused groundless fears and perplexity in the minds of many gracious souls, for the relief of whom, Reverend Mr. FIRMIN published an excellent book, entitled, *The Real Christian.* Very often the children of godly parents, who have had a religious education, and been kept from all scandalous sins, that wound and waste the conscience, have been favored with an *easy*, as well as with an *early* conversion: the seed of grace has sprung up in their hearts, *they know not how*, Mat. iv. 27. So as that, although they can say, as the blind man restored to his sight did, *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see*, yet the particular time they cannot account for. *It is* (says Mr. NORTON*) *our duty to bless God, that we are converted, and not groundlessly to afflict ourselves about the time of our conversion.* And he cites Mr. PEMBLE, whose words are, *To tell the month, day, or hour, wherein they were converted, is in most converts impossible; in all, of exceeding difficult observation; though I deny not, but the time may be in some, of sensible mark.*

* Ubi supra: p. 162.

That eminent man of God, Mr. BAXTER,* relates, that he was once at a meeting of many Christians, as eminent for holiness, as most in the land, of whom divers were ministers of great fame, and it was desired that every one of them would give an account of the *time* and *manner* of his conversion, and there was but one of them all, that could do it. And, (says he) *I aver from my heart, that I neither know the day, nor the year, when I began to be sincere.* Nevertheless, for the most part, they, that have been great sinners, are not converted without dreadful terrors of conscience. Our great HOOKER (of whom Dr. GOODWIN says, that if any man, in this age, came in the spirit of *John Baptist*, HOOKER was the man) his *Doctrine*† will be found a sad truth, viz. *That as for gross, and scandalous sinners, God usually exercises them with heavy breakings of heart, before they are brought to Christ.* Especially it is so, if the Lord intends to make use of them in great services for his name. *Saul* (afterwards *Paul*) had a terrible conversion, although he was not long in the pangs in the new-birth. The like has not been noted of *Luther*. Famous Mr. ROGERS,‡ of *Dedham*, had been very extravagant in his youth. Mr. RICHARD ROGERS, of *Weathersfield*, who was his kinsman, helped to maintain him at the University, where he sold his books, and spent

* Of Infant Baptism, p. 129, and 133. † Sermons on Acts ii. 37.
‡ See Mr. FIRMIN's Real Christian.

the money, so that his kinsman and patron would have utterly cast him off, had not the entreaties of a near relation prevailed with him, to try him once again. When he saw what a wonderful change converting grace had made on his young kinsman, he would often say, *I will never despair of a man for* JOHN ROGERS's *sake.* God designed, that this very ungodly youth, should be made a great instrument of glory to his name, and of good to many of his elect. He was bruised to no purpose under the hand of the Almighty. Great were the terrors of his soul for some time, when he would get alone under bushes in the field, praying, and crying to God for mercy. When he was converted, it is thought he was an instrument of converting more souls, than any one minister in England. He was inspired with an extraordinary zeal; had a way of delivering himself in his Sermons, which in any other man would have been ridiculous, but in him was very becoming, and awful; which made Bishop BROWNING say to Mr. WARD, JOHN ROGERS *will do more with his wild note than we shall do with all our set music.* But this is God's usual method, with such of his elect, as have fallen into great sins; he brings them home by great terrors. For the confirmation of this, I might have instanced in Mr. BOLTON, whose excellent books have made him famous in the Church of God. Before his conversion he was very wicked. He loved

stage-plays, cards and dice; was an horrible swearer, Sabbath-breaker, a boon companion, that neither loved God, nor good men; he hated *puritanical preaching*. Hearing the fame of Mr. PERKINS, he went to Cambridge to hear him preach, and having heard him, said, *he was a barren empty fellow, and a passing mean scholar*. This man, after his conversion, was an eminent saint, and a successful Minister of Jesus Christ. But the manner of his conversion was terrible. His sins were so heavy upon him, that he roared for anguish of heart, would sometimes rise out of bed in the night for very anguish of spirit; and to augment his misery, he was afflicted with grievous temptations, *horribilia de Deo, terribilia de fide*. These heart-piercing sorrows continued for many months. They issued in a *sound conversion*.

There have been some, who have maintained, that a man is not sufficiently *prepared for Christ*, except he be brought to that pass, as out of respect to the will and glory of God, to be *content to be damned eternally*. An horrid assertion, justly disclaimed by the author of this discourse, and refuted by the *Orthodox Evangelist*,* yet there are some unhappy passages of that nature, in a book of *humiliation*, which goes under Mr. HOOKER's name, by which, incredible wrong has been done to that great author. It may be, it will be to the satis-

* Chap. vii. p. 151.

faction of some readers, to see what Dr. GOODWIN has written concerning Mr. HOOKER's books, about *preparation for Christ*, who, in his Epistle prefixed to Mr. HOOKER's Sermons on Acts ii. 37. has these words: *There has been published long since many parts, and pieces of this author, upon this argument, sermon-wise, preached by him here in* England, *yet having been taken by an unskilful hand, upon his recess into these remoter parts of the world, was bold, without his privity or consent, to print and publish them (one of the greatest injuries that can be done to any man) it came to pass his genuine meaning, and this in points of so high a nature; and in some things different from the common opinion, was diverted in those printed Sermons, from the fair, and clear draught of his own notions and intentions, because so utterly deformed, and misrepresented in multitudes of passages, and in the rest, but imperfectly and crudely set forth.* That which the Doctor says is a sufficient vindication of the renowned name of Mr. HOOKER, from the reflections cast upon him on the account of some rude expressions in those books pretended to be his, which were never printed with his allowance. The like is to be said with reference to some passages in Mr. SHEPARD's *Sincere Convert*, which have occasioned great disquietment in some godly minds, and made them afraid to believe on Christ, when deeply sensible of their misery without

him. Concerning which book Mr. SHEPARD, in a letter to Mr. FIRMIN, dated *December* 27, 1647,* expresses himself thus: *That which is called the* Sincere Convert, *I have not the book; I once saw it, it was a collection of such notes in a dark town in* England, *which one procuring of me, published them without my will or privity; nor do I like to see it. He that published it, confesseth it came out altered from what was first written.*

It is usual with *new converts* to be molested with fears lest they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. I am far from being of Dr. TILLOTSON's opinion, who supposeth, that none in those days are, or can be guilty of that sin, nor any besides those, who were eye-witnesses of the miracles wrought by our Saviour Christ. I rather concur with Dr. COLLINGS, whose words are, *Give me leave to speak my fears. I profess they are my thoughts, that we live in an age as full of persons, that have sinned that sin, that shall never be forgiven, as any age ever was, since our Lord was on the earth.* Are there not many in our days, who, having been once enlightened, have not only sinned against the light of their education, but are become malignant haters of those holy truths, and ways of God, in which they were initiated, and malicious persecutors of all such, as profess the true and pure gospel? Do not such sin wilfully after

* See the Real Christian, p. 214. Discourse of Providence, p. 559.

they have received the knowledge of the truth? And have they not done despite to the Spirit of Grace? As for such as are troublrd with groundless fears of their having been guilty of that sin, the Reverend author of the discourse emitted herewith, has therein offered that, which may ease and satisfy their disquieted consciences. Mr. BAXTER notwithstanding the dispute which had been between him and Mr. TOMBS about Pædo-Baptism, after that wrote a Commendatory Epistle before a learned book of Mr. TOMBS's against the Papists.

It is known that in some points (not fundamentals in religion) I differ from this beloved author; nevertheless, (as when there was a difference of opinion between JEROM and AUSTIN) JEROM said for all that, *I cannot but love Christ in* AUSTIN; so do I say concerning my brother STODDARD. And I pray the Lord to bless this, and all his holy labors for the conversion, and salvation of many of God's elect.

INCREASE MATHER.

Boston, Nov. 15, 1714.

PREFACE.

THE work of *Regeneration* being of absolute necessity unto salvation, it greatly concerns ministers especially, in all ways possible to promote the same; and in particular, that they guide souls aright who are under a work of *preparation:* some there be that do deny any necessity of the *preparatory* work of the spirit of God, in order to a closing with Christ, this is a very dark cloud, both as it is an evidence that such men have not the experience of that work in their own souls: and as it is a sign that such men are utterly unskilful in guiding others that are under this work; if this *opinion* should prevail in the land, it would give a deadly wound to religion, it would expose men to think themselves converted when they are not: if men do understand that there is a work of *humiliation* before faith, then, if they get some common affections, love, sorrow, delight, yea, and a common faith too, they will say these are not of the right kind; for men must see the plague of their own hearts, their helplessness, and that they are like *clay in the hand of the potter*, before they come to

Christ, and so will be afraid, and be searching of themselves; but if they do not know any necessity of preparation, they will take the first appearance of holiness for holiness; and if they find religious affections in themselves they will grow confident that God has wrought a good work in them. It would likewise expose them to bolster up others in false confidence. A man that knows there must be a work of preparation, will be careful how he encourages others that they are in Christ, he will inquire how God has made way for their receiving of Christ; but another that is a stranger to it, will be ready to take all for gold that glisters, and if he sees men religiously disposed, will be speaking peace to them, he will be like the false prophets, saying, *peace, peace, when there is no peace:* so men will be hardened, it is a dismal thing to give men sleepy notions; and make them sleep the sleep of death.

The truth of this opinion is much to be suspected from what has been left on record to the contrary, by HILDERSHAM, PERKINS, DODD, SIBBS, BAINS, DIKE, BALL, PRESTON, HOOKER, SHEPARD, NORTON, and others of the like stamp, whose judgment in matters of this nature does outweigh the judgment of thousands of others, though otherwise learned men: but, besides this, there is a great deal of light held forth in the Word of God

in this matter. I will not argue from Israel's being led by Moses the Lawgiver out of Egypt, through *a land of pits and drought and fiery flying serpents*, before they were brought into the land of Canaan by Joshua; nor from the *legal* dispensation of the *covenant of grace* foregoing the *evangelical;* nor from John Baptist's being sent as a *forerunner of Christ to prepare the way of the Lord:* nor from the *parable of the Prodigal*, being in want, and becoming a servant *of* a *citizen of the country before he returned to his father;* nor from the *dry bones* being in a disconsolate condition, before God put life into them. These things may be better made use of for *illustrations* than *proofs*.

But there are other scriptures which hold forth, that there must be PREPARATION for Christ before our closing with him: it does appear by INSTANCES recorded in the Scripture. One is of Paul, Acts ix. 4, 5. he was terrified, in way of preparation, to his receiving of Christ, and about the same time was led to the understanding of his own helplessness, Rom. vii. 9. Another is of the jailor, Acts xvi. 29, 30, 31. he was greatly scared lest he should fall short of salvation; and since we have such instances, and none to the contrary, we may judge that this is God's method in converting sinners.

It also appears from such DOCTRINES as are held forth in the Scripture: as that

some sinners are *near the Kingdom of God*, and others are far from it: Mark xii. 34. this shews that some men are in a more prepared way, and more hopeful to receive it than others: so that doctrine that some are not in a present capacity to come to Christ, because under the *power of a carnal design*: John v. 44. this shews that men must be broken off from their carnal designs before they come to Christ: so the doctrine of the *difficulty of getting into a state of salvation*. Matt. vii. 13. Luke xiii. 24. this shews that there be many difficulties in the way of conversion; and that, by striving, they may get into a nearer preparedness for faith.

It also appears by that PROPHECY of our Saviour, where it is foretold that God will first *prepare* men, and then *bring* them to Christ, John xvi. 8. here it is foretold what method the Spirit will take with men; he will not reveal the *righteousness of Christ*, to men in the first place; in order to this, he *convinces them of sin*, makes them see their danger and miserable condition: first he searches the wound, and then applies the remedy: it appears also, by the *particular application of the call of the Gospel to those that are prepared*. Sometimes the *call* is propounded *generally* to all, but at other times it is propounded *particularly* to such as are *in distress by reason of their sins*; that see themselves miserable and undone. Matt. xi. 38. Isa. lv.

1. Rev. xxii. 17. the call is applied particularly to these, as being in the next capacity to give entertainment unto it: intimating the condition that men must be in before they do receive it.

EXPERIENCE also gives considerable light in this matter; we learn by *experience*, that Men's hearts are generally set for carnal things before they are terrified, and for their own righteousness before they see their own hearts. Generally such men as have not had the *terrors of God* in them, don't much mind *eternal things*; if they be not rude and vicious, yet they are worldly, vain and proud, Eph. ii. 3. And such convinced sinners as have not been led into the *understanding of their hearts*, are set to build up a righteousness of their own, they are taking encouragement from their frames, with a neglect of Christ. *Experience* also shews that many men highly reputed of for religion, have had a work of preparation. Many men that have a special interest in the hearts of others, can give a fair account how they have been prepared for Christ: and many professors that have not had such experience have not proved well. Several, that have had some light touches of conviction, though they have made a blaze a while, yet have proved themselves carnal men at last; or at least have rendered themselves much suspected. Many that have been strangers to the work of preparation

have cracked their credit at last, Matth. xii. 20, 21. Yea, many godly people do know that they were hypocrites, and never saw Christ, till after they had a *work of humiliation*: they know they were not godly, though they have affections, enlargements and encouragements; it was all common work, and they had no spark of grace in them; their religion was but the fruit of nature improved, Rom. vii. 9. Yea, this is exceeding *agreeable to REASON*; the light of nature cannot give a demonstration of it: for it is a voluntary dispensation; there is no necessity in nature of any preparation before the infusion of GRACE. Christ changed the water into wine, and raised the dead to life, without any previous preparation; so he can do in this case. The work of preparation does not make the work of the new creation the easier; for after men have a work of preparation, sin reigns in them as much as before; preparation does not at all destroy the principle; and men, when prepared, can do nothing to help God in planting grace in them, and men, that are not prepared, can do nothing to hinder God in implanting grace: but yet it is very agreeable to reason, that the spirit do a work of preparation, before it does infuse grace: for it is the duty of ministers to preach such things to sinners as are proper to work this preparation; they are bound to preach the *threatenings of the law*, man's *insufficiency*,

and God's *sovereignty*: Yea, the manner of God is to deal with men after the manner of men. Man is a rational creature, and therefore God deals with him in a moral way, sets convictions before him. Men would make enemies submit, before they pardon them; so does God. Besides, it is the *duty of the sinner* to do those things wherein preparation does consist; it is their duty to *seek to God*, to *reform*, and to *make an absolute resignation* of themselves to God. No wonder then if God holds them to it; yea further, there is an *absolute necessity in nature*, that men be *prepared* before the *exercise of faith*; Men cannot exercise faith, till the heart be prepared by a *sense of danger*, and the *insufficiency of other things*. If they don't see their danger, they can see no occasion that they have come to Christ: if they don't see themselves liable to wrath, how can they come to Christ to save them from wrath? As long as they imagine that they can help themselves, they will not come to Christ for help: Men can't trust in Christ alone, till driven out of themselves; they cannot come as helpless and undone, until they see themselves so, Phil. iii. 3.

And seeing there is such a work of *preparation* foregoing men's *closing with Christ*, it must needs be of great consequence for awakened sinners to be guided aright under this work. If men have the best guides, yet they may miscarry, but undoubtedly many do

perish for want of suitable help; some after they have been in trouble a while, do grow *discouraged*, under apprehensions that their seeking will be in vain, and so leave off endeavoring after a converted estate. Some *wander* up and down under fears and hopes as the children of Israel in the wilderness, until they die: they cannot be quiet in a way of sin, neither can they find the way of deliverance; and many others, after a little trouble, are *comforted* under a notion of being at peace with God. Unskilful *surgeons* make a palliate cure, and persuade them that the bitterness of death is past: multitudes of souls perish through the ignorance of those that should guide them in the way to heaven: men are nourished up with vain hopes of being in a state of salvation, before they have got half the way to Christ.

Those therefore whose business it is to lead souls to Christ, had need furnish themselves with skill and understanding to handle wounded consciences in a right manner, that they may be serviceable to them in their distresses; who would venture his ship with an unskilful pilot? who would venture his wounded body with an unskilful surgeon? who would willingly put his distressed soul into the hands of an unskilful minister? Men should not satisfy themselves with other points of learning, but labor after that *that they may speak words in SEASON to every one that is weary*;

that, as Moses said to his father-in-law, they *may be instead of eyes to them that are in the wilderness.*

There are two things especially serviceable to this end.

One is, that they *get experience of this word in their own hearts:* If they have no experience, they will be but *blind guides;* they will be in great danger to entertain false notions concerning a *work of conversion:* they will be inclinable to think that there is not so much necessary as is in order to conversion; they are in danger to be deceived with pretences of men's being delivered from their own righteousness, with shews of humiliation, faith and love. Whatever books men have read, there is great need of *experimental* knowledge in a minister; many particular things will occur that he will not meet withal in books: it is a great calamity to wounded consciences, to be under the direction of an unexperienced minister.

The *other* is, *to be acquainted with the observations of those who have travelled much in this work:* If a man have experience in his own soul, that will not reach all cases that may come before him; there is great variety in the workings of the Spirit, and in the workings of men's hearts under the convictions of the Spirit; and men, that have had to do with many souls in their distresses, may afterward meet with such difficulties as may puzzle them

very much; therefore it is of great use to get the knowledge of the observations of those who have had to do with great variety of cases, whereby they may get a larger understanding how to manage themselves, when things are difficultly circumstanced.

This small *Treatise*, composed upon the desire of some *younger ministers*, is offered to the consideration of such as do desire to be further instructed in the right way of dealing with distressed souls: and if the author shall be hereby the instrument of the salvation of any perishing souls, he shall count his labor well bestowed.

DIRECTIONS

HOW TO GUIDE SOULS THROUGH THE WORK OF

CONVERSION.

WHEN a sinner *wounded in spirit*, does apply himself unto a minister of the gospel for counsel, it is profitable, after some *inquiries* concerning the time, means and degree of their convictions and terrors to use this *method* with him,

1. To confirm and establish him more in the apprehensions of the *dangerousness of a natural condition:* shewing him that every man that dies in a state of nature, will certainly be damned, that a state of damnation is intolerable; that the continuance of his opportunities for deliverance is very uncertain: for there is danger that if his convictions be not cherished, they may by degrees wear off: many men's terrors are but short-liv'd: they harden their hearts by company, clogging themselves with worldly business, and their natural disposition to flatter themselves.

2. To encourage him to be *in the use of means, in order to his conversion:* for if they have not hopes of obtaining mercy; either they will not seek after it, or they will do it in such a careless and dull way that it will come to nothing: God leads men through the whole work of *preparation* partly by *fear*, and partly by *hope*. If they run into either extreme, to have fear without hope, or hope without fear, they are like a ship that goes beside the channel, and is in danger to be broken to pieces; a mixture of fear and hope makes men diligent: they may be encouraged from such considerations as these: that God has provided a glorious way of salvation through Christ, that all that do believe in him shall be saved; that there is an infinite ocean of mercy in the heart of God; that God has had compassion on many greater sinners than they, that the day of grace is not yet gone; that God is now striving with them by his Spirit, which is many times the forerunner of conversion.

3. To *direct him what course to take at present:* As,

1. *Daily to seek to God in secret.* As this is a duty, so a special means to cherish the motions of God's spirit in his heart: if this be neglected, it would be no wonder if his convictions should die away: he is also to be directed, not to content himself in putting up some good requests to God, but he should open his case plainly before God, as he would

to a *physician* if he were sick: this is a way to keep him from wandering thoughts in prayer, and further to affect his own soul with his condition. Isa. lv. 6. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.*

2. To *reform his life*, and not to indulge himself in any sins of omission or commission; in any external sins, nor in doing good actions in a sinful manner: men that are seeking salvation, must not allow themselves to go on in a way of damnation: that terror is not sufficient that will suffer men to live in an unreformed life: if men be thoroughly scared, they will dread doing what wounds their consciences; *fear of hell* will make men *afraid to sin:* if they be thoroughly wounded, those temptations that formerly carried them away, will be overcome, Luke xiii. 10, 12, 14.

3. *To lay himself open to the convictions of the spirit.* Sometimes men are desirous to be convinced and terrified, but not so much, they would over-rule their convictions as to time and degree; but as a *patient* leaves himself in the hand of the *surgeon*, so should they in the hand of the *spirit*, when it pleases him, and as much as it pleases him, not *shutting their eyes against the light*, John iii. 20.

After the awakened sinner has been using means a while, he oftentimes gives an *account of some* ALTERATION; he finds some affections, sorrow for sin, delight in sabbaths, love to the people of God, love to reading of

the scripture: What is to be said to him in this case?

1. He is to be told, that *he must not rest in ease, but labor after healing.* If a wise man by applying plaisters to a sore be delivered from much of the anguish that he was in, he will not satisfy himself with that, and give over the use of means, lest the anguish should return again; so the sinner had need be careful that he do not satisfy himself in the ease of his conscience, but must get it healed by *the application of the blood of Jesus Christ.*

2. It is *extremely dangerous* to tell him, that *it is hopeful God has put the seeds of grace into him.* There is not one in a thousand but does experience such religious affections long before he is converted; these religious affections are nothing else but the workings of self-love and natural conscience; natural conscience discovers the danger of sin, and somewhat of the baseness of it, hence he is sorry for it; the man conceives some hope that by praying, reading, &c. he shall get salvation, hence he delights in them; the man hopes that he has accepted of God, hence he has some affections to him; and if a minister does but speak encouragingly as if the man were converted, he lays a foundation for his ruin; for he is in great danger to fall in with the flattery.

3. He is to be warned against a *self-righteous spirit.* Men are exceeding ready to

think that their good works and religious frames will abate the fierce anger of God, and incline God to pity them, and have mercy on them: they are proud of their services, ignorant of the *righteousness of Christ*, and of the freedom of God's mercy; they think God cannot love them unless they be lovely, and that he cannot but love them if they be lovely, and so they are ready to doat upon their own righteousness, Rom. x. 3. *They go about to establish their own righteousness;* therefore the man is to be warned against this, and light is to be held forth to him, to convince him of the insufficiency thereof.

4. He may be put upon to *examine these affections*, whether they be not in hypocrisy; and *signs* may be given to him, whereby he may discern them to be so; but there had need be great care that the *signs be sound*, and warranted by the *word of God;* otherwise he is in danger to be established in his mistake.

Quest. 1. *Are sinners that are awakened to be directed to labour to work up their hearts to sincere sorrow for sin, and love to God and Jesus Christ?*

Answ. 1. If their terrors are great, they are ready of themselves to labor to do this, from a *self-righteous spirit;* that they may win the heart of God, and assuage his anger, they commonly take a great deal of pains in order thereto, that they may work up gra-

cious qualifications in themselves; they set spiritual considerations before themselves, read and hear, and use all the methods that are in their power, to cultivate their own hearts.

2. It is a *presumptuous thing* for them to strive for this, for it is impossible for them to work up such things in their own hearts; they are dead in sins, and cannot sanctify themselves; no principle that they have, will produce such an effect; *fear* will not make them do it, the fear of hell cannot make men hate sin more than hell: *self-love* will not make them love God above themselves: they cannot by *consideration* work any such effect upon their hearts, for they do not *understand spiritual things: encouragements* will not make them do it, for it is beyond their power: *resolutions* will be ineffectual, they may as easily remove mountains as to do this; therefore it is they should not strive to work their own hearts to it.

3. There can be no benefit of such direction but only this, that they may *find by experience their own inability;* that, after they have done their utmost, they may by their experience understand their own helplessness: it is *the duty of men to love God, and to repent of sin;* and it is the duty of sinners *to labor that they may love God, and repent of sin*, &c. but it is not in their power to work up their hearts to the love of God, and godly sorrow; they should labor to be convinced, *they cannot do it.*

Sometimes it is much to be suspected, that they do *not reform all that is amiss:* and in this case;

1. The *danger of a natural condition* is to be solemnly set before them; though their terrors seem to be great, yet they need to be greater; men must have so much terror as to bring them to a separation from sin: therefore there is need to represent their danger in the most lively and dreadful way, that the sense thereof may pierce their heart deeply; if they be but thoroughly scared, they will be brought to an universal reformation; Isa. ii. 20, 21.

2. They are to be urged to *reformation:* their duty in this matter is to be particularly pressed upon them, their consciences must be stirred to part with all sin, as Christ urges the Jews, Mat. v. 29. *If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out.* For the neglect of reformation will put a stop to the work, and they will not get forward in the work of *humiliation*, till they are reformed; as the first concoction prepares for the second, so reformation does for humiliation: men must overcome the next and more *immediate* difficulties before they overcome those that are *remote:* he that will not part with sinful practices, will not yield himself into the hands of justice: if they do not reform, they put the work to a stand; yea, such men do aggravate their own sorrows, for trouble will lie upon them, till their hearts are brought to be humbled, and their terrors will

be multiplied, if they belong to God, till they are persuaded to reform: Ps. xxxii. 3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day.*

Sometimes some *particular sin* lies exceeding heavy upon his heart. In this case the minister may tell him,

1. That it is not his duty in ordinary cases *to publish such sin to him*, it is fit he should confess it to God; but ordinarily there is no just occasion to publish a scandal to him; it is best that secret sins be kept secret, except the circumstances of the person do call for the making of it known.

2. That the *sin is pardonable:* This he may demonstrate from several examples in the scripture; from the sufficiency of Christ's redemption; from several offers and promises of the gospel, that the man's heart may not sink with discouragement.

3. That in case the rule does call for *any satisfaction to men*, he must not delay that, but that must be attended as soon as there is opportunity; if he can make satisfaction without confession, there is no necessity for confession; for satisfaction answers for the wrong that has been done to a man.

4. That he must not be sensible of that *sin only*, but *of all other sins;* every sin being provoking to God, and deserving damnation; and particularly that his impenitency and unbelief is more dangerous than any former act

of sin: John iii. 19. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.*

Sometimes after the man has been in trouble a while, before he has any great experience of his own heart, he has *some promises come to him with a great deal of refreshing:* and he hopes God has accepted him; in this case the minister may tell him,

1. That it is a *common thing* for God to give *encouragements* unto men, before they are carried through the work of conversion; that as God gives them encouragements by his *word*, so he does many times by his *spirit:* God always maintains in the hearts of sinners, that are seeking of him, some hopes that they may obtain mercy: and sometimes he gives them very great refreshing, by some sense of the glory of heaven, Luke xiv. 15. by some superficial discoveries of Christ, Matth. xiii. 20. thereby holding forth some promises before them, the design whereof is to draw them on a way of seeking, and to support them under their temptations.

2. That God *never gives a faith of assurance*, before he gives *a faith of dependance;* for he never manifests his love till men are in a state of favour and reconciliation, which is by a faith of dependance. When men have comfortable scriptures come to them, they are apt to take them as tokens of God's love: but men must first be brought into

Christ, by accepting the offer of the gospel before they are fit for such manifestations. God's method is first to make the soul accept of the offers of grace, and then to manifest his good estate unto him.

3. That if his comfort be not of the right kind *it will not continue:* and usually after such encouragements, men's terrors are wont to return with as much violence as ever. God commonly intermingles *smiles* and *frowns*, and if such vain confidences as men took up from refreshing scriptures, be but nipped in the bud, they generally wither away; and their fears return as strong as ever.

When the sinner that was hoping he was in a good estate, because some refreshing scriptures came to him, sees his mistake, he is in *danger to be discouraged.* In this case he may be told,

1. That it is a *common thing* for persons that are afterwards converted, *to pass through such changes:* it is not a peculiar thing to him, but a thing of ordinary experience in such people as God is about to deliver out of a natural state. They commonly have some lightsome times, and then returns of darkness: there was no reason to expect that that should last very long; such comforts are like Jonah's gourd, that rise in a night, and perish in a night.

2. That it is a *great mercy that those con-*

fidences are taken away from him : had they continued, they would have ruined him; false confidence is better lost than kept. His condition is the more hopeful now those confidences are lost; while he had those confidences he was like a ship that stuck in the sand, and now he is delivered from them, there is more ground of encouragement.

After he has had affliction and enlargement *for a while*, he is wont to complain that he grows *more dull*, and he is afraid that his convictions are about to leave him : In this case he may be told,

1. *That there is no reason to expect that his conviction should always be in the like degree.* Persons in such a condition are subject to many alterations, as it is with a ship at sea, sometimes it has a fair wind, sometimes it blows more moderately, sometimes it is becalmed; yea, sometimes it has storms and cross winds : there be many changes that pass over such men. So men in a journey have sometimes good way, sometimes bad; they meet with rivers and miry places, where they cannot make speed.

2. *That he must be very careful that he does nothing to quench the motions of the spirit*, 1 Thes. v. 19. There be many ways whereby men do it, sometimes by discouragement, sometimes by presumption and flattery, sometimes by rebelling against the light, sometimes by *company keeping*. Men,

that are much addicted to company, do commonly lose these convictions; so by crowding themselves with *worldly business:* though diligence be no hindrance, yet cumbering of themselves will be a great impediment to the abiding of convictions.

3. *That it is his best way to improve the convictions that he has.* Sometimes persons are wont to argue, that it will be to no purpose for them to strive. If they have not greater convictions, they shall but tire themselves to no purpose: and they conceive it best for them to tarry till they have stronger convictions: but the *seaman* is wont to hoist his sails, and improve the wind he has, whether it be less or more: if men improve moderate convictions, they may get forward, and do that which will further their conversion: and if they do improve lesser convictions, that is the way to have more: it is their duty to do it, and in that way God owns them; *to him that hath shall be given.* Some, that have complained of the smallness of their convictions, have within a little while changed their note, and complained as much of the greatness of them, that they have been such, that they could hardly live under them.

A person that is under the work of conversion is subject to many affrightments and *discouraging* TEMPTATIONS, a dreadful sound is in his ears: all such persons have not the same temptations, and they have

them not in any certain order: but care must be taken to give suitable support, and advice to them according to the *variety* of their temptations. ONE TEMPTATION is, That he is *not* ELECTED; but God has overlooked him, and appointed him to condemnation; this sometimes lies upon the heart with great weight; in this case he may be told,

1. *That those things, that make him fear that he is not elected, are no certain signs of it, there be no certain tokens of reprobation upon him.* Those things, that he takes to be signs, are very uncertain; the *greatness of his sins* do not argue reprobation: Many, that have been guilty of great sins, have been elected. His being of *elderly years* does not argue it; sometime God turns such to himself, Mal. iv. 5, 6. God's leaving of him still in a natural estate, though he has sought God a long while, does not shew it; *Israel* was a great while travelling from *Egypt* to *Canaan*.

2. *That it is a sinful thing for him to draw any conclusions about his election.* It is a secret reserved in God's own breast, and he cannot determine any thing understandingly about it: Deut. xxix. 29. *Secret things belong unto the Lord our God.* When he undertakes to conclude that he is not elected, he acts presumptuously: his conclusion may be false for ought he knows, he pretends to know what he is ignorant of.

3. *That God's striving with him by his spirit, is an hopeful sign that he is elected, for many times it is the fruit of election.* When the spirit convinces of sin, it is in order to his *convincing of righteousness*, John xvi. 8. This is the course that God is wont to take with those that are elected; frequently he lets reprobates live in security, but he is wont to terrify the elect in order to their conversion; and the more earnestly the man follows after God, and labors to get into a converted condition, the more hopeful it is that God has elected him; for where God has appointed the end, he has appointed the means also.

Another TEMPTATION is, That he has committed the UNPARDONABLE SIN; that he has committed the sin against the *Holy Ghost*, that sin which is *unto death*, he has carried badly after illuminations, and it sinks into him, *that now there is no remedy.*

In this case he may be told, That it has been *a frequent thing for men to fear* that they have committed this sin, who have afterward been converted; that it is *not the manner* of those that have committed that sin, to be perplexed and exercised with fears about it; but the principal way to help in this case, is to *inform him from the word of God*, what this sin is; particularly he may be informed,

1. That it is an *external sin*, not a sin that is committed in the heart; men have some wicked thoughts after enlightenings, and then

fear that they have been guilty of that sin; but that is an outward sin, it is a sin that *other men may see*, 1 John v. 16.

2. That it is a *course of sin*, not any particular act of sin, which a man breaks off from, and is troubled for, but a way of evil that he does continue impenitently in.

3. That it is one particular sort of sin, committed with great aggravations; namely, *a rejecting of the profession of the gospel*: There be many other grievous sins, but none of them, however aggravated, are the *unpardonable sin*; it is a rejecting of the truth of the gospel, and renouncing the profession, therefore they are said to *fall away*, Heb. vi. 6. they are said *to forsake the assemblies of the people of God*, Heb. x. 25. they are said *to tread under foot the son of God*; and *to deny their baptism*, Heb. x. 29. So that if any person among us should turn *papist* or *heathen*, having a blasphemous spirit against the ways of God, and a bloody persecuting spirit towards the people of God, there might be reason to fear that he was guilty of the unpardonable sin; but there be no footsteps in the *scripture* to judge that men that are following after God, and laboring to get into a converted condition, have committed that sin, though they are guilty of much unbelief, of many decays and backslidings, and of very vile thoughts and risings of heart; for multitudes of men that have been guilty of such

things, have had experience afterwards of the pardoning grace of God.

Another TEMPTATION is, *that his day of grace is past;* he had a time when he might have obtained mercy, but he has let it slip, and it is in vain for him to strive: in this case the minister may tell him,

1. *That it is a common device of Satan, when he cannot persuade men that it is too soon, then to persuade them that it is too late.* He is set to hinder men from using of means; and first he tells them *that there is no haste;* and when that temptation will do no longer, then he changes his voice, and tells them that the *season is gone.*

2. *That there is no such doctrine in the scripture that any sort of men's day of grace is past, before the day of life is past, except they be guilty of the unpardonable sin.* It is taught in the scripture, that God will strive with some men only a limited time, and then destroy them, Gen. vi. 3. *My spirit shall not always strive with man, yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.* It is also taught, that God does harden some nations in order to great misery, Isa. vi. 10, 11, and sometimes in order to their *unchurching*, John xii. 40. It is also taught, that God may harden some particular persons before death, and never more strive with them in any remarkable way, Rev. xxii. 11. *Let him that is filthy be filthy still:* but there is no such thing

taught, that there is any sort of men that may be described, or any particular person that may be known unto himself or others, whose day of grace can be said to be past before his death. When men say their day is past, they only fear, they do not know it.

3. *That such scriptures as seem to evidence that their day is past, do not determine any such thing;* it is said, Prov. xxix. 1. *that he, that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed.* But it is evident, that God waits longer upon some persons than upon others: some threatenings are *universal* and some are *indefinite:* shewing what God does many times do; so it is said, Heb. x. 28. *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him;* but the backsliding here spoken of seems to be the *unpardonable sin;* he had been speaking of that, ver. 26. and seems here to have reference to the same sin; for in other cases God does speak encouragingly in his word unto *backsliders*, Jer. iii. 22. Hos. xiv. 4.

Besides the temptations mentioned, there is ANOTHER SORT of temptations that are very exercising to him, his conscience being guilty, he is much subject to frights.

1. One temptation is, that he shall be left to *some great and dreadful sins.* In this case he may be told by the minister,

1. That one special reason of these fears is that he *sees more of the badness of his heart*

than formerly; men under troubles of conscience are wont to see much of the corruption of their heart, and they see that which is sufficient to lead them to all sorts of wickedness; and because God is angry with them, they are afraid he will not keep them, but avenge himself on them, by leaving them to such wickedness.

2. That God is now striving with him in order to his eternal good; God is exercising a great deal of mercy, and he has no cause to conclude that God will so leave him; though God might justly do it, yet he has reason *to hope in God* to preserve him.

3. That it is fit he should be humbled under the sense of the depravedness of his nature, and be sensible of the insufficiency of his own righteousness, to bring him into the favor of God, his heart being a sink of all manner of sin; he can never be justified, but by the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

4. That his best way is to make haste *to get into a converted condition.* If he were once converted, he would not be in so much danger to fall into *great transgressions;* because he would have then an holy principle to resist temptations to sin; and then he would have an interest in the favour of God; and it would be more hopeful that God would preserve them.

2. *Another temptation is,* That he *shall get a false hope,* and so satisfy himself that he is in

a good estate when he is far from it; he understands that it is so with many: Prov. xxx. 12. Rev. iii. 17. In this case the minister may tell him,

1. That he is *indeed in danger of it*, both because of the pride of his spirit, ready to magnify his own performances; and because of his fears of hell, the tediousness of those fears make him ready to catch at any appearances of conversion, and therefore he had need be exceeding careful; it is good for him *to understand what conversion is*, and what *preparation* there must be in order thereunto; and if there be appearances to him at any time as if he were converted, his way is to examine them thoroughly, and get the help of some that are skilful before he settle himself much in that persuasion.

2. That he must *leave himself as to that matter in the hands of God*: it is beyond his own power to deliver himself; if God delight in him, he will carry him through all the difficulties of the work, and shew him the right way; it may be God may have purposes of grace to him, and if so, he will *shew him the path of life*.

3. *Another temptation is*, that *Satan will appear to him*. This is a great terror to him; especially he is possessed with this fear when he withdraws himself to *secret prayers*: sometimes this makes him neglect his duty, some-

times it makes him attend it with distraction. In this case the minister may tell him,

1. That he is *under God's keeping*; and that when he is doing his duty, he is under God's protection. There is less reason to be afraid of *Satan's appearing* at that time, than at many other times; it is not God's manner to suffer Satan to appear at such times.

2. That if Satan had power and liberty to appear to him, it is not probable, that he would fright him with the expectations of it; he would not give such notice of his coming; but his design in terrifying of him, is to prevent him from doing that which might be serviceable to his soul.

3. That it is too much honor to Satan, to be so far out-bid with the temptation, as to change the time of his prayer; but if he cannot attend his duty suitably, and the temptation do prove overbearing to him, it is better to attend the duty by day-light.

I may add to his case *another* that now and then happens, that he says he has heard *some voice*, *seen some shape*, *felt something on him*; this I apprehend at least sometimes to be only the effect of *strong imagination*: a *strong fancy* may make men to imagine such things; as it is with persons in *their dreams*, and with *distracted persons*; all sensation is in the brain, and therefore by some disorder of that, men may think they see, feel, or hear things which they do not see, feel or hear.

4. *Another temptation is*, That it is best *to destroy himself*; many have been urged to this, some have attempted it, and some have performed it, as Judas did. In this case the minister may tell him,

1. *That the Devil is very active in his temptation*, though he has that in his own heart, that may lead him to it; yet it is Satan that stirs him up thereunto. The Devil entered into Judas when he betrayed Christ, and was not gone out of him when he destroyed himself. The Devil has a *double design* in it; *one is* to secure the man, he is afraid he shall lose him, now he is troubled about his condition, and is taking pains for salvation. Satan is jealous lest he will escape out of his hands, and labors to make him destroy himself, that he may presently secure him, then there will be no danger of his running away. *The other design is*, to bring reproach upon trouble of conscience, and discourage others from giving way to convictions. If there be but one such instance in a *town*, that will make many others to stifle convictions, lest they should come to the like end.

2. That there is good reason to hope *that he may obtain salvation*. It is discouragement that leads men to such practices: and if he have but considerable hope of obtaining peace with God, there is not much danger of his hearkening to the temptation; therefore such things may be suggested, as are proper to

bear up his heart, as that the spirit of God is striving with him in order to his salvation; that Satan is afraid he will be saved, that his sins are no other than what God has pardoned oftentimes, and the like.

3. That it is *a dreadful sin to destroy himself.* It is a sin against nature, it is unthankfulness for God's mercy in saving his life; that this far worse than other sins that are very terrifying to him; this is the way to throw himself immediately into endless misery. Whatever may be said of the possibility of the salvation of such persons, there is no reason to think that one in a thousand is saved; this sin is heinous, and quickly cuts off their opportunities: such a man as is tempted to this sin, would be afraid to tell a lie, or to prophane the sabbath; how much more has he reason to fear this sin, which will bring him presently to eternal damnation? It is a poor remedy to deliver himself from anguish, to throw himself into that, which is unspeakably greater; certain damnation is far more dreadful than the fears they are oppressed by: This will make their condition much worse, and not better.

SOMETIMES he complains of a self-righteous spirit; that he is ready to trust to every thing he does: That especially when he feels any affections he is proud of them, and ready to make a righteousness of them: In this case it may be profitable,

1. *To convince him of the insufficiency of his own righteousness to save him:* that his own righteousness will not bring him into favor with God; for his own righteousness is utterly imperfect, and so falls short of what the law requireth. The law stands for perfect obedience, but he never did perform one perfect act of obedience: all his obedience is stained with corruption. Besides, while he is in a natural condition, he does nothing sincerely, but is an hypocrite in all his performances; and accordingly God is so far from justifying of him for the sake of them, that he will not accept of him, but holds him guilty for the sake of them. Besides, his own righteousness has not the nature of satisfaction in it; there can be *no satisfaction for sin but by bearing the curse of the law.* Obedience is a natural debt, and cannot satisfy for his contracted debts; if our obedience would have procured our acceptance, there would have been no need of the death of Christ: Christ's death would be in vain, Gal. ii. 22.

2. *To direct him how to get delivered from this self-righteous spirit,* viz. *by getting an understanding of the badness of his own heart:* for let him hear never so often of the vanity of his own righteousness, yet he will trust to it, till he sees he has none, and can get none. A thorough discovery of his own heart will break him off from trusting in himself; for then he will see nothing in himself to trust in;

he will be afraid because of his own duties, his strong holds will all be thrown down; but a notional conviction of the insufficiency of his own righteousness to save him, without an experimental conviction of the badness of his heart will not deliver him from confidence in himself.

SOMETIMES he complains that he does every thing from a spirit of self-love: he does not aim at the glory of God in any thing; but fear of hell, and desire of salvation, are the great things that do set him on work: were it not for fear of hell he should leave off. In this case he may be told,

1. *That it is impossible he should act from an higher principle.* He has no principle of love to God, John v. 42. Self-love is the reigning principle in him, and therefore it is no wonder that he does all in religion from that spirit; it was his weakness that he formerly thought he did any thing out of love to God. No natural man ever did act with an higher spirit, than a self-love: a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

2. *That he should make use of this for humiliation, and not for discouragement.* There is no reason that he should be discouraged because of this, for every one is an hypocrite at first; and many that have sought God for a while with a selfish spirit, have afterward been turned, and have had another spirit given to them: but he should make use of this to

his humiliation, and learn hereby his own badness, the insufficiency of his own righteousness, and the justice of his condemnation, and that he has no cause to think much that God does reject his services, and not give peace unto him.

After this the sinner gives an account that he finds a spirit of love to God, sorrow for sin, aiming at the glory of God, hating of sin, &c. In this case he may be told,

1. That there is a great resemblance between common and saving grace: common grace is the picture of sanctifying grace, and common affections are sometimes stronger than saving. *Pharaoh* justifies God, *Saul* weeps, *one* who was far from sincerity, tells Christ, *he will follow him whithersoever he goeth*, the *Jews* cry, *Hosanna to the Son of David*, the *Israelites sang God's praise, but soon forgat his works.*

2. *That while they have such pangs of affection, it will be very hard for them to see their hypocrisy.* Their fear of damnation makes them catch at any appearances of sincerity, and their pride makes them have an high opinion of their attainments; men sometimes in that frame make such signs as do indeed shew their hypocrisy to be arguments of their sincerity.

3. *That it is a very dangerous thing for them to think that they are sincere, while they are not:* then they will bless themselves, when God curses them; then they will con-

tinue quietly in a natural condition, and neglect the means of conversion: and if they do not see the deceit quickly, there is danger that they may grow so hard hearted, that if they do see it afterwards, they will not be the better for it.

4. *That they may be satisfied from such things as these, that they do not love God sincerely whatever appearances there be*, viz. That they never had a work of humiliation; and sincerity does never forego that: that they never *closed with Jesus Christ*, and the heart is never *purified without faith*. All those affections that go before faith, let them be never so strong, are deceitful; the first good action that any man does perform, is to give entertainment to the gospel: other things follow upon that.

SOMETIMES he gives an account, *that he does believe on Jesus Christ;* he does not trust in his own righteousness, but places his hope in Christ. In this case the minister may tell him,

That there is a great deal of faith that does not justify. Some do believe for a time, Luke viii. 13. *some receive the word with joy, and in time of temptation fall away*, Mat. xiii. 20, 21. Some *believed on Christ, but did not confess him*, John xii. 42. several *sorts of faith* do not *justify:* As,

1. An *historical faith*. Men do receive the history of the gospel for a truth, and take

it for granted, that Jesus Christ is the son of God, and saviour of the world; and if any should deny it, or dispute against it, they would be very zealous against him, it would stir up their indignation; if they have any workings of infidelity, yet generally they go with that persuasion, that the gospel is true; but this is no more than a Turk will say for his religion: this historical faith does not mortify men's corruptions, John ii. 23, 24, 25. Many prophane men have this historical faith.

2. *A considerable confidence that Christ will save them.* They are persuaded that they shall obtain salvation by Christ, and do rejoice in the hope of it: this confidence is a distinct thing from justifying faith; it is good or bad according to the grounds of it. Godly men have frequently such a confidence from the experience of a work of grace in their own hearts, and the manifestation of the love of God; but this is not justifying faith, but a faith of assurance. Carnal men may have such a confidence, arising from an imagination that God loves them, and from an opinion of their own goodness; but this is not justifying faith, but presumption.

3. *A dependance upon Christ, on the encouragement of a man's own goodness.* He hears the gospel, or has some common illumination, discovering somewhat of God's readiness to pardon sinners through Christ: and considering what he is, he ventures on Christ. When

a man savingly believes, he ventures upon Christ upon gospel encouragements; but another ventures, being encouraged from the consideration of his prayers, tears, conscientiousness, or on that encouragement that he is not very bad, so he thinks such an one as he may venture; whereas if he did see himself so bad as indeed he is, he would not venture on Christ; the man makes partly his own righteousness, and partly the righteousness of Christ, the foundation of his faith; he does not exclude the righteousness of Christ, but the preponderating consideration, and that which especially emboldens him to venture, is his own righteousness; his own righteousness is the first foundation of his hope, though he takes in the plea also of the righteousness of Christ; he sees enough in Christ for such an one as himself, but not for the worst of sinners.

But possibly he will plead for himself, That he was much affected with Christ, and with the mercy of God, it was more than ordinary, he never had such a light before. In this case he may be told, That carnal men have sometimes superficial discoveries of Christ, and are affected therewith, Mat. xiii. 20. Men have considerable enlightenings and tastes, yet may fall away; and it is no wonder they should be affected with the mercy of God: if men do apprehend that God has pardoned them they cannot but be affected with it: as pardon does affect men, so does imaginary pardon.

He may further plead for himself, that it was just so with him, as it has been with godly men, as he has heard them to express themselves; that all his objections were answered; he was backward before, but he had such a discovery of Christ, that all his objections did vanish away, and he had nothing to say.

But he may be told, that the reason why some men's objections are all answered, is not from the greatness of the light that God gave them, but from their ignorance of their own hearts. They did not see so much of their badness, as thoroughly to feel the power of an objecting spirit; if they had seen how bad they were, their objections would not have been answered. A little matter will answer the objections of an ignorant and conceited man, they have not light enough to make such strong objections as they would do if they knew themselves; and so all their objections are easily answered.

SOMETIMES he builds his confidence upon some particular scriptures.

ONE scripture is, 1 John iii. 14. *We know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren:* He says he finds such a spirit in himself and he thinks his condition good. But he may be told,

1. *There is a great difference between loving the people of God for their piety, and honoring them for their piety.* Many natural men have some convictions that godly men are choice

men, and happy men; and if they think a man is a sincere man they honor him, and have a respect for him; so Herod had for John, Mark vi. 20. but these men have not a sincere love to them for their piety; they do not love God nor godliness, therefore do not love godly men for their piety.

2. *There is a great difference between loving godly men for their piety, and loving them for their morality.* Godly men are moral men, some of them are eminent for justice, sobriety and faithfulness, and these are very lovely things in the eyes of many natural men; they love them upon that account, Dan. vi. 3, 18. Darius had a great love to Daniel, but it was not upon the account of his piety, but his prudence and morality: morality is lovely in the eyes of many carnal men. Some love godly men, because they are related to them; some because they are friendly to them, and some because of their moral qualifications, that have not any love to them upon the account of their piety. The moral carriages of the people of God flow from a spirit of piety; but morality and piety are very different things, and some persons that have a love to them upon the account of their morality, may have no love to them upon the account of their piety.

ANOTHER scripture that he may build a confidence on, is, 1 John v. 11. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of*

God. By this rule he says he is in a good condition, he does believe this, therefore is regenerate. In this case he may be told,

That the believing here spoken of, is the receiving of it as certain upon the testimony of God. Many men have a common persuasion that Christ is the son of God from tradition, and from his miracles, which is in a more general acceptation called believing, John ii. 23. and yet they are not born of God: but more properly they are said to believe it, who receive it upon God's testimony; and those men who have only a common persuasion, are indeed unbelievers; they that have not grace, do not properly believe the word of God.

ANOTHER scripture that he takes notice of to strengthen his confidence, is Mat. v. 6. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness;* his conscience testifies that he does so, therefore he hopes he is blessed. In this case he may be told,

That though some desires of grace are grace, yet all desires of grace are not grace: as men may act hypocritically when they pretend to desire grace, so when they do desire grace. For,

1. *Many carnal men do desire grace.* It is a common thing for ungodly men to desire grace, especially when terrified with the word, they desire to be converted: some men have slighter convictions, and they have faint and languishing desires, and some have more

smart terrors, and they think they would give all they have in the world, that they were converted: so the foolish virgins, Mat. xxv. 8.

2. *Desires of grace may arise from natural principles.* Grace is not only desirable, for its own sake, but there are several benefits that do attend it, which may make natural principles crave it. Grace is an honourable thing, Heb. xi. 2. it gains respect among men, it procures men a good name in the world; hence pride makes men crave it: Grace is a means of many outward blessings, 1 Tim. iv. 8. And upon this account, men out of a selfish spirit may desire it: grace is necessary in order to salvation, Heb. xii. 14. And upon this account nature makes men crave it.

AFTER *he is delivered from his confident opinion of his good estate*, and sees himself to be in a natural condition still; it may be needful upon that occasion,

1. *To encourage him*: for he is in danger to be too much cast down, so as to hinder his future diligence: he may be encouraged from the consideration of God's goodness in discovering that deceit which would have proved his bane; he was in a dangerous way, but God has delivered him, and so put him in a nearer capacity to be converted: God's not suffering him to continue in his delusion, is an hopeful sign, that God does intend mercy to him; he is now under greater advantages than before, John ix. 41.

2. *To warn him that he do not run into the same error again; for he is still under the reigning power of a self righteous spirit, and may get a false opinion of conversion again.* Some do several times strike upon that rock, therefore he must be cautioned not to be deceived with the appearances of grace; nor to give way to the flattery of his own heart; if he should take up such a persuasion again, it is doubtful that he would not be delivered; relapses are dangerous; and if he should begin to think so, it were best to advise with those that can inform him, before he be confirmed in such an opinion.

3. *To lead him into the understanding of his own badness, and insufficiency to help himself.* This is an advantageous time to drive him out of himself, and bring on the work of conversion. When he feels his own hypocrisy, the best way is to follow, till he is quite emptied out of himself; it is good policy to improve a victory, and to help him to a thorough sight of himself, that he may be prepared for Christ.

SOMETIMES after a man has been seeking a while, and has passed through many changes, there is reason to fear that he will leave off, he has a great deal of discouragement; others obtain, and he is left; God does not make the word powerful on his heart, he does not get forward, and it may be perceived that he is more slighty than he was. In this case it is best,

1. *To encourage him:* For the discouragements that he is under, are a great cause of apostacy; therefore it is best to hearten him up; the notion of the giant-like stature of the Canaanites, and the strength of their walls, was a great inducement to Israel to entertain thoughts of returning back to Egypt. So it is in this case: and may be encouraged two ways.

1. *By shewing the possibility of his obtaining mercy.* So Caleb told the people that they were well able to overcome; and if God delighted in them, he would bring them in: thus he may be encouraged, by shewing of him that God can help him, and that nothing does appear to shew that God will not help him; his mercy is free, he has pardoned others as bad as he; his providences to him are consistent with designs of grace.

2. *By shewing him the wonderful benefit that he will have if he does obtain mercy; besides that peace and communion with God which he will have in this life, he will enjoy eternal salvation in the other world, which is inconceivably great.* It were a great thing to have his punishments moderated, much more to be delivered from them; it were a great thing to be saved out of hell after hundreds of years, greater to be preserved from coming there: it were a great thing to be kept out of hell, and suffered to live a natural life always upon the earth, greater to be translated into

the glorious presence of God, and to be like the angels of God always beholding the face of the father: it is worth the while to go through any difficulty for heaven; heaven will make amends for all: if the way to heaven were rocks and mountains, yet it is worth the while to travel thither. The people of Israel were often told of the excellency of the land of Canaan, that it was a land flowing with milk and honey, and a land of vineyards, and olive yards, and wheat and barley: So it is useful to set before him the glorious happiness that the people of God will enjoy in another world.

2. *To warn him of his danger, for security has a great hand in apostacy: to remind him what a miserable condition he would cast himself into, if he should cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God.* Sometimes when men apostatise, they fall into despair; and God suffers them to be miserably hurried and haunted by their own evil conscience, and no means can deliver them; so it was with Judas. Sometimes shortens their days, and does not suffer them to continue in this world: when they draw back, God withdraws protection from them, and they quickly die: when they neglect seeking eternal life, God denies temporal life to them; and sometimes he leaves them to be very wicked; they sometimes become of the number of the basest of men, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22. Mat. xii. 44,

45. and they are in dreadful danger of eternal fire; and that misery that no creature knows how to grapple with. Such considerations as these may help him against the sloth and slightiness of his spirit.

SOMETIMES he complains he is followed with atheistical thoughts: he is frequently followed with questions about the being of God. In this case the minister may,

1. *Acquaint him that though this is a great sin, yet it may be forgiven.* There is abundance of atheism in the hearts of men, the lives of men shew that they have much of this spirit. Tit. i. 16. And many persons that have complained of this, have been afterwards converted; and that some godly men are much exercised with this temptation, Psal. lxxvii. 12, 13. And therefore though he should not make light of it, yet he should not draw up any dark conclusions against the possibility of his salvation.

2. *Convince him that there is a God:* and settle his heart about that great truth.

1, *By evidencing to him the being of God; which he may do, especially from the works of creation, thus:* The things which we see, are made things; they are finite, compounded, corruptible, and therefore it is impossible they should be of themselves; that which is finite is not eternal, but was made in time, out of nothing; that which is compounded, was compounded by some other thing; that

which is corruptible, has not its being from itself; we could not be of ourselves, and therefore the first man, who was of the same nature with us, could not be of himself; and he that made these things, must be an infinitely glorious God: he that could bring the world out of nothing, and make the creatures that are therein, with wonderful variety of properties and virtues must be one of infinite perfection, that is God, Rom. i. 20. Psal. xix. 1.

2. *By removing those objections that prove snares to him: if that be a snare to him, that we do not see God:* he may be told, that we do not question many other things which we never saw. We doubt not that there are such countries as France and Spain. Several things are invisible, as the souls of men, angels and devils, unless they assume a shape; yet we may be satisfied about these: there be other ways to satisfy us about the existence of things, besides seeing of them. We know some things by reason, and some things by faith, Heb. xi. 3. If that be a temptation to him, that others do not believe the being of God, he can plainly perceive by the lives of men, that whatever they pretend, they do not really think that there is a God: he may be told, that though they are not fully persuaded that there is a God, yet they cannot be fully persuaded that there is not a God; they have so much light they cannot extinguish it;

there is not a perfect atheist in the world: besides, carnal men are led by their corruptions, and their reason is very much darkened, and there is no weight to be laid upon their thoughts. Shall we think there be no Antipodes, because some ignorant men have denied it? Shall we question the roundness of the earth, because some others think otherwise? We may not offer violence to our reason, because of the sottishness of other men. If that be a snare to him, to conceive how God can be of himself; how it is possible he should be, without being made; he may be told, that if that be above his reason to fathom, yet that is not contrary to reason; as it is to think that a company of finite things, should be of themselves: besides, if there are beings, there must of necessity be some first being: if the rest be made, yet there must be one that was not made: to say that nothing was made, and to say that all things are made, are alike absurd; those things, that are made, could not have been, unless there were something that was not made; seeing many things have a being, there must be one being that is of himself; they could not interchangeably make one another, but there is one who was not made, but is of himself, who is GOD.

SOMETIMES he complains that he is followed with horrible injections, blasphemous thoughts, and other wicked thoughts, that are a great affliction to him, and take away the

comfort of his life, they make him a terror to himself. In this case he may be told,

1. *That so far as they are injected by Satan, they are not imputed to him.* The heart of man is very bad, and from that fountain of sin, exceeding wicked thoughts may arise; but when persons are violently followed with such thoughts, they are usually injected by Satan, they are some of his fiery darts spoken of, Eph. vi. 16. And when he casts them in, the man is no more guilty, than he that hears a man blaspheme: if a man were perfectly holy, that could not prevent such injections if God let Satan loose upon him.

2. *That his nature is so corrupted, that those injections do less or more taint him.* The heart is like tinder, and these temptations will make some impression, though he has a detestation of those thoughts, and labors against them, yet there is a principle in the heart to fall in with them; and generally upon such occasions, persons do contract guilt; and it is but rare if ever, that men are merely passive at such a time: the *sin* that is in men, *does easily beset them*, Heb. xii. 1. And therefore it becomes him to be confessing before God the wretchedness of his own heart, in favoring in any degree those temptations.

3. *That such temptations are no sign that God does not love him; he may not gather from thence, that God has given him up to Satan; for this has been the condition of some*

very godly men. This is an exercise that God has brought upon some that have been dear to him: as Satan is wont to tempt the best of men, so some of the choicest with these suggestions; this is not too great an affliction to be brought upon such men as God does love; the Devil may in this manner hurry those that he shall not be able to destroy. Paul in likelihood had some such temptations, 2 Cor. xii. 7. God for holy ends may suffer those whom he loves to be thus exercised, that they may learn their own weakness, and be humbled before God.

4. *That it is not very usual for God to suffer men to be long followed with these injections.* Though there be some instances to the contrary, yet more ordinarily after a while God does restrain Satan, though no man can determine any precise time, yet after a while they are wont to be removed. God may so far hear prayers, as to remove this affliction.

SOMETIMES he complains bitterly *of the badness of his own heart*, speaks of it as exceeding bad; he says he never saw it so bad as of late, and seems to be almost discouraged thereby. In this case he may be told,

1. *That the heart of every natural man is exceeding bad.* Many times through restraints of corruption and common grace, the badness of it is hidden; but the *heart of every natural man is desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 9. Whatever appearances it may make, it is utterly

corrupt; every sin is unmortified: those sins that they have not been accustomed to, those sins that their tempers do not dispose them to; those sins of whose baseness they have the deepest sense, and their hearts are totally empty of all goodness, there is not one spark of goodness in them: that the principle of sin is as strong in them after they are enlightened and reformed as ever it was.

2. *That it is necessary for him to be convinced of the badness of his own heart.* When men see the badness of their own hearts, they are ready to be discouraged; but they are then in a more hopeful condition than before: if men be strangers to their own hearts, they will trust in themselves, and neglect Christ. God first discovers to them what they are, and then he discovers the excellency of Christ to them: men will never come to Christ, till they are convinced what corrupt, blind and dead creatures they be. And therefore the more God shews him of the badness of his heart, the more graciously he deals with him: the badness of the heart is matter of sorrow, but the sight of that badness is matter of encouragement; the more they see of that, the more hope there is of their being prepared for Christ.

3, *That it is his best way to search his own heart farther.* Many times men will complain bitterly of the badness of their own hearts, and one time after another give an account that they have seen more in their hearts

than ever they did before; and yet are far from seeing what they must see in their own hearts. And while it is thus, they should be put upon it to study their hearts, that they may see more of them: persons are afraid to see their own hearts, and are wont to strive against it, seeking to persuade themselves that they are better than indeed they be: it crosses their pride, and their false hopes, to see the badness of their own hearts; therefore there is need to stir them up thereunto, and to tell them of what consequence it is. The sight of the heart is like the opening of a festered wound, it prepares men for healing; they should be put upon it to search themselves, and led into the way to do it; particular things may be propounded to them to search after; this is a very natural thing, for the sincerity of their conversion has a great dependance upon the thorough knowledge of their hearts.

Quest. *Whether at this time it is not best to urge him to believe on Christ, though he does not thoroughly understand the badness of his own heart?*

Answ. 1. It may not be amiss while he is in this condition, to mind him that it is his duty to believe in Christ. And to set forth sometimes the excellency and sufficiency of Christ before him, it may be several ways beneficial to him; it may help him to take notice of the contrariety and opposition of his heart to this duty, and lead him into a further

understanding of the corruption of his nature; it may give some check to that spirit of self-righteousness that prevails in him, and make him sensible of the necessity of the righteousness of Christ unto his justification; it may serve to encourage as to the possibility of his salvation, and convince him, that he is capable to be brought into a state of salvation.

2. *Yet there is no ground to hope, that till he thoroughly sees himself, he will accept the offer of the gospel.* Men must be first humbled before they will believe. Invitations to come to Christ will never be successful, till men are driven out from their false refuges; they may hear the most powerful arguments with a great deal of evidence and affection, but they will not be obedient; either they will be afraid to come to Christ, and have one thing or other to object; they will be fearful, because they see so much sin, or because they do not know that God means them, or they have not the inward call of the gospel. Under some notion or other they will not come, or else they will come in a presumptuous manner, and pretend to believe when they do not indeed believe: either they will be borne down with unbelief, or they will get a false faith.

SOMETIMES *the man complains that he has not encouraging scriptures come to him*, and therefore he fears that he is not under the work of the spirit: other men have encouraging scriptures brought to them, and therefore

God does not deal with him, as with those he is wont to convert. In this case the minister may tell him,

1. *That if he have supporting considerations cast into his heart, that is sufficient;* there is no necessity to have encouraging scriptures to come with a great deal of power upon his heart; there is need of some supporting considerations, to maintain an hope, and to keep him from despair: and if the heart be but supported with an hope that he may obtain at last, that is sufficient. God deals very variously with men; some, that have many encouraging scriptures, do never obtain mercy.

2. *That if he does continue to wait upon God, he may have encouraging scriptures come to him after a while.* God knows what he stands in need of, and does not tie up himself to the same method, as to the circumstances of the work: he uses a great deal of variety; scarce two persons are carried on exactly after the same manner; some have more encouragement towards the beginning, and others towards the latter end of the work.

SOMETIMES he says, *that if he were sure to obtain, he could be willing to take any pains:* yea, though God should hold him waiting a long while; and he could be content to go through any anguish of spirit; but that which sinks his heart, and makes him dull, is, that he is not certain of success. In this case he may be told by the minister,

1. *That all, that have obtained mercy, have sought upon the encouragement, that they might obtain mercy.* They did not know what the issue of it would be; the possibility of it was that which bore up their hearts in using of means; they had some hope mingled with fear, and if they had not sought upon the encouragement of the possibility, they had certainly gone without mercy. The sick man does not say he will not use means, unless he were certain of a cure: the merchant does not say that he will not send his ship to sea, unless he were certain of a prosperous voyage: the husbandman does not say that he will not plow and sow his land, unless he were certain of a good crop; men must wait upon God, upon this encouragement, that they may obtain mercy, John ii. 8, 9.

2. *That the mere loss of their pains is a small matter.* It will be a dreadful thing for a man to lose his soul; but the mere loss of their labour is a small matter. A man may well venture the loss of his labour in hope of the salvation of his soul. A man that is sick, will venture the loss of a little expense for the preservation of his life: men have no cause to be very scrupulous about the loss of their pains, the loss of their souls will be far sorer.

3. *It is not fit that men should be sure to obtain mercy, till they do believe in Christ.* There is security enough, that if they do believe in Christ, they shall be saved; and there

is no reason that God should be desired to make a new covenant, and secure salvation to any other condition: God has descended low enough when he promises salvation to believing: and it is too much for any man to desire that God should promise it to praying, to reading, to reforming, &c. Especially seeing those things are done with a false heart, only for salvation.

4. *If men be thoroughly scared with the danger of damnation, they will readily improve their possibility, and not stand for assurance of success.* Men will be glad of a possibility, and not neglect means, because they have no more encouragement: if a man be cast into the sea, he will not neglect swimming, because he is not certain that he can swim to the shore: if a man be pursued by an enemy, he will not stand still, because he is not certain that he shall get clear. If men stand convinced of their dreadful danger in neglecting to seek, they will betake themselves to the use of means at a venture, rather than run the hazard of their souls.

SOMETIMES *he complains that after he has told the minister how it is with him, it seems to him as if he had told a company of lies;* and he is terrified with the apprehension of it. In this case he may be told,

1. *That these thoughts rise partly from the frightfulness of his conscience.* He is in a terrified condition, and so the sound of a shaking

leaf will scare him; and he flees when none pnrsueth; he imagines dangers where there be none; he has a trembling guilty conscience, and is afraid that he sins when he does not, and is ready to charge things upon himself without csuse.

2. *That these thoughts arise from those contrary workings that are in his own heart.* Sometimes he has a great sense of danger, sometimes he has but little sense of it: sometimes he is afraid he has committed the unpardonable sin, and then he is not afraid of it: he has a great variety and change of frames, and whatever account he gives of the workings of his own heart, he has had some contrary workings thereunto; so that after he has told what workings of heart he had, he has reflections, because he remembers some contrary workings of heart.

SOMETIMES *a man, that has been seeking after peace with God a great while, leaves off for some months together*, he is followed with guilt, and comes and makes his case known unto the minister: In this case it is very suitable,

1. *To reprove him for his backsliding, and set before him the sinfulness of what he has done*, and the danger that he has exposed himself unto: he has quenched the spirit, the tendency of whose motions was for his good; he has sinned against a great deal of light; when he was in a more hopeful way, he has

relapsed into a sorrowful condition: he has lost ground, and has a great deal of his work to do over again: God must needs be greatly provoked with him.

2. *To encourage him notwithstanding, by assuring him, that he is capable of mercy.* God invites backsliders to return to him: persons are sometimes cured of relapses: God has mercy enough to pardon such sins, several persons have had experience of it: sometimes first attempt is not successful; (as when David attempted to bring the ark into the place prepared for it) but the next time he prospered.

3. *To warn them that they do not so again.* They are in great danger, because they have done so already; a beast that has once tired, is more ready to do so again: those temptations that have prevailed upon them, are more like to prevail again; and if they get an habit of backsliding, they will be the more incurable: custom in an evil way naturalizes it to men: they run more readily into the same.

SOMETIMES *a man goes on in a way of seeking a great while, yet seems to be at a stand*, the work does not go forward: he has the same fears, the same complaints, sees nothing further into his own heart; he is like a man in a chronical disease, that notwithstanding all medicines, continues much in the same posture, he is neither much worse nor much better: like a ship that beats upon the coast

day by day, and cannot get in. In this case the minister may,

1. *Mind him that he may quickly die.* The sense of approaching death is very terrifying, and will stir men up to do their utmost: the face of death is terrible, and it may be very profitable to work upon them, a sense that they may be quickly snatched away; they have the seeds of all diseases in them; God's judgments are as a light that goeth forth. Men are commonly snatched away before they are aware: many of the Israelites that went out of Egypt, did not live to go into Canaan: their way is offensive to God, and so he may take them away in his anger.

2. *To convince them, that they cannot make their own hearts better.* One thing that makes men be at a stand is, that they are waiting in expectation to mend their own hearts: they hope from sabbath to sabbath, and from one duty to another; and though they fail hitherto of their expectation: they find that afflictions do not do it, nor ordinances, nor mercies, nor examples; yet they are promising themselves that, after a while, they shall make them better, and it is fit they should be convinced of the impossibility of that; their hoping and waiting for that is their snare: they may be shewed how it is quite beyond their power: whatever resolutions they take up, whatever pains they take, whatever encouragements, afflictions and terrors

they have, yet it is beyond the compass of their power; they cannot understand the excellency of God and Christ, or the great evil of sin: sin governs them, and they cannot subdue it: self-love may make them seek salvation, but not love God above themselves. Men cannot be scared out of a sinful estate, though they may out of some sinful practices.

3. *To possess them that God is very angry with them, notwithstanding the pains they take.* For one great reason why they make no proficiency is, because they live upon their duties; though they do not think that their duties do justify them, yet they do pacify their consciences with them; and they think that God will have a respect to the pains they take: they do what they can, and they do no more than some others; and they hope they stand upon better terms with God than formerly; and though they speak of their own badness, yet they imagine so much of their own goodness, as that they think it will be an hard case for God to damn them, therefore they should be convinced upon what terms they stand with God; that, as there is no merit in their duties, so there is nothing to move God to pity them, nor to abate the anger of God towards them; but their best duties are provocations, and imputed to them as sins.

SOMETIMES a man that has been in a very hopeful way quickly to get through the work of conversion, returns again to his old

postures; he had of late great convictions of the badness of his own heart, the hypocrisy of his duties, the insufficiency of any thing of his own to gain God's favor, and has such workings of heart as are wont immediately to procure submission to God, and a work of humiliation, and in a little time tacks about, and is remote from humiliation as he used to be: as the children of Israel when they were almost ready to enter into Canaan, fetched a compass, and wandered a long time in the wilderness. In this case the minister may,

1. *Warn him that he be not afraid to see the badness of his own heart.* For persons that have been praying for it, are yet afraid of it when it comes to. It is such a doleful and uncomfortable spectacle that they cannot bear to behold it; the sense of it is so cross to their pride, and stirs up such fears of damnation, that they cannot tell how to away with it, and labor to hide it from themselves, and to get such affections as may comfort them; but they should be told, that there is no cause for them to fear to see their own hearts, for it is dangerous to be ignorant of them, but not dangerous to see them; the sight of the heart is awful, but not hurtful; the heart is bad whether they see it or no, and they must see it before it be better: the surgeon must come to the bottom of the wound before he heals it.

2. *Instruct him, that there is a necessity of his submission to God;* for his opposition to

that has made him to quench those convictions of the spirit which he had. He could not bear to yield himself a prisoner into the hands of God, and to lie at his foot waiting for mercy, and that he has put him upon it to deliver himself from those convictions that led him away; but he must be instructed, that there is a necessity of submitting himself to God; he cannot help himself, and God is bound to help him; God may leave him to perish if he will and so long as he magnifies himself, and refuses to resign up himself to God, God will not discover Christ to him; he may pray, but he will not be heard: God resists the proud.

SOMETIMES he is *afraid that his convictions are not like the convictions of other men, and he hath several arguments to strengthen those fears.*

One argument is, that his convictions are only the workings of natural conscience, and not from the spirit of God: his convictions are the workings of his own thoughts; but he may be told, the way of the Spirit's working, when it does convince men, is by enlightening natural conscience; the spirit does not work by giving a testimony, but by assisting natural conscience to do its work: natural conscience is the instrument in the hand of God to accuse, condemn, terrify, and to urge to duty: the spirit of God leads men into the consideration of their danger, and makes them to be affected therewith, Prov. xx. 27. *The*

spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly. When men's own hearts are stirring them up to sin, and they have many reasonings about it, that is no sign that Satan is not busy with them: so when their own hearts are accusing and frightening of them, it is no sign that the Spirit of God is not at work with them: all the regular actions of conscience, all those convictions that are according to the word of God, are from the spirit of God.

Another argument is, that his terrors are not so great as other men's. Many others have such terrors that they are swallowed up therewith, almost distracted; and the town may take notice of it; but his terrors are more moderate by far; but he may be told,

That there is great diversity in the degrees of men's trouble: every man must have so much trouble, as to make him strive earnestly after salvation, and do what he can do in order to it; so much as to make him thoroughly to reform, and earnestly to strive to get into a converted condition. Every ship that performs its voyage, must have so much wind as may make the ship sail; but some ships have stronger and more tempestuous winds than others have. Some men are of more tender spirit, and less will prevail upon them, than upon others: and some men, whose troubles are but small at the beginning, do grow afterwards to a great heighth: God

uses his sovereignty very much as to the degrees of men's trouble.

Another argument is, *that his terror did not begin as other men's did.* Many others have been smitten in the preaching of the word, the word of God has been like a sharp sword in their heart; but his troubles came from the examples of others, or from some affliction, or from his fall into some sin; but he may be told,

That *it is all one from what occasion his troubles did arise, provided that he be but convinced of the absolute necessity of present reconciliation, and be but earnest in his endeavors after that:* though the word be a principal means of conversion, yet God may bless what means he will to do the work, Luke iii. 10, 12, 14. Jer. ii. 24. Examples, falls, and afflictions have a great tendency this way. Whatever be the means of men's reformation, yet if men be reformed it is well: God would have men make use of providences as well as ordinances, there is a voice of God in them, Mic. vi. 9.

Another argument is, *Because he does not see the evil of sin.* He sees a great deal of danger, but he does not see the evil of sin, he thinks that other men see more than he sees; but he may be told,

That other men do never see the great evil of sin, until they are converted. Men may see a moral evil in sin, and a great deal of the vanity and folly of it, though they are not un-

der a preparatory work of the spirit; but they never come to see the great evil of sin, until they are converted. Men have not a spiritual understanding given them, till they are converted; so long as they remain under the preparatory work of the spirit, no such things can be expected from them, as are peculiar to saints: when once men come to see the evil of sin, they also see the glory of God; they do mortify their sins, and are brought into a state of sanctification.

Another argument is, *Because he does not prosper in his seekings;* he has been seeking a long time, and yet God stands at a distance from him, other men get through it quickly; some that began a long time since him, have obtained peace with God, but he is left yet in a deplorable condition: but he may be told,

That it is a common thing with God to convert some in a far shorter time than others. One ship may spend twice as much time as another in performing the same voyage; one man's disease may be broke in far less time than another man's. Some men have more temptations and hindrances than others; the Spirit pursues some men more closely than others; and those, that are longer under the work, may be as soundly converted at last. The great reason why men do not hitherto prosper in their seekings, is not that their first troubles were not like the troubles of other men, but because they trust in their own

righteousness, and are not yet convinced of their own helpless condition, and the badness of their own hearts.

Quest. *But are not some men's convictions and terrors saving? Is there not a difference all along in the terrors of them that are elect, and them that are reprobate?*

Answ. *There is no difference for a great while between the strivings of the Spirit in those that shall be converted, and in those that shall not.* As there may be no difference in the voyages of two ships for a pretty while, one of which at last arrives in the harbor, and the other is cast-away; so it is here. Those, that shall never be converted, may have the same experiences for a considerable time, that those have that shall be converted; there may be no difference in their awakenings, in their reformations, in their temptations, in their encouragements, nor in respect of their frames. This does appear,

1. *Because those strivings that men may have, that shall never be converted, are sufficient to bring men forward towards Christ.* There is no necessity at all, that the elect should have any other strivings for a time, than what are common to reprobates; the convictions that reprobates may have are sufficient to bring men forward towards Christ; those terrors that reprobates may have, are sufficient to wean them from the world; to make them reform their lives, and labor to be

converted. If men have but such a sense of hell as many reprobates have had, there is no danger but they will take pains to be saved. Ps. lxxviii. 34. Though this will not convert them, yet it will bring them nearer to the kingdom of God, than they were; it will make them travel towards Christ, and overcome several impediments that lay in the way of their conversion; though they do not see the great evil of sin, yet they will be afraid of it; though they do not see the excellency of holiness, yet they will seek after it: common convictions are a preparation for conversion.

2. *They, that are to be converted, are not capable of any strivings of the Spirit, but what are common, till they come to be humbled, and to believe.* It is a pretty while after God begins to strive with the elect, before they come to be humbled, and to believe in Christ; and before that, they are not capable of any strivings, but what are common. What can there be, but what is common to other men? Other men have fears of hell and judgment, sense of wrath, moral convictions of the evil of sin; encouragements, many discoveries of vileness in their own hearts, and deceitfulness: and what can these have more before they are humbled? they are not capable yet to see the evil of sin, the excellency of Christ, nor of godly sorrow, nor of sincere desires, because they are not converted. Why may not a reprobate have as much conviction as they?

What are they capable of in their present circumstances, but what many have had that are now in hell? Some speak of a saving conviction and contrition; What is it? if it be only of hell and wrath, reprobates have such as well as they; it cannot be the great evil of sin, for none can see that, but they that are converted: natural men are blind, Rev. iii. 17.

3. *If there be a difference, men might be able to tell what the difference is, and apply it.* There is a difference between common grace and saving grace, and we are able to give an account what it is: so if there were a difference between the convictions of the elect and reprobate, we might be able from the word of God to tell what the difference is; if ordinary men could not do it, yet it might be expected, that such as have a deeper insight into the scriptures should: there God gives us rules to discern the difference that is in his dispensations; but no man in the world is able to tell what convictions of wrath and hell are peculiar to elect sinners, and what are peculiar to reprobates. Can we distinguish them by their kinds, by their degree, by their continuance, by their immediate effects? What rules have we to guide us in this matter? And can we make an application to persons? If sinners give us a true account of their terrors, can we tell one that his convictions are such as are proper to the elect, and they will end in conversion; and another, that his convictions are

the convictions of reprobates, and that they will end in damnation? This would be a bold undertaking of any man; the scripture is silent about it; yea the scripture speaks the contrary, Luke xii. 52. *them that were entering in ye hindered.*

SOMETIMES *the man is afraid that he shall die quickly, and lives in a great deal of torment upon that account.* He is in anguish of spirit; this frame rises either merely from his sense of God's anger, he thinks God will presently pour out his wrath; or sometimes besides this, there is something in providence that looks that way, or some word comes to him that makes him fear it; as that, *Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live.* In this case he should be told by the minister,

1. *That he ought not to take up such a conclusion.* No man should believe any thing that may be false: he has no sufficient grounds to draw up any such peremptory conclusion, for the thing itself is uncertain; God's anger does not shew it; God has been angry with him a long time, yet he lives; neither do these other signs shew that it shall be; such things have oftentimes failed.

2. *That it is not so usual with God to take men away when they are under earnest endeavors to be converted.* God threatens sinners to take them away in the time of their security: when they say *peace, peace,* 1 Thes. v. 3. Mat. xxiv. 48. Though sometimes men

die that are seeking after peace with God, and to all appearance have not found; yet this is not an ordinary dispensation. When he is striving by his Spirit to bring them to repentance, it is an hopeful sign that God will wait a while upon them; if we knock at a man's door, and they be all fast and do not stir to open the door, we are wont to go away; but if we perceive that they are rising and preparing to open the door, we are content to wait a while. God generally stays to see what work men will make of it.

3. *That he has indeed no certainty of his life; his body is mortal and frail, and many men die suddenly.* God has been much provoked by him, and may justly snatch him away by a sudden stroke. Many times men have very little warning of death, the fear of death is of great use to forward the work of conversion: if men *put far away the evil day*, they thereby harden their hearts; *the right numbering of their days*, is a means to make them *apply their hearts to wisdom*, Psal. xc. 12. Upon this account it is good to nourish awful fears of death: that makes men sensible of the vanity of the world, of the dangerousness of sin, of the necessity of making haste to be converted; therefore ministers should say nothing to persuade them that they are in no danger, for they are in real danger, and it is best for them to have the sense of it; this will solemnize their spirits, and quicken them

to their work; when afraid of death, they will be willing to take pains, and not be hindered by temptations.

SOMETIMES he complains that *he finds a dreadful murmuring spirit;* he is dreadful apt to quarrel with God, and cannot tell how to justify him: it is a great terror to him, yet he cannot deliver himself from it. In this case he may be told,

1. *That it is generally so with men under the work of preparation.* There is scarce any but has experience of it. Men can hardly bear outward afflictions, much less appearances of damnation: when awakened sinners are called upon to submit to God, yield themselves prisoners to him, there are two courses that men take to avoid it: one is, to establish a righteousness of their own; they strive to pacify the anger of God, they would fain do something to engage the heart of God to save them. Upon that account they pray affectionately, they are exact in their outward carriage, they strive to make their hearts better: The other way is, when they find that their danger continues, after all their pains, they quarrel with God, object against his dispensations, find fault with him; they are in a tumult, their hearts are in an uproar, and they are murmuring against God's dealing.

2, *That he may see much of his own heart in these murmurings.* And indeed these murmurings are a great occasion sometimes to

bring men off from their own righteousness: therefore it is good to lead him on this occasion into the sense of the wretchedness of his own heart; he may see in these workings much of his own hypocrisy, he has owned many times the need he has of free mercy; and that he deserved condemnation; yet now he murmurs as if God owed salvation to him; he may see much of the pride of his own heart, in rising up against God, and of his boldness, and of his enmity to God; these workings of heart do discover a dreadful fountain of sin within.

3. *That those objections which his heart makes against God's proceeding are causeless.* He may be shewn particularly, that the ways of God are righteous, and that men have no reason to murmur against him. It should be cleared up to him, that God has great cause to find fault with him, but he has no cause to find fault with God.

1. If the man OBJECTS, *that men are brought under a necessity of sinning, and yet are punished for sin.* Sin being DECREED, it cannot but be committed, yet it is punished. He may be told,

1. *That the DECREE of GOD does not at all infringe the liberty of man:* though the decrees bring a necessity, yet men act as freely as if there were no decrees. The decree of God offers no violence to the will of man; men *choose the ways of sin*, Isa. lxvi.

3. And therefore the decree is no excuse for sin: men do not accept it when any wrong is done unto them, neither will God accept it as an excuse; men act their own pleasure and dispositions when they sin: the necessity rising from the decree, does not take away the commendableness of good actions, nor the blameableness of bad actions; this necessity does not cut off all rewards and punishments.

2. *That in this decree, God does but use his sovereign liberty.* If God will make a multitude of men and angels, must he be bound to bring them all to eternal life? Who shall lay a prohibition upon God, that he shall not make use of some of them for the glory of his justice? if it be injurious for God to decree that men shall sin, and then punish them for their sin, then he is utterly cut off from all opportunity for the glorifying of his justice; but it is worth the while for men and angels to suffer for the manifestation of God's vindictive justice.

2. *If the man* OBJECTS *that the sin of* ADAM *is imputed to him, and upon that account he is deprived of original holiness; whereas he was not at all active in it, and gave no consent unto it.* He may be told,

1. *That men in many cases have a power to appoint others to represent them;* and they are accordingly bound to stand or fall according to the carriage of representatives: yea, men have a power to make representatives

for others; these things are common in matters of a civil nature. Why then may not God, who hath more power over men, than they have over themselves, appoint one to represent them, to act on their behalf, according to whose carriage, they should stand or fall?

2. *That this was a fair and probable way for the good of mankind;* it was as hopeful a way as for every man to stand for himself: there was less likelihood that all Adam's posterity should stand; than that he should stand, only from the personal qualifications of Adam, which were certainly greater than his posterity would have had in the time of their childhood; but because Adam was under an exceeding great bond, he had a great charge upon him; the happiness of all his posterity having a great dependance upon his carriage. Adam had not only the care of his own soul upon him, but he stood intrusted for many millions that were to descend from him; and it was probable, that that consideration should make him more careful to keep God's covenant.

3. *If the man OBJECTS against the severity of God's law, that punishes men with everlasting damnation.* He may be told,

1. *That it is very meet that he should appoint such a punishment, as might be a great restraint to man's sinning.* If God had appointed some little punishment, men would

have been more bold to break the law of God. Experience shews, that this severe punishment is not sufficient to keep multitudes from living in a way of sin; if the punishment had been less, men would have regarded it but very little.

2. *It was very meet God should appoint a punishment that was suitable for the vindication of his name.* God loves himself, and his name is dear to him; and it becomes God to annex such a penalty to his law, as that his great name might be vindicated: God is a great God, and therefore sin is a great evil; and it is very fit that if sin be punished, there be a punishment appointed some ways proportionable to the great evil of sin.

3. *That by God's appointing so dreadful a punishment he makes no man miserable.* God holds out the point of a sword, this will do them no hurt if they do not run against it: God makes a dreadful pit, this will hurt no man if he does not run into it: God's law makes no man miserable; they make themselves miserable, and are cruel to their own souls, when they sin against him.

4. *The punishment appointed for sin, is no greater than the recompence of obedience.* There is an equality in the law, the law is as bountiful to the obedient, as severe to the disobedient: if the law did appoint little rewards of obedience, and great punishments of diso-

bedience, men would have more shew for their complaints, but the reward is as great as the punishment. Heaven is as good as hell is bad.

4. If he OBJECTS, That *God has shewed mercy to others that have not taken so much pains as he:* God pardons others, and gives grace to others, but denies him. He may be told,

1. *That his labor and service does lay no bond upon God to shew mercy to him.* Whatever he has pretended in his prayers, he has no true regard to the glory of God, he has minded nothing higher than his own salvation; he has been serving himself, and not God. God is no ways obliged to give him such a reward, he has not merited grace, but has merited condemnation by such services: there is nothing in such services to work upon the mercy of God; God's mercy is not moved by any external thing, there is nothing in those services to engage the justice of God, they are far from being meritorious; there is nothing to engage the faithfulness of God: God has made no absolute promises to any hypocritical prayers.

2. *That God has a liberty to bestow his grace upon whom he will.* Mercy is God's own, and he will make choice who shall be the subjects of it. God is master of his own gifts, will bestow them upon one, and deny them to others. It is just for God to deny all

sinners saving mercy, but if he pleases to have mercy upon some, none may prescribe who they shall be; but he may choose one, and refuse another, 1 Cor. iv. 7.

3. *That God never did bestow saving mercy upon any sinner, while he quarrelled against his proceeding.* Before ever others had mercy, their spirits were brought down, and they were brought to justify God, and lie at his feet; if they had stood it out as he does, they would have gone without saving mercy, Isa. xlv. 23. *To me every knee shall bow.*

5. If he OBJECTS that *he has done what he can*, and yet God denies grace to him. He should not think much of it, if he gave way to a sluggish spirit, and carried himself viciously, but he does what he can, and what would God have more. He may be told,

1. *That if he does what he can, he may not challenge mercy from thence.* By what law will he demand saving grace because of that? That does not in its own nature take away God's liberty and his sovereignty: there is no wrong done him, if God sees cause to deny him; neither is there any promise whereby God has obliged himself to those that do all they can; God has left it in his own liberty to deny them, if he pleases.

2. *That he doth not what he can.* It may be he is otherwise very faulty, but however he does not do what he can, because he does not own the sovereignty of God; he does not

justify God, nor acknowledge that God may justly reject him after all. Indeed he cannot do this without help from God, so he cannot pray and reform, without assistance: yet this is a thing he can do, principles of nature may produce this effect; many natural men have come to this; men that have no natural principle have resigned up themselves to God, *their mouths have been stopped*, and they have *become guilty before God.*

6. If he OBJECTS that God *requires him to believe, whereas it is not in his power: he is dead in sin*, and yet God binds him to believe, and calls on him to believe; this seems very hard and strange. He may be told,

1. *That though he has lost his power to obey, yet God has not lost his power to command.* If he has lost his strength, yet God has not lost his authority: if a servant make himself drunk, and be not able to do his master's business, that is no excuse. God gave man power at first, and his prodigality does not deliver him from God's authority.

2. *That in this way God is pleased many times to work faith.* Men are able to do many things in order to believing, and hereby they are put upon it to prepare for that; and in that way many have faith wrought in them. There have multitudes, by the blessing of God on the preaching of the gospel, been brought to embrace Jesus Christ.

SOMETIMES the man says, *he is afraid to do any thing in religion; for whatever he does he is ready to trust to it;* if he prays, fasts, reads, especially when he does those things with any affection; so he trusts in his conscientiousness. In this case he may be told,

1. *That he may not neglect his duty by any means.* He must be sure to attend his duty whatever ill use his heart be ready to make of it; he must not scare himself from his duty, because he is ready to trust in it: duty must be done, God's command must be attended, whatever be the consequence of it. Men may not take upon them to judge when it is best to attend God's command, and when it is dangerous, and so give themselves a dispensation from their duty; as men must not do evil that good may come of it; so they may not neglect good, lest evil come of that: men must do their duty, and run the adventure of their heart's making a bad use thereof.

2. *That there is no necessity of men's trusting to what they do.* If God do but open their eyes, to see the plague of their own heart, they will not trust to what they do. When men are thoroughly convinced of the abominations that are in their hearts, and see the hypocrisy and formality of their duties, it is impossible they should trust in them: their confidence in their duties rises from the opinion that they have of them, and when they

come to understand the wretchedness of them, their heart will not gather confidence, but fear of them; and therefore it is their duty to study their own hearts, and labor to find out the wickedness of them.

When the man is told that there is a necessity of seeing his own heart, in order to his humiliation. Sometimes he objects, that he is blind and cannot see; how can a blind man see his own heart. He may be told,

1. *That he is indeed spiritually blind, and therefore he cannot see the evil of sin;* that is not to be seen till men have received a spiritual understanding from God; and accordingly there is no necessity of seeing that in order to his humiliation.

2. *But yet he is capable to have an experimental sight of the badness of his own heart.* Natural conscience is able to discern that men may find by experience, that they are under the power of pride, of discontent, and carnal affection; and that they are utterly destitute of love to God, or any gracious disposition; these things are not discerned by a spiritual eye, but by a natural eye: natural men may observe and discern the workings of their own hearts, Rom. vii. 8. *Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.*

SOMETIMES the man says, *he is willing to believe in Christ, but finds himself un-*

able; he could be glad he could believe, but it is beyond him. In this case he may be told,

1. *That there is a mighty opposition in the heart of a natural man to believing in Christ: as it is with all other spiritual duties*, so it is with this. Men do not love to believe in Christ, but have a contrariety thereunto, John v. 40. Mat. xxiii. 37. The opposition rises partly from pride, they had rather be saved by their own works, that they may have somewhat to glory in; it is very cross to their haughty spirit to go out of themselves, and be beholden to Christ alone for salvation, to have nothing of their own to glory in; men do not love to see themselves nothing; and partly it rises from fear; it seems to them a terrible thing to adventure upon Christ, they are not certain that God is free to accept of them; they are not certain whether Christ's righteousness be sufficient for them; they do not see the encouragement that is in the gospel, and think it an unlikely thing that they shall be safe in such a way: hence they have a trembling in their heart; look upon it too great an adventure, they fear it will be looked upon to be presumption, and that instead of mending their condition, they shall make it worse, they should be afraid to stay away from Christ; but they are afraid to come to him, and therefore are not willing.

2. *If the man were willing, What keeps him from Christ?* The difficulty lies in the will, if

the will be conquered, the man is conquered: Yea, faith in Christ is an act of the will: faith is a choosing of Christ for his Saviour. Christ is offered to men, and many encouragements are presented before them; and when once the will is gained to accept the offer, the man does believe on Christ: if men were willing, the difficulty would be at an end; they cannot be willing till they are able; they are not willing, until the will is strengthened to comply with God's call.

3. *That seeming willingness that is in many men is but feigned.* They pretend a willingness to quiet their consciences; they do not, it may be, feel much opposition, but they are not indeed willing; they are willing to be saved, and willing to be saved by Christ, rather than not be saved at all; and have some selfish desires that they could come to Christ, but there is no sincerity in them.

SOMETIMES the man says, that *he would fain submit to the will of God, but cannot tell how;* he has been striving after it a great while, but cannot attain it. In this case he may be told,

That natural men do never sincerely strive after submission to God; they do strive to submit after a fashion, and pray that they may, because they may hear that it is necessary in order to conversion, but they are never sincere in it; they do it in a false and deceitful way: which appears,

1. Because they are *laboring to make their hearts better.* They are laboring to mend themselves; and upon this account they labor after it, that they may not be necessitated o submit to the will of God; that their own goodness may be a bond upon God to save them, that it may not be in the free liberty of God to do what he pleases with them: and upon this account they strive to submit to God, that they may make a righteousness of that.

2. Because at the same time *they are hiding their own hearts from themselves; they are afraid to see how bad they are.* If they have any convictions of their own badness, they will stifle them if they can: they are laboring to excuse themselves, and love to look upon any thing in themselves, that seems like goodness; they are persuading of themselves that they are better than they are, which are great hindrances to submission.

3. *Because they are not thoroughly convinced of a necessity of submission to God.* If they were convinced of a necessity of it, they would do it; and if they be not convinced of it, they cannot strive sincerely after it: as long as men hope that they make a shift without it, they will not heartily seek after it; as long as men hope that their own righteousness will lay a bond upon God, and that it is not fair for God to condemn them, they will not heartily endeavor after submission.

When men are called upon to submit to God, *and resign themselves to his sovereignty, they say they do so;* they cannot help themselves, but must juttify God. In this case there is great need to examine, whether their submission be of the right kind; for there is a shew of submission, which is not real humiliation; and there are these signs of a false submission.

1. *When it is the fruit of their own strivings.* Men hear that they must submit themselves to God, before they obtain mercy; and accordingly they strive for it, and work up a kind of image of submission to God: They bring themselves to own that they are in God's hands, and he may do what he will with them, this is never right. When men are brought to submit to God indeed, the thing is forced by the power of conviction: they strive against it, but were so evidently convinced of the insufficiency of themselves, and the justice of God, that they had no other way left them, but to fall into the hands of God: as it was with those lepers, 2 Kings, vii. 4.

2. *When men make a righteousness of their submission.* When men have got a false submission, they are wont to be proud of that, and to think that God will be taken with them: they look upon it a choice frame of spirit, and rejoice in it as a thing pleasing to God; but when men do indeed submit to

God, they see nothing in it to be proud of; they see themselves all over defiled like lepers; empty of all good, and look upon this submission as having nothing at all of goodness in it; they see they are merely forced to it: that they have no other way to take, but to fall into the hands of God.

3. *When, notwithstanding their submission, they are still striving to make their hearts better.* If you ask them whether they are striving to love God, and to do duties for his glory? They say yes, they are laboring after it; you may be sure they do not submit to God, but are laboring to get some goodness of their own to commend them to God, they are not sensible of their own impotency. But if a man do indeed submit to God, he sees himself dead in trespasses and sins; ask him whether he be striving to make his heart better; he will say he can easily remove a mountain as do it; that he has been striving after it a great while, but now he finds that he has no power; his heart is dead as a stone, there is no disposition to any thing that is good in him, it is quite out of his reach; if God does not make him better, it will never be effected.

4. *When men say they have been brought to that many a time.* When some men are enquired of, whether they were brought to submit to God's sovereignty? Yes, they say many a time. Sinners in trouble of conscience say it has been so oftentimes with

them; this shews it not a right submission. Godly men after their conversion, may submit many times to God, but that submission differs much from this; that is a gracious submission, and they do not see at the same time themselves utterly destitute of all grace; but that submission that goes before the closing with Christ, is never wrought any more than once; when it is wrought it may continue some little time, till God reveals Christ to a man; but this work is never wrought over and over again in the soul.

5. *When men are afraid they are not humbled enough.* Some men that do pretend to submission, as afraid that they are not humbled enough, and they wish they may be humbled more; this makes it evident that they do not indeed submit, it is a sign that they make a righteousness of their submission. When men do indeed submit to God, they are never exercised with any such scruples, because they do not look upon their submission as a thing that commends them to God. When a man submits, he absolutely resigns up himself as a prisoner to God, is wholly broken off from his own righteousness and sufficiency, and leaves himself with God, and does not do it under a notion that there is any excellency in it, but out of necessity leaves himself with God.

6. *When men submit to God as looking upon him not very angry.* Some sinners submit to

God, and at the same time they think they have some love to God, and some care of his glory; and accordingly they look upon their peace half made; truly this is no difficult matter; it is easy for a man to put his life into the hands of his friend: there is no great opposition to submit to God, when a man is pretty confident that God will save him; but it is another thing to submit to God, when a man does not see a spark of goodness in himself, when he looks upon God as bitterly angry with him, and is much afraid that God will utterly destroy him: when men submit under such circumstances, it is evident that God has conquered them, and that their wills are broken.

Quest. *What is to be said to a man in case he should say that he is willing to be damned?*

Ans. 1. *No man acting understandingly is willing to be damned.* All ungodly men do interpretatively love damnation, Prov. viii. 36. but no man that understands himself, is willing to be damned; it is against nature; nature teaches every man to desire happiness. Damnation is a dreadful terror to them that know what it is, Isa. xxxiii. 14.

2. *No such thing is required of men.* For God has put a spirit of self-love into men, and binds them to love themselves: and commands men to be seeking of salvation, John vi. 27. Luke xiii. 24.

Such willingness is either only pretended; or, if real, it must arise either from desperate rage and passion, or from some violent pang of false affection to God. The spirit of God does not stir up such workings in the hearts of men.

SOMETIMES a sinner does enquire *how he may come to know his own heart?* he is told that it is needful for him to know it, and enquires what he should do in order to it. In this case he may be directed to these three ways,

1. *To observe the sinful workings of his own heart.* The hearts of men are often working in a way of pride, discontent, worldliness, envy, &c. And, by observing these, a man may learn abundance of the badness of his own heart, if he do consider with himself, how far such a spirit would carry him, if God did not restrain it. As when a man sees the fire burn the wood on the hearth, he gathers that it would consume the house too if not restrained.

2. *To examine those shews of goodness that the heart makes.* The heart makes many shews of goodness sometimes of sorrow for sin, of love to God, to godly people, of love to ordinances, of desires to be converted, of believing the word of God, of humility, of patience, of thankfulness: and the way to know the heart, is, to search whether it be not false in these appearances; to examine

the ends and motions of those frames and workings of heart, whether the root of them be not self-love, fear of hell, hope of merit, &c.

3. *To try his heart, by supposing some suitable cases to it;* as he may suppose, to himself That such godly men as he pretend great love to, should slight and despise him; that God should take away such a child from him, that God should convert some others, and leave him under guilt and terrors; that his estate should be lost, that there should come persecuting times; that he were in the hands of enemies that would kill him, if he would not carry sinfully; that God should now come to take away his life before he is converted. By questioning seriously with himself what he thinks he should do in such cases, he may come to have more understanding in his own heart. Changes of condition make great discoveries of the heart: and supposed changes sometimes do a pretty deal that way; such questions, if seriously considered, may be as touchstones to discover what is in the heart; the answer of the heart to such enquiries, may give men a great deal of light to see themselves by.

Quest. *How does God shew men the badness of their own hearts.*

Ans. 1. The *means* whereby God effects it, *is by leading men into temptation.* Men in continuance of time fall into temptation, and

so the vizard falls off from their hearts, and they come to have an understanding of the plague that is therein. Sometimes by reason of some temptation they are drawn into some moral evil, and that discovers their hypocrisy and corruption: sometimes temptations prevail upon them to make them worldly and proud: sometimes by afflictions the discontentment of their hearts is stirred up; so by God's not hearing their prayers, by converting other persons; sometimes by hearing the doctrine of God's sovereignty, or the strictness of the law. Sometimes the word of God, and sometimes the works of God are a temptation to them, and occasion them to be dead to that which is good, and make their corruptions work violently, Rom. vii. 8. *Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.*

2. *As to the manner it is done gradually.* God does not lead men at once into an understanding of their hearts; as the surgeon by degrees comes to the bottom of the sore. God could at once make men see the bottom of their own hearts, as when the jailor was converted; but in this way men would not have such experience of the deceitful turnings and windings of their own hearts; but he generally shews it them by degrees, and they are a long while before they come to an understanding of them; they see something of their hearts, and then grow into a pretty good

opinion of them again, they have many partial discoveries of their heart; sometimes they go forward in discerning their hearts, and then go backward again; they get ground, and then they lose it; they seem as if they would presently come to an understanding of them, and then there is a stop put to it for a pretty while; a great deal of time is consumed before they come to have a thorough understanding of themselves: men are sometimes years under trouble before they do attain unto it.

Quest. *What must men know of their own hearts, before they be converted?*

Answ. In general, *They must know so much as is sufficient to bring them off from trusting in their own righteousness and their own strength.* Some men know a great deal more of their own hearts than other men, they see many particular deceits and workings of corruption that other men do not see, and no man knows his heart so before conversion, but he may learn a great deal more after he is converted: but so much must be known by every man, as is sufficient to break him off from trusting in himself: it is the sight of his own heart that does take him off from trusting in himself: let him hear never so much about the insufficiency of his own righteousness, he will trust in himself, till he sees his own heart; but when he sees that thoroughly, it is impossible he should

trust in himself, for he sees there is nothing there to trust unto.

Particularly, 1. *He must see himself under the reigning power of sin.* If men imagine that they have no great disposition to sin, or that their corruptions are in any degree mortified, they will commend themselves to God upon that account; and will not see it just and fair for God to condemn them. There is no absolute necessity they should have the particular consideration of every corruption that is in their hearts; but they must see that they are under the dominion of sin, that a spirit of self-love reigns in them, and that their heart is contrary to that which is good; they find such workings of pride, discontentment and enmity to Christ, as shews to them they have abominable hearts; that their hearts are like the hearts of devils, as full of sin as a toad is of poison, Rom. vii. 9.

2. *To be empty of all goodness.* He has no inclination to any thing that is good, that there is no disposition to that which is good, but a total emptiness. It may be he does not think particularly of every grace that he is destitute of that, but sees that he is utterly void of spiritual life, that he has no power to do any good, he is dead in sin, wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Before that, he was convinced of a weakness, but now he finds himself dead; he thought before that he had little strength, now he sees that he has

none: there is not one spark of goodness in him, nor any power to get any, he is stript of all his perfections, and sees an utter emptiness in himself of all that is good; he has no love, no godly sorrow, no thankfulness, no humility, no spiritual desires; those appearances, that he had, are all vanished out of sight, he cannot do any thing, there is no seed of any goodness in him; if he be advantaged with all manner of helps, yet it is quite beyond his power to work up any good frame in his heart; he prays, but there is no goodness in his prayers, and he is incapable of working up any; he is not in a swoon, rubbing and chafing will not fetch him to life, but he is everlastingly dead in sin, unless God will put a principle of life into him.

SOMETIMES the man says that *he sees that he can do nothing of himself.* In this case he may be told,

That the best saint in the world can do nothing of himself, John xv. 4. Those, that do a great deal for God, and have a gracious principle, do yet know that they can do nothing of themselves: and a natural man may stand convinced of this, that he can do nothing of himself, though he be very proud, and imagines that he does God a great deal of choice service; when he says, he can do nothing of himself, he only means, that he can do nothing without assistance from God. This a man may see, and yet be a great stranger to his

own heart. The thing that he wants to see is, that he has no principle of doing any good, that there is no power nor inclination in him, but that he is totally and everlastingly dead in sin, unless God infuse a new principle into him.

SOMETIMES men have *great discoveries of their own heart for a pretty while together, and yet do not come to lie at God's foot*, they say themselves, *they cannot do it.* In this case they may be told,

1. *That they cannot deliver themselves; that it is utterly impossible for them to mend their own hearts.* For men may see themselves bad and insufficient, yet not be brought to despair as to their own power; be nourishing a secret hope, that in time with some advantages their heart will be brought to a better pass; therefore it is best to possess them with a sense of their utter insufficiency to help themselves; they may as well make a world, as make their own hearts good; they cannot work faith in themselves, John vi. 44.

2. *That they cannot deserve that God should give grace to them.* They cannot force God to work regeneration in them, they have no natural excellency to engage God, they cannot work upon the mercy of God, nor engage the justice of God to save them; God is not bound to them to help them, there is nothing to hinder him if he pleases, there is nothing to oblige him, they cannot compel

God; God is free to help them, or deny them help, as it pleases him.

3. *That it is dangerous to stand it out against God.* If they do not yield, they are in danger either to be left of God to a senseless spirit, or to get a false confidence, or to be snatched away out of the world; men stand in slippery places that continue to be subborn against great conviction: it is not long before the scale will turn; if they do not quickly submit, there is danger of their rejection.

SOMETIMES the man says, *that now he can justify God, however he deals with him,* and yet it is evident that he is not brought off from his own righteousness. In this case he may be told,

1. *That he must beware that he do not make a righteousness of this.* Pride will feed upon any appearance of good qualifications, and if he lots upon it that now his heart is better than it was, and that God is taken with him, he will greatly deceive himself; his justifying of God, is no justification of himself; his justifying of God, will not make God to justify him; though he justifies God, yet God condemns him.

2. *That some men do justify God from a partial conviction of the righteousness of their condemnation.* Conscience takes notice of their sinfulness, and tells them that they may righteously be damned; as Pharaoh, who

justified God, Exod. ix. 27. And they give some kind of consent to it, but many times it does not continue; they have only a pang upon them, that usually dies away after a little time: this justifying of God differs much from that which does immediately go before conversion, which is a fixed and thorough conviction, arising from a thorough understanding of their own hearts.

SOMETIMES the *man seems to be upon the very borders of despair.* For some men are nearer to it a great deal than others, he is in anguish of spirit and does almost conclude, that there is no mercy for him. In this case he may be told,

1. *That there is no hope in any creature.* He cannot help himself, he has no wisdom, power, nor worthiness that can help him; so there is no way that he can take that is sufficient for his deliverance: that ministers are not able to deliver him, and that if others pray for him, yet that will not secure his salvation: all creatures are cyphers, and cannot work out any salvation for him; if God will destroy him, there is none that can save him.

2. *That God may help him; it is not beyond the power of God to change his heart, and it is not beyond the grace of God to help him.* The reason that men are not pardoned, is not the greatness of their sins, but because they do not come to Jesus Christ. That though God be angry, yet he should not be discour-

aged, God is always angry with sinners, when he comes to bestow converting grace upon them: that God has done a great deal for him, inasmuch as he makes him sensible of his danger: that these discoveries of danger are many times forerunners of conversion: that his condition is a great deal more hopeful now, than when he pleased himself with his frames and attainments; every man must despair in himself, before he comes to trust in Christ; that there is enough in Christ, he *is able to save to the uttermost*, Heb. vii. 15. Christ came to *save the chief of sinners*, 1 Tim. 5.

3. *That there is no way left him now but to yield himself into the hands of God.* If God destroy him he may, he lies at the mere mercy of God; if God will deliver him he may, if he does not he does no wrong; he cannot run from God, he cannot force God; if he stands it out against God, he takes a way to ruin himself; the safest course he can take, is to fall into the hands of God; it may be God may help him, however he can but perish.

SOMETIMES a little before the work of God is completed in him, he complains that he *seems to be as before he was under convictions*, careless and senseless; his terrors have left him, and he is not affected with his condition. In this case he may be told,

1. *That now he may see what an heart he has, and how insufficient he is to deliver himself.* His heart is empty of all that is good, and there is no possibility of his attaining salvation by his own power, he has no principle of grace, and never had; the frames that formerly he had, were nothing else but the workings of self-love and natural conscience; and unless God does deliver him, he will never attain unto life.

2. *That his way must be to wait upon God still.* This is no sign God has given him over, his terrors may quickly return again, and he may find mercy for all this: when he had his good frames and affections, they could not save him, nor make his peace with God; and if God do shew him his own emptiness, he may quickly after discover to him the excellency of Christ.

At length the man seems as if he were thoroughly brought off from himself, and brought to lie at the foot of God. All his selfish hopes are taken away, he sees his own heart, and his will bows, he seems to resign up himself to God.

In this case,

1. *It is best to examine whether there be no deceit in it.* Sometimes it is so plain that there is no great occasion to examine, sometimes it is more doubtful. When they are thoroughly humbled, such things as these do concur. 1. He sees his own righteousness

to be utterly empty and vile, that it has no power to draw the heart of God; he sees nothing at all to commend him, but he has provoked God thereby. 2. He is at an end of his contrivances to change his heart. Formerly when things appeared dark unto him, he was wont to think, that if he did thus or so, that would bring him into a more hopeful way; but now he is beyond all his contrivances, he cannot do any more. 3. He sees his heart spiritually dead. He is utterly destitute of power to do any thing; yea, he has no inclination to any good. 4. He sees he is in God's hand. It is free for God to do as he will with him, and he resigns up himself to God, so he is more quiet now than he was; both because his will is brought down, and he is satisfied that God can, and may help him.

2. *It is no ways fit to tell a man that God will shew mercy to him.* For though this be the manner of God, when men are prepared for grace, to bestow grace upon them, yet there is no promise in the scripture made to such persons; the promises are made to coming to Christ: faith is the condition of salvation; and there be many promises made to humility, yet there are none made to humiliation. And he is to be told, that he is in God's hands, God is at liberty to do as he will with him, and that he must wait upon God to open his eyes, and shew Jesus Christ unto him.

3. *It is very meet to set the Gospel before him, and mind him of God's sending Christ into the world to save sinners.* That Jesus Christ has satisfied the justice of God, and performed perfect obedience for us: that God has pardoned many through Christ, that he offers salvation to him through Jesus Christ; and that God has promised eternal life to all that do accept of Christ: that those, that have nothing to bring with them, shall be welcome to him; that God is of infinite mercy, and delights to glorify his grace in saving the chief of sinners: that because we had no worthiness, God has provided a worthiness for us in Christ: that Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all that come to him: that God's love is free, and there is no danger in venturing upon Christ; *whoever believeth on him shall not be confounded.*

Quest. *Is there at that time any true meltings of heart because of sin? Is the soul truly grieved for its sins against God, as some men have thought?*

Ans. That though there is such a conviction of sin as makes men to justify God, yet there is no godly sorrow for sin. Men are not at this time affected with any godly sorrow.

1. *Because such sorrow is inconsistent with the work of humiliation.* When the sinner is humbled, he sees himself emptied of himself, and sees his own heart dead in sin; this could not be, if he had any gracious sorrow for sin;

if there were true sorrow for sin, there must be love to God, a spiritual understanding, a new heart, a divine principle put into the man; for nature cannot produce any such effect.

2. *Because faith is the first act of grace.* If the man had a gracious principle, he would immediately entertain Christ and the gospel; after a man has received a principle of regeneration, the first way that it works in is by drawing the heart to Christ; when men's hearts are changed, and a new nature put into them, it does not first work in a way of sorrow for sin, or thirsting after God's glory, or delighted in holiness; but always the first act of grace is to close with Christ: God leads him into the exercise of this, that he may be justified, Rom. v. 1. If he did any other gracious act before this, it could not be accepted, for the person is not accepted before faith: all sanctification is the fruit of faith, Acts xxvi. 18.

Soon after the soul is brought to lie at God's foot, he is wont to give an account of his closing with Christ; that God has revealed Christ to him and drawn his heart to him, and he does accept of Christ. In this case it is best,

1. *To examine whether his faith be right.* And in this work there is no weight to be laid on it, whether it was in hearing, reading, praying or meditating, that God gave the light to him; God does not confine himself to any of those ways: neither is there any weight to

be laid on it, whether it was by any particular word or without it; if it be according to the word it is sufficient; nor must we lay weight upon it, whether it were by a word of promise, or some other passage of the gospel; nor whether he had one word came to him or many. Sometimes many promises flow in, one after another, in abundance; but special enquiry is to be made, 1. What condition he was in just before, whether he was wholly emptied of himself, or found any imaginary goodness in himself; if his humiliation was right, there is no doubt of his faith: 2. Whether by that light that was given him, he saw Christ and salvation offered to him, or whether he saw that God loved him or pardoned him; for the offer of grace, and our acceptance goes before pardon, and therefore much more before the knowledge of it: 3. Whether he saw a glorious fulness in Christ, a sufficiency for the greatest sinners, so as to make him admire the excellency of Christ. 4. Whether the offer came with divine authority, whether he saw God calling of him so that he could not but accept thereof.

2. *If upon enquiry the case be more doubtful, as it may be, partly because some things were not so clear to himself, or because he has forgotten some material thing, and cannot speak to it.* It may be well to tell him, that if it be right, he will see more of it; when God begins to make a discovery of Christ, he will

not leave men, but is wont to shew them more. *The path of the just is like the morning light*, &c. Prov. 4.

3. *If the case be plain, it is best to encourage him, though there is no need to be positive.* But he may be told, that *it is hopeful that God has drawn his heart to Christ, and made a gracious change in his soul;* and that if he does indeed believe on Christ, he shall certainly be saved; this sin does not make such a breach between God and him, as to hazard his salvation.

4. *To warn him to depend still on the free grace of God in Christ;* he must expect many dark hours and times of temptation, but his way must be, *to grow in the knowledge of Christ;* he must not think that now he shall always live a life of joy and comfort. Satan will be busy with him, and he will have many workings both of carnal confidence and unbelief; and he must get more and more convinced of his own righteousness, and the fulness of Christ; if he live many years, he must never expect any thing *to glory in but Christ Jesus:* and he is likewise to be warned, that he *live up to the mercy of God to him;* that he do not fall into a languishing and pining condition, but maintain the *life and power of godliness*, that so he may not expose himself to temptation and darkness, and that he may *not dishonor the holy name of God; shewing forth the virtue of him that has called him out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

There be TWO particular CASES that do require a particular consideration.

The first CASE is, *When a minister is sent for by a man upon his sick bed.* The first thing to be done is *to get an understanding in what condition the person is.* For though a man that does not know his case may speak several things that may be safe and profitable, whatever his condition is; yet the more knowledge there is of the state of the man, the more advantage he is under to speak pertinently.

I. If it be plain that the man is in a natural condition, it is most proper to insist upon these three things:

1. *That he has a present absolute necessity to be at peace with God:* that if he should die in a natural condition, he will be forever undone: it is very fit he should be reminded of his sinful life, and the dreadfulness of that punishment that hangs over his head; which may be set before him in an affecting manner, that if it be possible he may be terrified, and made sensible of those eternal miseries that are coming upon him.

2. *That he may not rest in any thing short of Jesus Christ.* Men in such a case are like a man drowning, ready to catch hold of any thing that comes near; they are ready to have a dependance upon their privileges, upon their parentage, upon their sorrow for their misspent life, and upon their purposes

to live better if God raise them up again; he must be led into an understanding of the strictness of the law of God, and the vanity of all carnal confidences.

3. *That there is a glorious way of life prepared by Christ.* Christ Jesus has fulfilled the law, and wrought out eternal salvation for us. That the gift of God is eternal life; and that the mercy of God is free, and God does not refuse any that do hearken to the call of the gospel, that God will as readily receive him if he comes to Christ, as if he were likely to live many years, and do service to God in the world.

And if his particular temptations may be discerned, care must be taken to remove them; if he be under any special discouragement or any flattering delusion, the snare, if it be possible, must be broken; he must be shewed the vanity of that temptation. Such light must be held out, that if God will bless it he may be delivered.

If at that time, or any other afterwards, he does pretend to believe in Christ, it is very meet that he be cautioned that he does not deceive himself; for sick-bed repentances are seldom true. Many persons that made great pretensions when sick, have proved very bad after their recovery.

II. If it be doubtful whether the man be in a natural condition, or converted, as there may be some occasion to hope because of his

profession, because of his estimation among men; because of an orderly carriage, and yet occasion to fear, because there is no great evidence of grace, either in his conversation before, or discourse at present; sometimes there is more grounds for hope, sometimes for fear. These three things may safely be spoken to him.

1. *The doctrine of the law and gospel may be set before him.* They may be somewhat explained and cleared up: it is fit men should be reminded of the rule they are to be judged by. Many times when the rule is clearly laid down, conscience makes application, and witnesses to men how it is with them, Heb. iv. 12. *The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword*, &c.

2. *Promises may be applied conditionally.* He may be told, that if he have been thoroughly broken off from himself, and brought to rely upon Christ, God has accepted of him; that if his heart have been drawn by gospel encouragements, to rely on Christ, he is out of danger; that if God's glory be upon his heart indeed, he is an heir of glory; he may be told, that only his own conscience can tell what the workings of his heart have been: that if he be not mistaken, but has indeed made Christ his refuge, all his sins are pardoned.

3. *He may be warned that he do not deceive himself.* It may be meet to remind him, that the heart is deceitful; that many false hearts go hoping out of the world; that there be several things that do resemble faith, and every grace may be counterfeited: that he had need to beg of God to discover things plainly to him: that it would be a dreadful thing to be mistaken; and so he may be charged that he do not trust in any thing in himself, but betake himself alone in Christ.

III. If it be considerably plain, that he is converted and gracious; either from his known eminency in religion, or from an account that he gives of communion with God, or discoveries of Christ, and gracious workings of his heart: it may be very meet, to comfort him with those great and precious promises that God has made, to remind him of the freeness of God's grace, and the preciousness of the blood of Christ; he may be minded of those things that are the pillars of our faith, and the foundations of our comfort; how God in all ages of the world has proposed this way of salvation, in this way the saints of old have lived and died; how the faithfulness of God stands engaged for their salvation, that their sins and iniquities are cast behind God's back; this must be understood or spoken upon a supposition, that their work is a thorough work.

In case he desires the minister to tell him what he judges about his sincerity; it may be suitable to tell him, that as far as he can discern, his heart is upright, and that the root of the matter is found in him; he must tell him that he has no infallible knowledge, God alone does know the hearts of men; there is no depending on his judgment, but so far as he can perceive, his soul has been renewed by the spirit of God.

If the man has any particular temptations, it is very suitable to remove them; he may be under temptation, because he has great deadness, a great deal of pride and hypocrisy; because he has not had so much discovery of the favor of God, as he perceives others have had: because God has afflicted him very much; because he is withdrawn now in the time of his sickness: such particular temptations are to be answered. It may be shewed to him, that the dealings of God are various with his people; that such things are not inconsistent with grace, that the best way is to live upon the free mercy of God in Christ.

The OTHER CASE is, *when such persons as have made an high profession of religion for a long while, are in darkness* about their condition.

In this case, the first care of the minister must be, to get satisfaction concerning the state of the person, whether he be regenerate

or not. Not but that many things may be spoken that may be profitable to them, whether they be sincerely godly or no: but if the minister do not know their condition, he cannot apply proper remedies; and he may speak that which may be very dangerous, if he supposes the man to be unconverted, when he is converted; he may torment him, and discourage him needlessly; if he supposes the man converted when he is not, he may do him much damage by comforting him up in a false way; therefore it is very needful that he do get what satisfaction he can about their condition, that so he may be helpful to them in their distresses.

In order to his passing a right judgment upon their condition, he must be careful that he do not lay too much weight upon it, that they have been in church-fellowship many years, that their carriage has been orderly, that they are well accounted of where they live, for these are very fallible signs, such things are common to saints and hypocrites; though these things may be grounds of charity; but a minister had need have better grounds to go upon when he comforts up persons with hopes of reconciliation.

Neither must he lay too much weight on bad signs, that are not demonstrative; if the man do not know the time of his conversion, or first closing with Christ, if he have any notable blemish, if he be not well accounted

of, the minister may not draw any peremptory conclusion from thence that he is not godly; yea, if he do judge himself confidently to be unconverted, it is best to enquire somewhat further in it.

It is best discovered by three sorts of enquiries,

1. *Whether they have passed through the several steps of the work of conversion.* Some can give so full an account thereof, as will abundantly satisfy the minister that the work is right; some are so strangely to seek, that he may be much confirmed, that they have no grace; in some others after they have given what account they can, the work is more dubious.

2. *Whether they have lived a life of sanctification.* There is great diversity in the measures of sanctification that men have attained unto; every holy man lives an holy life. And by enquiring what knowledge they have of God? Whether they prize the glory of God? Whether they hate all sin? Whether they do draw their encouragement from Christ? Whether they love holiness for holiness' sake? What conflict they have with pride, unbelief, a self-righteous spirit and self-love? A minister may come to competent satisfaction whether they be in a state of grace or not; in discoursing such things with them, a man may many times feel the workings of a spirit of holiness.

3. *Whether they have had sensible communion with God.* God is wont at times to draw nigh to the souls of his people, sometimes in meditation, sometimes in prayer, and in other ordinances; and to make discoveries of himself, and of Jesus Christ to their souls, and to draw their hearts to him; and if there has been any thing considerable that way; the minister may be well satisfied of their good estate.

In case the minister be satisfied that the man is not converted, he must use his prudence to judge whether it will be for the man's profit, that he do in plain terms tell him so; sometimes it may be a prejudice and a means to exasperate him. Sometimes there is no such danger, but he may freely tell him what he judges, and the reasons of his judgment.

But in case he do not see it his way to tell the man his thoughts concerning him, yet he ought, in conscience in the wisest way he can, to put him into the understanding of his own condition: he may not suffer the man to go away with an opinion, that he thinks well of him, much less may he leave him ignorant of such rules whereby he may come to understand his condition; it becomes him to lay such signs of trial before him as are most likely to bring him to a sight of himself, and convince him of his dangerous estate.

In case the minister be satisfied on good grounds about the man's good estate: he ought to endeavor to clear it up to the man, laying convincing light before him; and answering those temptations that make it doubtful to the man himself; and also to direct him in such ways, wherein it is hopeful that God will help him and deliver him from his temptations.

SHORT SERMONS.

SERMON I.

What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
Matt xvi. 26.

HOW little attention does this infinitely important subject gain in the world! How few consider the salvation of their souls as the great business of life! You, who are reading these lines, did you ever lay it to heart, and are you acting accordingly? If this is your case, the following language will express your heart-felt convictions: "I have a soul as well as a body. My soul must live forever, in happiness or in misery. It is capable of inconceivably greater pain and pleasure than my body is. It is matter of comparatively little importance, whether I am in abject poverty or in the greatest affluence, during the few years I am to continue in the present world! whether I am respected or despised by my fellow mortals; whether my body is sickly or healthy, full of pain or at ease. These are matters of small consequence;

death is certain and near. "Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust, must soon be pronounced over my lifeless body. In a dying moment, if I could call the whole world my own, what good would it do me? what comfort could it afford me? But whether my soul is to be eternally happy or miserable, the companion of angels and saints made perfect around the throne of God, or doomed to weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, with devils and damned spirits in hell, where the worm never dieth, and where the fire never will be quenched—this is the most momentous inquiry I ought to make. To escape from the wrath to come, and to secure an inheritance among the saints in light, ought to be my great concern. Is it so? Which world is most in my thoughts, this or the next? Which am I most anxious about? Am I not often inquiring "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed? But when did I seriously enquire, "What must I do to be saved?" If I have no prevailing concern about my soul, I may be certain its state is bad, and its danger extreme.

SERMON II.

Sin is the transgression of the law.
1 John, iii. 4.

SINNER, did you ever inquire what sin is? Did you ever study the word of God, that you might have proper views of this greatest of all evils? If you have never made the inquiry, your state is bad, dreadfully bad. Your salvation is at stake. Look seriously into the text. Lift up your heart to God and say, "Lord, give me proper views of sin." "Sin is the transgression of the law." What law? The law of the most holy God. Where is this law to be found? It is contained in the ten commandments. Did I ever read them with a trembling heart and a faltering voice, asking, have I transgressed this or that part of God's holy law? Did I ever consider that the law may be broken by thought, as well as by word or deed? Did I ever reflect that the law is spiritual, reaching to the thoughts, purposes, and intentions of the heart; that every irregular thought is a transgression of the law; that every unholy desire is sin; that for "every idle word that men speak, they must give account in the day of judgment," Matt. xii. 36. that awful day, when the heart-searching God shall judge the secrets of our hearts? Alas! how many idle thoughts have passed through my mind, without the proper conviction, attending each of them, that this is sin!

See Gen. vi. 5. How many idle words have I every day spoken without reflecting, that for every one of these I must give account! Matt. xii. 36. When did the evil of my thoughts and words extort an anxious cry from my heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" If sin be the transgression of the law, that is, if falling short of the perfection which the law requires in thought, word and deed, be sin, as well as doing that which the law forbids; how much have I to answer for, that perhaps I never before thought of! Yet I have often confessed, "we have done what we ought not to have done, and left undone what we ought to have done, and there is no health in us." Alas! I have mocked God, by confessing with my lips what I did not feel in my heart. Let my conscience, O Lord, now be awakened to feel what sin is!

SERMON III.

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Rom. iii. 23.

ALL—and therefore you, my dear reader, and myself. We have sinned; that is, we have broken God's law, for "there is none righteous, no not one," Rom. iii. 10. There is none that hath kept the law of God. We have transgressed *every* precept of his moral

law, either in act, word, or evil desire. The charge is heavy, but the verdict is true. Let us consider the case, earnestly entreating God to enlighten our minds. Take the ten commandments in your hand, and read. We have broken the *first* commandment by trusting in and loving other things more than God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," Matt. xxii. 37. In this we have come short. The *second* respects the manner in which God is to be worshipped, not with outward form and ceremony only, but in spirit and in truth. Alas! how deficient have we been in that serious attention, that inward reverence, and that devout affection which his worship required! God is a jealous God. You say you have never been guilty of profane cursing and swearing, and so think you have kept the *third*; but have you never, in saying your prayers, or in reading the scripture, suffered the holy name of God to pass through your lips, without an awful sense of what you were doing, or even without thought? "God will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain." Have you always employed the whole Sabbath in those religious exercises which the *fourth* commandment enjoins; and performed these exercises in such a devout manner, that the law has nothing to charge you with, in thought, word, or deed? Sinner, lay your hand upon your mouth, and plead guilty.

Need I go through the second table? Dost thou "love thy neighbor as thyself?" Hast thou done unto all men as thou wouldest they should do unto thee? Have you never been guilty of disobedience to your parents? Know you not, that every rising of causeless anger is murder—Matt. v. 22. that every unchaste desire is adultery—Matt. v. 28. that secret fraud and neglect of affording that succor to the poor which is in your power, are theft; that every uncharitable thought is a breach of the *ninth*, and every covetous wish a transgression of the *tenth* commandment? Surely all have sinned in doing that which the law forbids, and in not doing that which the law commands. What have I then done, or what have I not done? "All have sinned." What is my state? A state of sinfulness and misery. Why have I not felt it till now? Because sin hath blinded mine eyes against the light of truth.

SERMON IV.

Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.

Gal. iii. 10.

WHAT means that awful word "cursed?" The curse of God is the declaration of his just anger and wrath against sin and the sin-

ner. "Who can stand in his sight if he be angry?" Ps. lxxvi. 7. But who is cursed? Every one, whether young or old, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, that continueth not throughout the whole period of life, without any intermission, failure or defect whatever, in all things, in thought, word, and deed, doing perfectly what the law requires, and keeping himself absolutely free from what the law condemns—"In all things that are written in the book of the law do to them, (the law being understood in its spiritual and most exalted sense and interpretation:) and remember that it is farther said, James ii. 10, "that whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Now consider, has there been a day, an hour, a moment, in which your state has been such as the law requires? The curse is pronounced on every trsnsgressor for every transgression: not only for profaneness, murder, adultery, and such like gross acts of sin, but for every sinful thought, and for every moment in which you have failed to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul." O how many curses then has the law denounced against you and me! It has been revealing the wrath of God against us year after year; for year after year, we have been sinning against God. Are these things so? Can you from scripture prove them to be false? What! is every sinner

cursed for every sin, and have I been perpetually sinning all my life? Is it true, that I have never, from a sincere regard to God, made conscience of one thought, word or action; never performed one duty, or abstained from one sin, on a right motive, love to God? Has my whole life been one uninterrupted course of evil? Is my state, then, a state of condemnation? How astonishing it is! what a proof of the darkness of my mind, and hardness of my heart, that I can live one hour at ease under the curse of God! that I can lie down or rise up without trembling, since the curse of God must plunge the sinner into hell!

SERMON V.

The wages of sin is death.

Rom. vi. 23.

"SIN is the transgression of the law," 1 John iii. 4. that eternal rule of right to rational beings, the moral law of God. It is sin, all sin, every sin, that is here spoken of. Death, whatever that word means, is the just and certain reward of every sin committed in thought, word, or deed. But what is death? The death of the body is its separation from the soul. You are a sinner; and this effect of sin you have begun to feel in all those pains and sicknesses, which are bringing your body to the grave. You are now a dying man.

The death of the body, or its separation from the soul, will occasion its return to the dust, from whence it was taken. But death, in the text, means something more: *the death of the soul.* What is that? It is something as much more dreadful than that of the body, as the soul is of more value than the body. It is the separation of the soul from God, as its life and happiness: hence it becomes a state of unavoidable sin, and, first or last, a state of self-tormenting anguish, arising from the forfeiture of the friendship of God, with all its attendant blessings. For God is that to the soul, which the soul is to the body. Spiritnal death, or the death of the soul, consists not in the loss of consciousness or feeling, but in the loss of the image and favor of God. "For in his favor is life;" Psalm xxx. 5. and in his frown is death. If you, my dear fellow-sinner, are not made alive by God's converting grace, this is your state. You "are dead in trespasses and sins:" and unless you are quickened by God's Spirit communicated to you, before your departure hence, in this unhappy state you must forever continue: for the death spoken of in the text is opposed to eternal life in the following clause. And oh, if the effect of this spiritual death is misery, even in this present life, (as the experience of every man testifies, if he will own the truth) then what must it be in the world to come? Ah! who can tell? We read of "a worm that

never dies," to prey on the tormented conscience; of "fire that never can be quenched, to destroy both body and soul in hell;" of "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" and all this to last forever. But is there not a disproportion between the offence and the punishment? Let God be true, and every man a liar. He says, "the wages," the just reward, "of sin is death." God's truth binds him to fulfil his threatenings, as well as his promises. O fly from the wrath to come, for "who among us can dwell with devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

SERMON VI.

What must I do to be saved?

Acts xvi. 30.

THIS is the anxious inquiry of an awakened sinner. By an awakened sinner I mean the man who knows what sin is, and who painfully feels that he is a sinner, and as such under the curse of God, and in danger of hell-fire. Are you an awakened sinner? Alas! all men are naturally asleep, and insensible of their danger; and so continue, till they are roused up out of their carnal slumbers by the word and spirit of God. They cry peace, peace, to themselves, when there is no peace: for God hath positively said, Isa. xlviii. 22.

"There is no peace to the wicked." They live on day after day, keeping death, judgment, and eternity out of their thoughts; never reading the bible with a sincere desire to know what their state is, and never crying to God from the bottom of their hearts, "God be merciful to me a sinner." If you live without earnest prayer to God for mercy, habitually neglecting it, you give as full proof that you are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in you," as if you were living in the grossest immoralities. But when it pleases God to fasten conviction on the heart of a man, and to awaken his conscience, then he starts up as one out of sleep. He sees, what he never discovered before, that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God. He reads in the word of truth, "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God; Psalm ix. 17. and trembles as he reads. He acknowledges, "I have forgotten God, and sinned against him;" and being convinced that "the wages of sin is death," he asks, How shall I escape the damnation of hell? Such a man is deeply in earnest, when he makes the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" He feels that his all for eternity is at stake. The world, with all its pleasures, profits, and honors, becomes tasteless and insipid; it cannot give ease to his aching heart, nor heal his wounded conscience. He now begins to pray. His prayer

is now the real language of his heart, not the formal, unmeaning service it was before. A sense of his danger drives him to the throne of grace. The word of God he now reads as the decision of eternal truth, and he reads it as having an interest in every line. O sinner! has this inquiry been yours, "What must I do to be saved?"

SERMON VII.

Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.
Mark i. 15.

THESE are the words of our blessed Saviour, addressed to poor, guilty sinners like you and me. But what is repentance? It is the work of the Spirit of Christ upon the heart, producing such an inward sense of the evil and guilt of sin, as makes a man wonder that he is out of hell; such a hatred of sin as causes a man to forsake it; and such an apprehension of the consequences of sin, as makes a man willing to be saved wholly and solely through what Jesus Christ has done and suffered for lost souls. The penitent sinner is convinced that sin deserves punishment; that he himself, as a sinner, is liable to the wrath of God; that sin must be pardoned or punished; that he can make no amends for the least of his transgressions, and consequently that his salvation must be all of grace. The man

thus humbled is prepared to welcome the news of a Saviour, "who came to seek and to save that which was lost." Matt. xviii. 11. Such is the gospel. It is glad tidings to a lost, guilty world. The sum and substance of it is, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. i. 15. He died to make satisfaction for their sins; and, being God and man in one Christ, "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Heb. vii. 25. His blood being the blood of God incarnate, Acts xx. 28. was infinitely meritorious, and it was shed for this very purpose, to take away sin: so that if your sins, poor self-condemned sinner, are more in number than the hairs of your head, or the sand on the sea shore; if they are great and aggravated, and red like scarlet; yet there is hope: "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth (hath power to cleanse) from all sin." 2 John i. 7. "But how am I to become interested in this, and get the comfort of it?" Believe the gospel, rely on what the word of God says about Jesus Christ, and his willingness and power to save sinners. "But may I without presumption believe that Jesus Christ came to save such a wretch as I am?" Yes, "this is God's commandment, that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John iii. 23. There can be no presumption in doing what God has commanded, and taking God at his word.

SERMON VIII.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief.
Tim. i. 15.

THIS is the sum of the gospel. Jesus Christ is God: "He made the world, and all that therein is: all things were made by him and for him;" See John i. 1—3. Col. i. 19. But we his creatures broke his laws, and rebelled against him. He might justly have cast us into hell, the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. But O, wonderous love! God was manifested in the flesh; was born into the world. For what purpose? To save sinners. How did he save them? By dying for them upon the cross, bearing their sins in his own body upon the tree, and washing them from their sins in his own blood. Did I ever consider this wonderful love of God? I am a sinner, born in sin, and, as such, liable to eternal punishment. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," even such as I am? Have I ever earnestly entreated him to save me? Do I believe that I am a miserable sinner? Do I feel it and lament it? And am I sensible that unless Christ saves me, I must be a damned soul forever? Alas, how many never go to Jesus Christ to save them? How many are careless and unconcerned about what

Jesus Christ has done for sinners! But do I lay it to heart? Are all my hopes built upon this faithful saying, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners?" O what a comfortable saying it is, that though I am a sinner, the chief of sinners, yet I may be saved from the sin I have committed, and the hell I have deserved, if, under a penitential sense of my wickedness, I look to Jesus Christ and trust in him! O may the Holy Spirit enable me to look unto Jesus! O what should I, a poor wretched helpless sinner, do, if there were no Jesus to save me! How eagerly should I welcome such glad tidings! Surely the message is "worthy of all acceptation," and ought to be received by all, since all have sinned, and stand in need of salvation; and since all, who feel their lost estate, may come to him who is able to save them. O Lord, the Holy Ghost, enable me to believe to the saving of my soul!

SERMON IX.

Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.

John vi. 37.

HOW tenderly compassionate is the dear Friend of poor lost sinners! How anxious does he appear to remove every objection out of the way of the enquiring soul, that is made

willing to be saved on gospel terms, "by grace through faith!" Eph. ii. 8. Lest such should be discouraged, how graciously does he describe their character and feelings, inviting them with all the eloquence of god-like pity to come unto him! Hear his words, Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Are you weary of the slavery of sin, and the bondage of Satan and the world? Are you heavy laden with guilt in your consciences, and fear in your hearts? Behold! the loving Saviour stands with open arms to receive you; and these are the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." He is faithful that hath promised, Heb. x. 23. and cannot deceive you. He will not alter the thing that has gone out of his lips. Psalm lxxxix. 31. Make the experiment, come to him. He is able and willing to save; wherefore should you doubt?

But you say, "I am a sinner." Be it known unto you, that Jesus Christ is an Almighty Saviour. You say farther, "I have continued long in open rebellion against him. I have been many years sinning against him with a high hand." Be it so, you are not out of the reach of mercy, nor is your case too desperate for the skill and power of the great physician. Do you still object, "I am a sinner of no common kind, of sin-

ners I am chief? Even unto you is the word of this salvation sent. The blood of Jesus is the blood of God, Acts xx. 28. and therefore cleanseth from all sin." 1 John i. 7. His righteousness is the righteousness of God, Rom. iii. 23. and therefore is sufficient to justify the most ungodly. Do not despair; for thus saith thy Saviour, the lover of thy poor soul, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." He makes no exceptions; being "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter iii. 9.

But you say, "Must I not mend my heart and reform my life before I venture to approach him? If you wait till you have effected this in your own strength, you will, after all, die in your sins. This he must do for you: and this he will effectually do for you, when you come to his cross, confessing your sins, and trusting in his blood as your atonement. You must come to him just as you are, a poor, vile sinner, to be washed in his blood, to be clothed in his righteousnes, sanctified by his Spirit, and fitted for his glory. Why do you object to receive what he is so ready to give, and that freely, "without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1. even pardon, holiness and heaven?—He professedly receiveth sinners, Luke xv. 3. that he may save them, and has solemnly declared, HIM THAT COMETH UNTO ME, be the person who, or what he may, I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT.

SERMON X.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. v. i.

"THERE is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," Isa. xlviii. 23. An unpardoned sinner can have no peace with God. While his conscience is unawakened, he may be careless and secure; but as soon as his eyes are opened, and his heart is made to feel, he must be miserable, till God speaks peace to his guilty soul. To be justified is to be pardoned and accepted of God. Pardon and acceptance are only to be obtained by faith in Jesus Christ, as having atoned for sin by his precious blood. When it is given me to believe that Jesus Christ hath taken away my sins, there is nothing more to distress my conscience; then I have "peace with God." The distress of an awakened soul arises from a guilty conscience, and a sense of his sins. As soon therefore as the poor, trembling sinner discovers, that Christ died for such as he is; that Christ being God is able to save the chief of sinners; that this was his errand into the world; and that he has said, "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." John vi. 37—As soon as the poor sinner believes this, he has peace with God: he can call God his father; he can trust God for every thing;

he can think of death with comfort, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Sinner is this your state! Do you know that there is no salvation without an interest in Christ; that there is no peace with God but through Christ; that unless your sins are pardoned your life must be unhappy, and your death the entrance on eternal misery? If I am looking unto Jesus as the only Saviour, and in self-despair have fled unto him for refuge, then God is no longer angry with me; my sins, which are many, are forgiven, my person is accepted, and if I die to-night I shall go to God. O happy state to have nothing to fear in life or death! to have God for our Friend, Christ for our Redeemer, the Holy Ghost for our Comforter, death our friend, heaven our home, and an eternity before us of peace and joy! Sinner, is this thy case?

SERMON XI.

Unto you which believe he is precious.
1 Pet. ii. 7.

THE apostle is speaking of Jesus Christ, the dear dying friend of poor lost sinners, who pitied us, when we had no pity on ourselves; and died for us, when otherwise we must have been cast into hell. Now if you believe this, that your sins would have damned you, if Christ had not taken them on himself; and

that you must have been cursed forever, if Christ had not been made a curse for you: if you feel in your hearts an humble assurance of pardon purchased by his blood; and if you can consider him as saying to you in the gospel, what he said to the poor, sinful woman, Luke vii. 48—50, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven;" then Christ is precious to you; you love him above all things. You love to think of him; you love to hear of him; you love to talk of him; whatever he has commanded, you desire to do; and whatever he has forbidden, you would not willingly do, to gain the whole world. You are now become a new creature. You cannot live as you once lived. You are born again. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. 2 Cor. v. 17. The things which you once hated, such as prayer, praise, hearing and reading God's word, you now love; and the things which you once loved, such as vain conversation, and trifling amusements, you now hate. You cannot now go to bed at night without thanking the adorable Saviour for the mercies of the day; nor without committing yourself to his protection for the night, and trusting your soul in his hands, that if you die before morning, he may receive you unto himself: and when you rise in the morning, you cannot go out into the world about your lawful business, without begging him to keep you from the snares of the world and the

temptations of Satan. Your only object is to please your beloved Saviour, and above all things, you fear to offend him. You desire, "whether you eat or drink, to do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. v. 14.

SERMON XII.

Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Heb. xii. 14.

GOD is a holy God: Christ is a holy Saviour: the Spirit of God is a holy Spirit: heaven is a holy place: the angels are holy angels: and all God's redeemed people are a holy people. Am I a holy person? If I am not, the scriptures assure me that I shall not (cannot) see God. It is not mere decency of conduct: there may be external morality where there is no holiness, though there can be no holiness without morality. If you are a holy person, you not only abstain from sin, but you really hate it. You hate all sin: whatever is not consistent with the will of God you hate and abhor. Your abhorrence is turned against yourself on account of your remaining sinfulness. You discover sin not only in your life, but in your heart. If you are a sanctified person, you make conscience not only of your actions and words, but of your thoughts. You desire not only to ap-

pear good in the eye of the world, but to approve yourself to God who searcheth the heart. You seek an inward conformity to the mind and will of God. Is this the case? Remember that it is written, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Holiness is, in short, the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us. This love becomes the *motive* to all holy obedience; the word of God then becomes the *rule* of the whole conduct; and the glory of God is proposed as to the *end* of our conversation. Now no man can enter heaven till he is made holy. Do you believe it? And is it the prayer of your heart, "Lord sanctify me wholly, body, soul, and spirit?" If it be, the Lord hath begun the good work in your heart, and he will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ, that you may be presented holy and unblameable before him in love.

SERMON XIII.

Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Titus ii. 13.

THIS is the happy privilege of the believer in Christ, to be looking for the second appearance of his Lord. Jesus has promised that he will come again; that he will "come

quickly." Rev. xxii. 20. He has declared that his coming will be sudden, like that of the thief in the night. Thess. v. 2. The believer is a man who is expecting it, waiting for it, and preparing to welcome it. He knows, that though "the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," yet, that another end of his coming is, that he may "be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." 2 Thess. i. 8, 10. Therefore "he looks for that blessed hope." He has "peace with God through Jesus Christ." Guilt, the cause of fear, is taken away. He believes that the Judge is his friend, therefore he looks forward with a comfortable expectation. He feels that his present state is not his rest; for though the guilt of sin is taken out of his conscience, and the love and power of it out of his heart, he painfully feels, that sin yet dwelleth in him; and therefore longs for the coming of Christ, that he may totally destroy it. The hope he has is a blessed hope, because the things hoped for are inestimable in value, eternal in duration, and certain to the man, who looks for them in faith and hope. "We that are in this tabernacle (of flesh and blood) do groan, being burden-

ed," 2 Cor. v. 4. with sin, affliction, and temptation: but at the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

SERMON XIV.

If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Luke xi. 13.

IN these words our gracious Father, who is in heaven, permits us to decide an important point by the conviction of our own consciences. He appeals to our feelings as parents, in order to encourage our hope, and enliven our confidence, ver. 11. "If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? If a hungry child come to a father, saying, "Father, I am starving for want, give me bread to eat," will the father (unless he is worse than a brute) give his child a stone to mock him? "Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? Or if he ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion," to destroy him? Certainly not. "How much more then shall your heavenly Father," whose

affection to his poor, sinful children is infinitely superior to yours for the offspring of your bodies, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

I am a poor, ignorant sinner, I want to know myself as a sinner before God, and as exposed to his just indignation. I want to know Jesus Christ as a Saviour, for, to know "Him, is life eternal." But this saving knowledge I can derive only from divine teaching. God has promised his Holy Spirit, to lead the poor ignorant sinner, that feels his ignorance, (for that is the point) into all truth necessary for his comfort and salvation. "O Lord, let thy Holy Spirit teach me!"

I am a poor, helpless sinner; I find I have no power to believe on the Son of God. Yet faith in him is essential to salvation. My conscience is distressed on account of my sins. I want to know him and the power of his resurrection. But I can no more believe by any mere exertion of my own powers, than I can make a world. God has promised his Holy Spirit to create faith in the heart of every humble supplicant. O Lord, help me to believe to the peace of my conscience, the salvation of my soul, and the eternal glory of thy name.

God giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. We can do nothing, we can do nothing but sin, and so destroy ourselves without his special assistance. Do you feel

you want it? And do want and absolute necessity drive you to a throne of grace for his comprehensive blessing? Do you ask as a hungry child asks his father for bread? Are you sensible of your ignorance, so as earnestly to seek his divine teaching; and of your helpless state, so as to ask help of God? "Ask, and ye shall have: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Consider, God cannot break his word. If you have asked without receiving, it is because you did not ask in earnest. You do not feel your want. Ask of God to give you to feel your wants, and then he will supply them: ask him to teach you to pray. Come to him as a poor, ignorant, helpless child, for "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Mat. xviii. 3. Lord, give unto us this child-like spirit!

SERMON XV.

It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

Hebrews ix. 27.

YOU and I are dying creatures. We have seen many of our friends and relatives laid in the grave: many as young as ourselves, and apparently as likely to live. Some we have seen carried off by long and lingering diseases,

and some cut down suddenly without warning. God only knows when we are to follow them into the eternal world. We know not the day of our death. Our times are in God's hand. It may be to-night. We are certain the moment of death must come; we are certain it can be at no great distance; but we know not how near. Now if these things are true, what madness it is to put off the necessary work of repentance to a future day! we are not certain of seeing to-morrow: and as repentance is the gift of God, if we neglect to ask for it to-day, and refuse to hear his warning voice, he may say to us, as in Prov. i. 24, &c. "Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought my counsel and would none of my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord."

After death [illegible] judgment. We must all stand befo[illegible]nt seat of Christ, to give an account of the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad. Who must appear there? All, young and old, rich

and poor, without distinction or exception. You and I must meet there. But for what purpose? To give account of all our secret thoughts, and of all our secret actions, to the Almighty Judge. He keeps a book of remembrance, in which all evil thoughts, words, and works are registered; every one of which will be then brought forth to our eternal confusion, unless they are washed away in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read, Rev. vi. 16. that some, in that day, will call on the rocks and mountains, saying, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." God grant it may not be your case, or mine. But, in order to avoid this dreadful state, we must seek the Lord while he is near; the wicked must forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon." This is the day of grace. But it will be too late to seek for mercy when the day of judgment comes. If you die without an interest in Christ, it had been good for you if you had never been born; for it would be better to have no existence at all, than to have a miserable existence in hell forever. This must be the portion of every unpardoned, unconverted sinner. God hath said it, who cannot lie.

SERMON XVI.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

Heb. ii. 3.

A SALVATION great indeed, beyond description or conception, contrived by the wisdom and love of God for my poor, lost soul! A salvation procured by the death of the only-begotten Son of God! How near was I to the brink of hell! How deeply was I fallen! How many and great my sins, to make such a salvation necessary! How dangerous must it be to neglect it! God has no other Son to give! If you are unconcerned about it, if you take no pains to secure it, if you are unaffected with your danger, and with the salvation that is proposed to you, how can you escape! It is impossible. You reject the only Saviour, and thereby commit the greatest sin: you spurn at God's mercy in Christ, and trample the precious blood of Christ under your feet. Are you not shocked at such a thought? Be assured that every careless, prayerless sinner, is guilty of this. There is no relief for those who reject Christ. There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. Their ruin is certain, is near, and will be eternal and intolerable. Remember, "this is the accepted time, and this is the day of salvation." Cor. vi. 2. If you die without Christ, you

can never see the face of God with comfort. You must hear the Judge pronounce your sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. xxv. 11. God forbid! Once more I entreat you, my fellow sinner, before you close the book, stop and think. Nay, go upon your knees, and pray to God to awaken your conscience, and give you the knowledge of Christ. My prayers are offered up for your salvation. I have no motive in putting this into your hands, but your eternal good. O God, may these sermons be productive of good to the reader's soul, in time and eternity. Follow it with thy blessing: and may the precious truths, therein set forth, "be the savour of life unto life, and not of death unto death." Grant it, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen. Amen.

APPENDIX.

TWO SERMONS,

BY THE REVEREND MR. STODDARD.

SERMON I.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me.

Luke iv. 18.

THIS is a text Jesus Christ himself preached upon at Nazareth, which was the place of his education. It is taken from Isa. lxi. 1, 2. where there is but little variation as to the words, but a great agreement as to the intendment of them. The sermon that Christ preached is not upon record; but we have the preface, v. 21. *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*, which gives us some light, and shews us that the prophecy doth relate unto himself. In these words is a prediction of the Spirit's coming upon him.

Q. *What is meant by the Spirit?*

A. The third person in the Trinity.

God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one and the same spiritual substance. But here the third person is understood. Sometimes

he is called the *Spirit of the living God.* 2 Cor. iii. 3. Sometimes the *Spirit.* 1 John 32. *I saw the Spirit descending from heaven.* Sometimes the *Spirit of Christ.* Phil. i. 19. *The supply of the Spirit of Christ.* Sometimes the *Holy Spirit.* Eph. iv. 30. *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God.* Sometimes the *Spirit of Grace.* Heb. 10. *And have done despite to the Spirit of Grace.*

Q. *Why is the Spirit said to be upon him?*

A. It is all one as if the Spirit was said to be in him.

The same expression we have, 2 Kings ii. 15. *The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.* And Isa. xi. 2. *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.* It may have a respect to the Spirit's visible descending on him. Mat. iii. 16. *He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.*

This is amplified by the reason, *Because the Lord hath anointed me.* The priests were seperated to their office by this ceremony, Lev. viii. 12. *He poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him to sanctify him.* So the meaning is, That God had seperated and ordained him to this office, to preach the gospel.

DOCTRINE. *Ministers had need have the Spirit of the Lord upon them, in order to the reviving of religion among his people.* There are some times of degeneracy and declension in the church. Sometimes common-

wealths are in a languishing way. Sometimes the estates of a people are under decay. So, sometimes Religion is in a withering condition; but there are means that are serviceable for the reviving of it: and this is one special means, when the ministers have the Spirit of the Lord upon them. The Spirit of the Lord must be poured out upon the people, else Religion will not revive. But when the Spirit is upon ministers, it is a very hopeful sign. Mal. iv. 5, 6. *I will send you Elijah the prophet, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.* This was accomplished when God sent John the Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Ghost. So after the apostles were filled with the Spirit, much was done by their ministry, for the advancing of religion.

Q. How doth the Spirit's being upon ministers, conduce to the reviving of religion?

A. Two ways especially.

1. *The Spirit gives them a zeal for God's glory, and the salvation of souls.* When the Spirit of God is upon them they will be much concerned for God's glory. So it was with Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 10. "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of Hosts." They will not be indifferent whether God's kingdom flourish or not; their hearts will not be upon the world, but their hearts will be engaged for God's honor, so for the salvation of men's

souls. They will take a great deal of care that their hearers do not perish. 1 Cor. x. 33. "Not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved." 1 Cor. ix. 19, 20, 21, 22. "I have made myself a servant of all, that I may gain the more," &c. "I am made all things to all men, that by all means I may save some."

1. *Hereby they are disposed to study and preach such things as do especially tend to the reviving of religion.* There be several other truths, that in their season must be studied and preached. Ministers must not decline to preach the whole counsel of God; no part of the word of God is in vain. But when they are zealous for God's honor and men's salvation, they will set themselves to revive religion; they will dwell upon those things that do more directly tend to the furtherance of men's salvation. Such things as will take with the consciences of men. Ecl. xii. 10. "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words." They will consider the necessities of people, and strive to relieve them. So it was with Paul, Acts xx. 21. "Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." The corruptions of the land will stir up their spirit. Acts xvii. 16. "While Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."

2. *Hereby they are prepared to declare the word of God powerfully.* The word of God is as an hammer, and men must smite with strength to make the nail enter, or the rock to break. If the word of God be preached in a dull dead way, it is not like to have much efficacy. Men will be in danger to think that the preacher himself does not believe it, or that he lays no great weight upon it. But when they have an holy zeal, that makes them to be Boanerges, sons of thunder, they will be earnest and fervent. That was the commendation of Apollos, "That he was fervent in spirit." Acts xviii. 25. So Christ taught. Matt. vii. 29. "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." And this made his doctrine the more affecting. v. 28. "The people were astonished at his doctrine." This was foretold of Christ. Mic. v. 4. "He shall tread and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God." Zeal will inflame the heart, and make men declare the word of God, so as to awaken others, and not lull them to sleep. Such men will speak in the heat of their spirits. When men are sensible of the breaking out of fire, or the approach of enemies, they will cry out earnestly. So the prophet directed, Isa. lviii. 1. "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

3. *Hereby they are filled with courage to dispense the word of God faithfully.* There is danger that some men will be provoked, if they be told plainly of their sins, if their confidences be shaken, and they be dealt plainly with. And if ministers have not a spirit of zeal, they will be in danger to neglect speaking what they should; be apt to speak too tenderly: but if they have a spirit of zeal, that will make them faithful. Jer. xx. 9. "His word was in my heart as a burning fire, shut up in my bones, I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." They ought to speak whether men will hear or not. Ezek. ii. 7. "Thou shalt speak my words to them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." And zeal will make men faithful, though others be angry. Acts ii. 36. "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ." Zeal strengthens the heart against fear. So the prophet dealt plainly with Asa, and John the Baptist with Herod.

2. *If the Spirit be upon ministers, that gives them understanding and wisdom for their work.* The Spirit of God makes them studious, busy in reading and meditating, and thereby they get understanding. The Spirit suggests suitable thoughts to them, and thereby they get understanding. The Spirit of God opens their eyes, gives spiritual discoveries to them,

and thereby they get understanding. All wisdom comes from God. Men are led by the Spirit into the consideration of providences, and so they get a great deal of experience. God gave Solomon wisdom in a more than ordinary way, and he hath his ways to give wisdom to men for their work that he calls them to. It was foretold concerning Christ, that God would give wisdom to Him. Isa. xi. 23. "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." God by his Spirit furnishes men with knowledge to be serviceable.

1. *Hereby he makes them able to discover men's iniquities to them.* Many men practise things that are evil, under a notion of liberty. Through custom, and carnal reason, and their dependance upon the judgment of others, they stand in the defence of sinful ways; they have a great deal to say in the vindication of them, and sometimes do not suspect them to be evil: but God, by giving understanding to ministers, doth enable them to lay convincing light before them, and make it plain from the word of God, that those ways are evil. That is required of ministers, that they do convince gainsayers, Tit. i. 9. So Christ Jesus laid abundance of light before the Scribes and Pharisees,

to shew them their iniquities. And Paul laid abundance of light before the Gentiles, to shew them their vanity and sin in worshipping of idols. And Apollos laid light before the Jews, to convince of their sin in rejecting Christ. Acts xviii. 28. "He mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures, that Jesus was Christ."

2. *Hereby they are made able to speak terror to the consciences of sinners.* If the consciences of men be terrified, that makes way for their conversion. Terror of conscience makes way for men's coming to Christ. Gal. iii. 24. "The law was our school-master to bring us to Christ." And the Spirit of God, by giving them understanding, fits them for this work, thereby they are enabled to represent in an affecting manner, the dreadful miseries that sinners are in danger of. So did John the Baptist, and the people of the publicans, and the soldiers were much affected, and enquired what they must do. Luke iii. 10, 12, 14. Ministers hereby are enabled to find out several considerations to evidence to men, the certainty of their ruin, if they do continue in a natural condition; and to shew the truth of that, Mat. v. 18. "That not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law, but all shall be fulfilled." And they are able to convince men what danger there is that they will never be converted: to lay open the wretchedness of the heart, and its mighty opposition to the

gospel, the great advantages of Satan to seduce; the many by-paths that men are wont to take; the uncertainty of God's giving repentance to them, as the apostle teaches, 2 Tim. ii. 25. "If peradventure God will give repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

3. *Hereby they are able to discover to men, the deceits of their hearts.* Man's heart is full of deceit. Jer. xvii. 9. "The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Men are wont to make plausible pretences for their sins. They have many things to say by way of apology for themselves, excusing their sins. They pretend that they are willing to know their own hearts. They pretend that they do see their own insufficiency. They pretend love to God, and faith in Jesus Christ: but God by his Spirit enables ministers so to lay open the deceitfulness of their hearts, that they are brought to know themselves. If men could hold their deceits, they would live and die in hypocrisy: but God helps ministers to unravel their hearts, and so he leads them into an understanding of themselves. 2 Cor. x. 4. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds." Heb. iv. 12. "The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

4. *Hereby they are made able to direct them in the right way.* Men that are distressed in conscience, are many times at an utter loss what to do; and are prone to run into bye-paths, and take very improper methods for their help. They are contriving in what way to get pardon and grace; and they would undo themselves, but God by his Spirit, helps ministers to guide them in the right way. Mal. ii. 7. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth." Ministers are to be their guide. It is their work to direct them, that they may not quench the motions of the Spirit; to direct them that they may not grow secure, that they may not settle on their own righteousness; that they may not get a false faith; that they may not be discouraged; that they may have no prejudices against God and his ways, that the work may be hastened, and that they may be led to Christ. Samuel tells the people, that he will "teach them the good and the right way." 1 Sam. xii. 23. So when God gives the Spirit to his ministers, they are fitted to lead sinners in the right way to Christ.

1st Reason. *Men are so blind and corrupt, that it is very difficult to work upon them.* Men by nature are in darkness. Rev. iii. 17. "Thou art blind." They have wholly lost their spiritual sight, and their natural conscience is very defective: It is very slow to conceive of those things that it can conceive

of. Men are subject to abundance of delusion; they are under the prevailing of carnal reasonings, easily deceived with appearances and shews, subject to flatter themselves; they become "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts are darkened." Rom. i. 21. And through heedlessness and forgetfulness, they are very ignorant of what they might know. Tit. i. 15. "Their mind and conscience are defiled," and the hearts of men are very much depraved. They are violently set upon their carnal interests. Jer. l. 38. "They are mad on their idols." They are exceedingly addicted to the love of the world: they are set for profit, and pleasure, and honor: their business is to advance their own interest. They cannot endure to reform their lives. They say as Jer. ii. 25. "They have followed after Idols, and after them they will go. They are full of enmity to God and his ways. Rom. viii. 7. "The natural mind is enmity to God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Hence, if they have but little means, ordinarily they take very little impression. Men that are fast asleep, will not be awakened with a little noise. More gentle means will not do with naughty children. Small blows will not break a rock; gentle physic will not do for a stubborn disease. If ministers be ignorant and sluggish, there is little likelihood that much good will be wrought.

2d Reason. *Yet men have so much conscience and self-love, that it is difficult to withstand powerful means.* Though sinful men are like the beasts that perish, yet they are not beasts. They have a conscience in them, and that tells them that there is a God that made heaven and earth; that he is to be served; that his anger is terrible, and that his word must needs be true. The Gentiles shewed, that "the work of the law was written in their hearts." Rom. ii. 15. And they have likewise a principle of self-love in them; they are craving happiness. Ps. iv. 6. "Who will shew us any good?" They dread misery, and abhor destruction. From these two principles they are capable to be wrought upon. When the wrath of God is set before them in a lively manner, their consciences will echo to it. This rouses up those sparks of light that are in conscience, and conscience adds its testimony. Hence the men are afraid, they tremble lest God should execute vengeance upon them; they would fain get their sins pardoned. When they hear the clear reasonings, and powerful dispensations of the word, they cannot but fear: and they think, What shall they be profited, if they should get the whole world, and lose their own soul? So when they hear searching preaching, that leads conscience into the examination of their hearts and ways, and puts them upon it to labor after the power of godliness. A workman may

bring rude timber into form. A skilful physician may be a means to remove a stubborn disease. Dull consciences may be frighted: proper means may by God's blessing, revive religion.

1 USE. *The case of the christian world is very sorrowful.* A great part of the world makes a profession of Christ; but there is little sincere religion; very little of the power of godliness: and it may be said, not of some particular persons only, but of some nations, as Rev. iii. 1. "They have a name that they live, but are dead." There be great pretences to religion, but God is but little honored, and few souls are saved. Religion doth not flourish in many places, for the ministers have not the Spirit of God upon them.

1, *Some are heretical.* There were abundance of heresies in the days of the apostles, and there be many in these days. The Papists hold justification by works, that it is lawful to have images in worship: that the Pope is infallible, and has power to forgive sin, &c. The Socinians deny the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and that He bore the curse for us. The Arminians hold universal redemption, election from faith foreseen, the power of free will, and falling from grace. And they be ministers especially that do propagate these opinions, and beguile ignorant men. They pervert the scripture, and wrest it to their own

destruction, and the destruction of many others. Learned men are the great seducers that promote damnable heresies. These men hinder the flourishing of religion. "They increase unto more ungodliness." 2 Tim. ii. 16. Men are "led captive by them." 2 Tim. iii. 6."

2. *Some are wicked livers.* They that should teach others to keep the law of God, break it themselves. So it was with Hophni and Phineas. 1 Sam. 22. "They lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." So it was afterwards, Isa. xliii. 27. "Thy teachers have transgressed against me." So the Scribes and Pharisees, under the pretence of long prayers, did "devour widow's houses." Matt. xxiii. 14. And so it is at this day, in many places of the christian world. Many that should lead men to heaven, are guilty of debauched practices: they are swearers, drunkards, unclean, and prophaners of the Sabbath. Religion is not like to flourish under the influence of such men. Such teachers take a course to root religion out of the places where they dwell. They, that teach wickedness by their practices, are like to do little good by their doctrine.

3. *Some are ignorant.* Many that are set up to teach, have knowledge to read, and that is in a manner, all the learning that they have. Jeroboam did not matter who he made to be

priests. So it is with many others. God complained of old, of the ignorance of teachers. Isa. lvi. 10. "His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant." Men need a great deal of knowledge, to be able to instruct others. But some teachers are ignorant of the principles of religion; are not able to vindicate them. They are not versed in the scriptures. These men will be poor helps to the souls of others. Blindness is a very bad property in a guide. "If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch." Matt. xv. 14. When teachers are ignorant, "the people will be destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hos. iv. 6.

4. *Some want experience.* Some ministers have good learning, a good conversation, and religious affections, and so they may do some good: they may be means to restrain some men from sin. Yea, they may be instruments of conversion; but such a ministry is not like to revive religion in a land as have not experiences. The condition of such a country is very sorrowful. Jer. ii. 8. "They, that handle the law, know me not." It is a great blessing, when people have such ministers as are able "to comfort others with that comfort, wherewith they themselves have been comforted of God." 2 Cor. i. 4. Men, that have had experience of temptation, and relief under them, of their own hearts, and of Jesus Christ, are most likely to be instruments of the reviving of religion.

2 USE *of direction to people, what ministers to choose.* It is of great concernment to have religion revived. God useth great means in order to it: he brings great judgments and calamities in order to it. But a special means to obtain this, is, to have such ministers as have the Spirit of God upon them. In Jeroboam's time, they did not care who were priests. 2 Chron. xiii. 9. "Whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock, and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no Gods." But if you desire the flourishing of religion, get such men for ministers, that it may be said of them, as God said of Joshua, Numb. xxvii. 18. "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him."

But there is a double difficulty in this.

1. *Some that are to choose, do not regard this.* In some places the care of this matter belongs to the patron; and many times such have little regard to present those that are fit for the work: and where the people have a liberty to choose, they are careless of making a good choice. Some are purse-ridden, and do not matter who they have, so they can have him upon easy terms. Micah got one on easy terms, and satisfied himself that he had a "Levite to be his priest." Judg. xvii. 13. Some love one that will prophesy smooth things, and nourish them in their vain hopes of eternal life. Isa. xxx. 10. "They say to the seers,

see not? and to the prophets, prophesy not right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." Some would have one that is a cheerly companion. Some would have one that would please their itching ears. 2 Tim. iv. 3. "After their own lusts they shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." People that have but little religion, are in danger to take up with ministers that have not the Spirit.

2. *Some do not know where to find them.* Some would be glad to get such an one, but they know not where to suit themselves. We are not come to that pass that is spoken of, Amos viii. 11, 12. "I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." But yet there is no great plenty of such men as have the Spirit of God upon them. It is a mercy that people may find those that have good learning, and that are orthodox in their principles, and of a good conversation; but there be not many that have the Spirit. People must take up with such as they can get; that that is wanting cannot be numbered.

3 USE *of exhortation, to pray for the ministry.* It is the duty of ministers to pray for the people; and it is the duty of the peo-

ple to pray for their ministers. The ministers are bound by their office, to pray for the people; and the people are bound by their interest to pray for their ministers. When they pray for their ministers, they pray for themselves. Moses prays for them, Deut. xxxiii. 8. "Of Levi he said, Let thy Thiummim and thy Urim be with thy holy One." We find Paul several times begging the prayers of the church. Eph. vi. 18, 19. "Praying with all manner of prayer and supplication, for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." So 2 Thess. iii. 1. "Finally brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified even as it is with you." Heb. xiii. 18. "Pray for us." This should move the people of God to pray for their ministers, because if the Spirit rest upon them, that is a preparation for the reviving of religion. It is a burden to the spirit of all godly men, that there are such decays of religion; that few are converted and that iniquity doth so abound: and therefore you should be longing after that, that it may revive again.

Consider 1. *If religion do not revive, the country will become more wicked.* Pride and wantonness, and worldlinessand prophaneness do abound in the land. There be many bad examples; there is a great deal of the break-

ing out of sin. In many places they have a very ill name on the account of their iniquities. Many people *do declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not.* And how shall a stop be put to it, unless religion do revive? unless men be awakened and convinced? Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take this stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Some think family government may put a stop to sin. Some think the zeal of rulers, and faithfulness of officers may put a stop to sin. But how shall these things be come at; if the spirit of religion do not revive among us?

2. *If religion does not revive, multitudes will perish forever.* If religion does not revive, how shall men get to heaven? the form of godliness will not bring men to heaven. Coming to meeting, going to lectures, joining to churches will not secure salvation. What will become of the posterity of the people of God, if religion does not revive? Morality will not prepare men for dying. John iii. 3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." If "men be converted, their sins will be forgiven." Acts iii. 19.

But if they be not converted, they will not be forgiven. Unregenerate men are very charitable to one another, but they will go to hell, Mark viii. 12. "The children of the kingdom shall go into outer darkness."

3. *If religion do not revive, there will be great judgments.* We have had many sore calamities year after year; and there has been a great deal of consideration how to be delivered from the wrath of God: and something has been done for the preventing of wrath, but yet God's anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. One judgment is scarce over, before another comes. We pray, we fast, make laws, and dispute about reformation, but yet we are in affliction, and the hand of God goes out against us: and so it will, unless there be a reviving of religion. Mal. iv. 5, 6. "He shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." The curse of hardness of heart will not go alone: If God leave us to an hard heart, that will be attended with other curses.

SERMON II.

To preach the gospel to the poor.
Luke iv. 18.

IN these and the following words, is set forth the work that Christ was anointed for. First, to preach the gospel to the poor. Here mind, 1. What he was to preach; that is, the gospel. In Isaiah it is good tidings. And so the Greek word signifies, so our word gospel signifies. It comes from two Saxon words. God, that signifies good; and Spell, that signifies a word. There be other good tidings, but the gospel is so by way of eminency. The gospel brings tidings of the love of God to men, and of a glorious way of reconciliation and salvation. They are much to blame that slight the gospel, and reject it. They carry as if the gospel were not good tidings. 2. To whom he was to preach, viz. To the poor. There be two sorts of poor. 1. They that are low in the world: that are destitute of riches; and the invitations of the gospel are sent to them as well as others; and they, that receive it, are more generally of that sort. 1 Cor. 1. 28. "God hath chosen the base things of the world, and things that are despised." James ii. 5. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom." And Christ Jesus principally preach-

ed to such. Matt. xi. 5. "The poor have the gospel preached unto them." 2. Those that are poor in spirit: that are sensible that they have nothing to purchase heaven; that are sensible that they have no money nor price for their salvation: and they are of two sorts. 1. Such as are legally poor. As they, Matt. xi. 28. "That labor and are heavy laden:" that are convinced of the wretchedness of their hearts, and that God may justly condemn them. 2. Such as are Evangelically poor in spirit. Such as have the grace of humility, and live upon the mercy of God in Christ. Spoken of, Matt. v. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Those that are called poor here, are called meek in Isa. lx. 1. Their hearts are meekened, either by conviction or by grace. I do not exclude the latter, but it seems to have a particular respect to the former.

DOCTRINE. *The gospel is especially to be preached to the poor in spirit: they are particularly to be invited.* Consider here these two propositions:

1 Proposition. *The gospel is to be preached to all.* Though there be no expectation that all will receive it, yet it is to be preached to all. Ministers are not bound to preach it to every one in the world, for that is impossible: but they are to preach to all as they have opportunity. They may not designedly hide the gospel from any. There be many differences

among men, in respect of their estates, age, covenant, interest and sinfulness: but the gospel is to be preached to them all. Christ did forbid his disciples to go into the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into any city of the Samaritans. Matt. x. 5. But this was a temporary command: but now the gospel is to be preached unto all. Mark xvi. 15. "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." That is, every human creature. Acts xx. 21. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Gal. iii. 28. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." All are to be instructed in the gospel, and to be invited to Christ.

1st Reason. *Because the promise is to all.* There is a conditional promise made to all that believe in Christ. There is no exception of any that do believe in Christ. The sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven. But the conditional promise is true of them, and no man knows that he hath committed that sin. The offer of the gospel is made to men without any exception. It is propounded in general terms, so as to comprehend all. Acts x. 43. "Whosoever believeth on him, shall have remission of sins." Men are ready to except themselves, but God makes no exceptions. Sometimes the promise is propounded

indefinitely. John iii. 36. "He, that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life." But sometimes it is propounded universally; for there is no other condition joined to this; and not only so, but the notes of universality are added to the promise; as whosoever. John iii. 16. So all. Acts xiii. 39. And any. Rev. iii. 20. And therefore it must be preached to all.

2d Reason. *They, that are not poor in spirit, may receive benefit by the gospel.* The gospel is many ways useful to make men poor in spirit. Preparation for Christ is carried on by the law and the gospel in conjunction. When men hear that there is a way of salvation by Christ, that makes them more willing to see their danger, and not altogether so opposite to receive conviction. It encourages them to pray to God to shew them their misery. When men hear that Christ died for our sins, that makes them sensible that God is very angry for sin; that he will execute vengeance. This is an evidence of the justice and severity of God. Men may learn from thence, that sin is a great offence, and must be punished. Luke xxiii. 31. "If they do such things in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?" When men hear, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son to suffer for them," that discovers the vile nature of sin, whereby men abuse a God of such grace. Ps. cxxx. 4. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." When

men hear that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse, that may convince them that their own works cannot save them. Gal. ii. 21. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." When they hear the command to believe in Christ, that convinces them, that though they be civil and religious, yet if they believe not, they are rebellious, and in a miserable estate.

3d Reason. *Because they, that are not poor in spirit now, may be poor in spirit afterwards.* If men hear the gospel, and do not make a right use of it now, yet they will retain the knowledge of it, and it may do them service afterwards, though they be not sensible of their lost condition now; but are senseless, and carnally confident, yet they may be poor in spirit hereafter; and then what they have heard may come to mind, and become powerful upon their hearts. It may be, when they have not an opportunity to hear the gospel, they will call to mind what they have heard some years before, and ponder on what has been preached to them formerly. It is possible they may be made poor in spirit, when they are in captivity among the Papists, or Heathens. When they have no opportunity to hear the gospel, or they may be made poor in spirit, when they lie upon a sick bed, and cannot hear the word preached; and then what they have formerly heard, may work effectually on them. Manasseh would not

hearken to the prophets when they spake to him. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 10. But afterwards, when he was a captive in Babylon, he remembered what he had been taught, and repented. v. 12. "When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers."

2d. Proposition. *The gospel is especially to be preached to the poor in spirit.* It is fit that ministers should make a particular application of the calls of the gospel to them. It is true they may do so to young men, to ancient men, and to great sinners: but there is a peculiar reason to make particular application to them that are poor in spirit. These persons are in a particular manner invited in the scripture. Isa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." They are thirsty that are parched up for want of somewhat to quench their thirst. The like we have, Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest for your souls." They are weary and heavy laden that are oppressed with the weight of God's wrath. So, Rev. xxii. 17. "The Spirit and the Bride say, come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." God is here teaching ministers to have a particular regard to such. The invi-

tations are not confined to these, but they are to be particularly applied to these. Some others have special need to have the terrors of the law preached to them; but the invitations of the gospel are especially to be propounded to those that are poor in spirit.

The reason of this, is, not from any excellency in this poverty of spirit. There is nothing of spiritual goodness in this. It is indeed a reasonable thing; it is according to the dictates of right reason, but there is nothing of piety or love to God, or godly sorrow in it. It is a mere forced thing, and accordingly it is not acceptable unto God. The first good act that is done by the soul, is believing in Christ: and accordingly there is no promise made in the scripture to this legal poverty of spirit. No man is under any promise of salvation till he comes to Christ. It is probable that God may give grace to all those that have this poverty of spirit; but there is no promise in the word that he will. Indeed there is an inconsistency in it, that there should be any promise made to it. For when a man is poor in spirit, he owns that it is in God's liberty to do with him as he pleases: and he continues some time in this frame, and continues to acknowledge it. But if there were any promise of salvation to it, then after the first act of submission, it would not be in God's liberty to do with him as he pleased; but he would be bound to bestow grace upon

him, and he might challenge and lay claim to faith.

But the reason is, Because such men are prepared to receive the gospel. This poverty of spirit brings men near to Christ; so that it is very hopeful that they will accept of him. The people of the Jews needed the ministry of John to prepare them to receive the Messiah. Mark i. 2. "I send my messenger before thy face, to prepare thy way before thee." So particular souls need a work of preparation to make way for their accepting of Christ. So Paul was prepared. Acts ix. 6. He, trembling, and astonished, said "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" So the Jailor, Acts xvi. 30. He said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And when men are thrown out of their own confidences, and made poor in spirit, now they are in a fair way to receive Christ; now they are sensible that pardon and eternal life are the free gifts of God, and therefore Christ, to prepare the angel of the church of Laodicea, convinces him that he was "Poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked." Rev. iii. 17. Yet those men do not accept of Christ, until they have another work of God upon the heart. They are not fully prepared by this legal poverty of spirit. There needs another work of God, further to prepare men before they will come to Christ. If a man were poor in spirit seven years together, that will not prevail with him to come to

Christ; but further to prepare him, his eyes must be opened to see the divine authority of the gospel. 1 Thess. ii. 13. "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 indeed the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe." Until they see the glory of God and Christ, they will not believe. Ps. ix. 10. "They, that know thy name, will put their trust in thee." But when they are poor in spirit, they are prepared to receive the gospel, and give entertainment to Christ.

1. *Now they see a want of salvation.* Men, that are seeking their felicity in the world, and have not a sense of the wrath of God, do not mind Christ. They take more notice of the market, and worldly opportunities, than of gospel invitations. Matt. xxii. 5. "They made light of it, and went one to his farm, and another to his merchandize." But when they are poor in spirit, they are like thirsty men, that are even parched up. Rev. xxii. 17. "Let him that is athirst come." They tremble as Paul did. Acts ix. 6. This is some preparation.

2. *Now they see that they can get salvation in no other way.* If men have hope to work out their salvation themselves, they will not come to Christ. If they can cure their own souls, they will not come to this Physician. If the Prodigal thinks that he can earn his

living, he will not return to his father. Luke xv. 15. "He went and joined himself to a citizen of the country.' But he that is poor in spirit, has tried all conclusions, and every thing fails him. He sees himself a dead man. Rom. vii. 9. "Sin revived, and I died." So he sees greater necessity. This is a farther degree of preparation.

1 USE. Hence see, *That those, that are not poor in spirit, do especially need to have the law preached to them.* It is useful to all sorts of men to hear the preaching of the law. Saints stand in need of it to keep them humble, to put them upon it to renew their faith in Christ, and to make them thankful: but especially such as are not poor in spirit. They need to be brought to Mount Sinai, and to hear the thunderings, and see the lightnings. Secure sinners do not love to hear the terrors of the law. They had rather be entertained with some more comfortable doctrine; but they are in great necessity to hear the law. If there had been no law, there would have been no necessity of the gospel. And men, that are not sensible of the terrors of the law, will not regard the invitations of the gospel. Such as are not poor in spirit, need to hear the law often, that they may be prepared to receive the gospel; that their hearts may be broken and humbled. Gal. iii. 24. "The law was our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ."

1. *That they may be sensible of the terribleness of damnation.* Many men are not aware what a terrible thing it is to be damned. They have a deeper sense of poverty and reproach, than they have of damnation. They look upon hell as an uncomfortable place: they think if it must be their portion to go to hell, they shall bear it as well as others; they are not like to go thither alone: they seldom think of it. They look upon it as a remote thing; at a great distance, and it does not terrify them; but the law discovers that it is intolerable. Ps. xi. 6. "Upon the wicked God will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest." Isa. xxx. 33. "Tophet is prepared of old, he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord, as a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. Matt. xxv. 41. "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Matt. xiii. 42. "He shall cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Hence many men are exceedingly terrified, and see a necessity of deliverance. Isa. xxxiii. 14. "Sinners in Zion are afraid, trembling has surprized the hypocrites: Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? If the sense of the terribleness of damnation sinks into their hearts, they will not regard the world, they will not stick at their pains; they will

not think much to part with their sins: they had rather undergo any sorrow than be damned.

2. *That they may be sensible of the great danger of damnation.* Men are wont to soothe themselves that God will not send them to hell: he is kind, and gracious, and they pray to him, and they are in covenant, and enjoy privileges: they live orderly, and are sorry for their sins, and so they hope they are in no great danger. But the law shews, that sinners are under a sentence of condemnation. Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death." That God is very angry with ungodly men, Ps. l. 21, 22. "I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee. Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." The law shews, that the threatening must be executed. The law must take place, that the faithfulness of God is engaged for the fulfilling of the law. Matt. v. 18. "Not one jot nor tittle shall pass from the law, but all shall be fulfilled." Hence many men are afraid they shall not escape. They say as Micah, vi. 7. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil?" They are afraid there is no mercy for them. They have a "fearful expectation of fiery indignation." They have a "dreadful sound in their ears," as Job xv. 21. And their hearts are meditating terror. They confess, they reform,

they cry, they plead, but yet it rings in their ears, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them."

3. *That they may be sensible of the danger of sudden destruction.* There is an inclination in men to put far away the evil day, and then they think they may have a long opportunity to enjoy worldly comforts. Men see that God exercises patience towards others, and they flatter themselves that he will be patient towards them. But by the law, they see that God will destroy many sinners suddenly. 1 Thes. v. 3. "When they say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." And the law shews them, that God is very angry; that he sets their iniquities before him, "their secret sins in the light of his countenance:" and so they are afraid God will not wait upon them. In the evening they are afraid they shall die before morning. If they find any bodily indisposition, they are afraid they shall die. If there be a thunder storm, they are afraid they shall be killed: their hearts shake at the report of sickness that prevails: they tremble at the shaking of a leaf. It is with them as Deut. xxviii. 66, 67. "Thy life shall hang in suspence, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it

were evening: and at evening thou shalt say, Would God it were morning; for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear."

4. *That they may be sensible of the justice of their damnation.* Men have abundance of objections against the justice of God. They argue that sins do not hurt God; he is happy forever, notwithstanding their sins. They object, that they could not prevent their sins; they are according to the decree of God; that the sin of Adam, that they did not consent to, was imputed to them, and so they were conceived in sin, and born in iniquity. They object, that they have done service, and that the pains of hell are intolerable. But the law shews that their damnation is just. Rom. iii. 19. "Whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." It is very evident from the law, that men have deserved destruction; that they are worthy of death, for they have broken an holy law; and according to the sentence of it, which is a rule of justice, they have merited damnation. It is evident, that they are the proper causes of their own sins, and they have therein run upon the point of the sword, and have thrown themselves into a gulph of misery. Hos. xiii. 9. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.

2 USE. *Of warning to sinners: Be not afraid to see that you are poor. There is that*

maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing. Prov. xiii. 7. So it is with some in this case. Rev. iii. 17. "Thou sayest thou art rich, and increased in goods, and hast need of nothing, but art poor, and wretched," &c. Men miserably deceive themselves by such imaginations. Gal. vi. 3. "He, that thinketh himself something when he is nothing, deceiveth himself." It is awful for men to see themselves poor: it is frightful, but if you be poor, it is best to see it. The case of such men is doleful, but not desperate. Such have no foundation to trust in themselves; but they have ground of encouragement, for the gospel is especially to be preached to them that are poor in spirit. In the invitations of the gospel, he hath a singular regard to them. Luke iv. 18. Your condition is not the more dangerous, but the more hopeful, for seeing yourselves poor.

Consider, 1. *You are wholly empty of goodness.* Some of you have considerable shews of goodness. There is an appearance of good desires, gracious sorrow, love to ordinances and sabbaths, and there is care to avoid sin; but there is nothing of goodness in all this. It cannot be said of you, as of Jeroboam's son, "There is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." All that you do is in hypocrisy. You are acted in your religion by a spirit of self-love: fear of hell and hopes of heaven are the great principles that influ-

ence you. You are acted by a lust of self-love in all your religion. Ps. lxxviii. 36. "They flattered him, and lied to him with their tongue. Their heart was not right with him." You make a considerable profession, but God may say of you, as of them, Deut. v. 29. "O that there were such an heart in them." All that ye do is for yourselves. Hos. x. 1. If you be swept and garnished, yet you are empty. There is some similitude of faith and love, but no reality. There is not one spark of goodness in your heart; though corruption be restrained, yet it reigns; and so long as corruption reigns, there is a total want of goodness. Faith is the first good thing that is wrought in the heart. You are afraid of judgment; so are the devils. James ii. 19. "The devils believe and tremble." You are much in prayer, so would the devils be, if they had hopes of deliverance.

2. *You have no power to do any good.* You have power to do all manner of external duties, but you have no power to keep the law. Rom. viii. 7. "The natural mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." If you have the help of ordinances, of afflictions, of deliverances, of examples; yet you cannot work up any gracious frame in your own heart. If there were a seed of grace in your heart, by being cherished, it might grow and flourish, but there is none. A man that is in a swoon, may be brought

to be sensible, and to walk and work, but a man that is dead cannot: thus it is with you. You are "dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1. A watch or a clock, by springs and weights may move briskly, but it has no principle of life. It is quite beyond you to do any spiritual good. You cannot receive the gospel. There is encouragement enough set before you, and it would be exceeding profitable to you to receive it, but you cannot. You have not an heart to receive it. John vi. 44. "No man can come unto me, except the Father that sent me draw him."

3. *God is not bound to change your heart.* God is absolutely free, he may help you, but if he will not, he is blessed forever. It is true, he may help you without any wrong to himself, but that lays him under no necessity. It is in his choice, whether he will glorify his justice or mercy on you: he may pass over you and take another. Rom. ix. 16. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." God is under no constraint to change your heart: his justice does not necessitate him. You have deserved condemnation, and your prayers and tears lay no bonds on the justice of God. His faithfulness does not necessitate him. He hath promised to convert some, but there is no absolute promise to any natural man. His mercy does not necessitate him. The merciful nature of man, doth many times

force him to pity and help others, but God is wholly voluntary in the exercises of his mercy. God is not of such a tender heart, that he cannot bear to see men in misery. God can take pleasure in the exercises of justice. Isa. i. 24. "Ah, I will ease me of mine enemies, and avenge me of my adversaries." His honor does not necessitate him to convert you. It would have been as much for his honor to have converted Esau as Jacob, Judas as Peter, Saul as David. If he does not convert you, he will be glorified for ever. You cannot bring God under any necessity to convert you. If he doth not, he doth you no wrong: you are in his hands. He is the potter, and you are the clay; he may make you a vessel of "honor or dishonor." Rom. ix. 21.

3 USE. *Of Exhortation to them that are poor to receive the gospel.* If it were not offered to you, it would be obtrusion and presumption, a thrusting yourselves upon Christ, it would be an impudent thing. But God offers mercy to you; yea in an especial manner; as the message concerning Christ's resurrection was sent in a particular manner to Peter. So he charges his ministers to make a particular application of the gospel to you. Luke iv. 18. Isa. lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17.

Consider 1. *It is not beyond his mercy to pardon you.* Salvation is a great work. If

your sins had been fewer in number, and smaller in their nature and aggravations, it would require great mercy to pardon and save you. But as great as your sins are, it is not beyond the grace of God. You must beware that you *do not limit the holy One of Israel. God is rich in mercy.* Eph. ii. 4. His grace is like the ocean. It is sufficient to cover all your sins. Eph. iii. 18. *To comprehend the breadth, and length, and height, and depth of the love of Christ.* There are three dimensions that belong to bodies: Here are four ascribed to mercy. Thickness may be measured downwards, so it is depth; and upwards, so it is height. Mercy brings sinners from deep misery, to the pinnacle of happiness. God's mercy is greater than man's. God can find mercy for such as men cannot find mercy for. Hos. xi. 9. "I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man." Isai. lv. 9. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God's mercies are greater than your sins. Men think if they had not sinned so much, or so long, their sin would not have been beyond God's mercy. But God's mercy can conquer all their provocations. Grace may prevail over all. Rom. v. 21. "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life." The mercy of God is greater than we can conceive of. The understanding of man is large:

we can conceive how many minutes there are in a thousand years; how many inches there are to the centre of the earth, but we cannot comprehend the love of Christ. Eph. iii. 19. "The love of Christ passeth knowledge." We cannot comprehend the bitterness of the cup that he drank for our sakes. We cannot comprehend the duration of his love. We cannot comprehend the great good that he hath procured for us.

2. *God has designed to save many lost sinners.* It is the purpose of his heart, to bring many poor sinners to heavenly glory. If he had taken up a resolution against it, men might well be discouraged; but he has not resolved against it, neither is he at a loss what to do; he is not loth to do it: but it is his full determination; he is resolved in his way, and he purposes to break over all objections, and conquer all oppositions. He is set in his way, and will not be put out of it. 2 Thes. ii. 13. "God has chosen you to salvation. Gal. i. 5. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ." And he has done a great deal in order to the salvation of such sinners. The price of it is paid. Sin laid a bar in the way, but that bar is removed by the death of Christ. There is no need of any contrivance how to satisfy the law, that is done already by Christ. God has sent Christ to save us. Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse, being made a curse for

us." And God makes a proposal to you, and gives you liberty to be saved, if you will accept of Jesus Christ. He does not tell you that his heart is hardened against you; but he tells you that you shall be welcome, if you will come to Christ. Rev. xxii. 17. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Yea, he doth beseech you to come for salvation. God is of infinite majesty, yet he intreats you to be saved. He condescends to your infirmity, and stoops so low as to plead with you; he becomes as it were a petitioner to you; he begs of you to come, and urges it as a courtesy to come, with tender-heartedness prays you to come. 2 Cor. v. 20. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

3. *This is a principal way, wherein God glorifies himself.* The end of all things is God's glory; and he hath done many great things for his glory. He made the world for his glory, that his power and wisdom might be manifested. He preserved the holy angels from sinning, for the glory of his goodness. He gave the law for the glory of his holiness. He drowned the old world, saved Israel out of Egypt, destroyed Sodom, brought Judah from Babylon for his glory. But this is a principal way wherein he glorifies himself, in working out the salvation of sinners by Christ. There is a great manifestation of the *Trinity*

of Persons in the God-head. There is a manifestation of the *power*, of the *justice*, and of the manifold *wisdom* of God, and of his unsearchable *grace*. In this way he is greatly exalted. Mic. v. 18. "Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity, and passing by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage, because he delighted in mercy?" Rev. v. 12, 13. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and honor, and strength, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and in the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever."