

2. I will consider this most awful assertion. *He that committeth sin is of the devil.* Here the word *committeth*, will be further noticed: as also what is here said of him—That *he sinneth from the beginning.* An enquiry into this, with the fall of the rest of the rebel angels with him, will be made; and a scriptural account will be given. This will make way for speaking regarding what our Lord hath said concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost—wherein it consists—Then of the state of the church at, and after the day of *Pentecost* to the close of the apostolic hour. I shall also observe, this tremendous sin was committed during that period: and give scripture proofs of the same. After which, and speaking of the tremendous effects of the same, I shall positively affirm, it cannot be committed by any now: nor will it evermore. So that this may compose the mind, and set us at rest, and relieve us from all fears on this account. This will be established on the scripture: yet it will be all, with the statement which will be given, left with you, to receive it, or neglect it, as may seem good unto you. I thought putting all this under the 2nd head of discourse, would have its advantages, as you may refer unto it. Then as all this will be regularly treated of, one particular after the other, you will have the advantage of looking it over, and referring to it at your leisure. *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* Then

3. The purpose, end, and design for which *the Son of God was manifested.* It was, that *he might destroy the works of the devil.* May the Lord lead me through all this, to your satisfaction, and benefit, and to his praise, and glory. Amen. So be it, O Lord. I am thus to proceed by

1. Taking notice of the address, in the first part of the words of my text. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* As all connected with the address is proposed to be taken up, I have therefore recited the whole of the verse, that it may be retained in memory, and as it may be kept in view, throughout the whole of going through the first head of discourse. And the various particulars expressed, will, by the good hand of my God upon me, be taken notice of, and closely attended unto: so as each of the particulars in each of the heads, will be most completely filled up.

The words of the address, *Little children*, contain much love, affection, and respect in them. Our apostle was full of love to Christ, to saints, to the whole visible and universal church of Christ. One cannot but conceive, he must stand in the relation of a spiritual father, and Pastor unto these, he more immediately, and expressly here writes unto: because he uses these terms so frequently. As an apostle, he must, according to his apostolical office, have stood in this general relation unto them all. He seems to have derived this term, as we are sure he did his love for all the holy brethren, from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who used this term and expression to his eleven apostles, when he addressed himself unto them, on the Tuesday evening of his Passion week, in the house of *Simon the leper*, at *Bethany*. His discourse which he had there with them, is recorded in the 13th and 14th chapters of *John's* gospel, and the term, *Little children*, you have chap. xiii. v. 33. Our *John* was very fond of his dear Lord's words. As he uses them here, they are not only very expressive of his love, affection, and regard for those whom he here expresses his good will unto, by giving a caution to them, but it is

doubtless to make way for their attention, and reception of the same. Nothing makes way for our receiving advice one from another, more, than by our profession of love and respect, for, and to each other. This is the apostle's method. The advice, or caution he gives is this. *Little children, let no man deceive you.* Let him be who he may, a preacher or professor—If he makes light of sin—If he would not have you to avoid it—If he would not have you abhor the very appearance of evil; have you nothing to do with him. This is contrary to that gracious faculty the Lord hath wrought in your souls. It is quite different to those teachings and instructions the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to favour you with. It is contrary to all which cometh from him. It is wholly and entirely opposite to the Lord Jesus Christ—To his gospel—To the knowledge of Him—To the profession of Him—To communion with Him. Pay, therefore, no attention, no not for a moment unto any such. *Little children, let no man deceive you,* in any such matters as these. It is into such licentiousness of life, all the antichrists in this present age, and all the effects of what they teach, and propose for to be attended unto, by their hearers, tend. These, I *John* the apostle of Jesus Christ, caution you against. Whosoever liveth in sin is in his sins. Whosoever committeth sin, is a bond-slave to sin. He who will venture to hear, or converse with erroneous persons, shews what he is, and is very fully inclined to be. I, therefore, give you this solemn caution; it is at your peril to reject it: yea, it will be at your loss, if you overlook it. I would fain set it on upon your minds, in the very spirit of love and gentleness: and this out of love to Christ, and out of love to you for his sake. *Little children, let no man deceive you* in this particular—This is a very clear and absolute truth: it may be resisted: there may be those who deny it: yet it is as truth, immutable. And it will be so for evermore, and throughout all generations. The gates of hell may withstand it: they may oppose it: yet it will ever be, that individuals, as well as whole churches of saints, who profess themselves to be righteous in Christ; that they are justified in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; that *God made Christ sin for them, who knew no sin; that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him*; each of these, and every one of these, individually, are in their own persons, lives, and conversation, aiming, to prove the good, blessed, and wholesome effects this most precious doctrine hath upon them, and within them. And this, I myself who am in Christ, a partaker of Christ, who know myself to be made righteous in Christ, by the gratuitous act of Jehovah the Father, stand forth, and for myself, and in the true knowledge of being made the righteousness of God, in Christ, am bold to declare, this is the only outward manifestation thereof. *He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

Such as are led by the word and Spirit, to right gospel apprehensions of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in a way of believing, receive the true knowledge of the same into their minds, and believe in the same for righteousness, are righteous in the sight of God, even as Christ is righteous. This is wholly and altogether out of themselves, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He being by the Divine Father, constituted the Surety and Representative of his whole church, who was to act for them, and suffer for them; so his doings and sufferings were to be imputed to them: by virtue of which, they are in the sight of their heavenly Father,

in the righteousness of Christ. He is their Lord their Righteousness : in Him they are everlastingly righteous. The Father beholds them in Christ as righteous as the righteousness of Christ can make them. This is as he beholds them in Christ, and hath made over the righteousness of Christ unto them by his gracious act of imputation. The virtue and efficacy of this is let in upon the mind, as it receives a spiritual perception of the same. The apostle is here speaking of the effects which the true knowledge of this produces. *He that doeth righteousness is righteous.* He hereby makes it manifest, outwardly, and openly, that he is a righteous person. His doing righteousness, must imply, he acts righteously. He neither can, nor does he attempt by any means to keep the law of God. This he needs not : and it is wholly out of his power. Christ hath done this for him, and is the end of the law for righteousness unto him. It is in Him he stands justified from all things. He does not act righteously to make himself righteous before the Lord. He is perfectly and everlastingly righteous in the sight of God, in the Person, and obedience of his coequal Son ; who is the one alone Righteousness of his church and people ; whose righteousness is unto all, and upon all them that believe. The believer, cannot, under believing views of being righteous in Christ, but express his sense of such inestimable grace by walking humbly with his God, and before him unto all well-pleasing. This is what the apostle here saith, *he that doeth righteousness*, who walks in the paths of righteousness, and is in his life and conversation a righteous man, gives full proof hereby, that he is a righteous man : he is interested in a better righteousness than his own : it is an outward evidence for him, that he is one with Christ : that he hath Christ for his righteousness in the sight of God ; and is admitted to have, and hold fellowship with Him. This makes him so exemplary in his walk and conversation ; so that such as take the most complete and exact notice of him, cannot but conclude that he hath been with Jesus. He so walks, that *he is righteous, even as he is righteous.* Christ is he who is here spoken of under the term *he*. The *as* must be a righteousness of conformity : it cannot be of equality ; that is everlastingly impossible. There are who will apply the whole text, to the righteousness of Christ, and to what believers are in him : but this most certainly and assuredly is not designed by what is here expressed : it is here spoken by way of discrimination, which fully appears from the very next words, which are these, *He that committeth sin is of the devil ; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* Both these verses when contrasted with each other, so serve to open each other, as to prove this assertion, that being righteous as Christ is righteous, belongs to the practice of outward righteousness, in walk and conversation. *He that doeth righteousness*, here, is the believer. The man in Christ. The doing righteousness, must have respect to his walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. In so doing, the believer looks to Christ as his Pattern and example—To his word as the rule and directory for his conduct—To his Spirit as his guide, to teach and influence him. He aims to act, as he may be most divinely assisted by the word, and Spirit, as near as possible to Christ, according to his preceptive and declarative will ; as in conformity to Christ ; not that there can be found an equality in the most righteous man on earth, who lives most like Christ, and the life of Christ ;

No; neither is this the apostle's meaning. He is only speaking of the real effects which the true knowledge of Christ, and fellowship with Him in real spiritual apprehensions of Him, produce in the renewed mind: so that they influence the walk: and hereby there is full proof given outwardly, of the reality thereof. He cautions against all preachers and doctrines which may contradict this. *Little children, let no man deceive you.* The doctrines of the gospel, which ye have received, are according to godliness. Be not therefore led off from them by any man, be he who, or what he may. This is a truth which cannot be overthrown. It may be resisted and contradicted, by false disciples, teachers, and preachers: yet it is as true as truth itself. *He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* You cannot have, or give, better proof to each other, of your being fully persuaded in you own souls, that you are righteous in the sight of God, in the glorious robe of Christ's righteousness, and that you are led by the Holy Spirit to consider yourselves as justified in Christ, and appearing in Him righteous even as he is righteous, in the view, and before the majesty of your heavenly Father, than by walking as becometh all this profession, as having Christ in his life, tempers, and conversation for your Pattern and Example. Thus you will hold forth the word of life, and shine as the sons of God, in this dark world, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation and generation. Thus I have explicated the text, and gone through my first head of discourse; and am brought to the next words, and thereby to my next particular which is this.

2. To open these words, *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. These words I have divided into two separate heads. It is the first of these, I am now to enter on; in which I am to consider this most awful assertion, *He that committeth sin is of the devil.* Also, as the word *committeth* here occurs, to take particular notice of it, as hath been before hinted: as also, of what is here said of him, that is of the devil: it is this, *he sinneth from the beginning.* Then make an enquiry into this subject: together with the fall of the rebel angels with him, and give a scriptural account of the same. This is designed to make way, for giving an account of what our Lord hath said concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost—wherein it consists. To clear this more from all ambiguity, I will give a general outline of the state of the Church, at, and after the day of Pentecost, to the close of the Apostolic hour. After all this hath been treated of, I shall observe, this tremendous sin, was committed during that period, and give proofs from the Scripture of the same. After this, I shall positively assert, that it cannot be committed by any now: nor will it evermore. This may compose the mind, and relieve it, and set us at rest, from all fears on this account; which will be all established on the Scripture. The whole of this, with the full and particular statement thereof, will be left with you, to receive, or neglect the same, as may seem good unto you. *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* This is set in immediate opposition to the former verse. As the one is descriptive of saints, so this is of sinners. The former are proved to be what they are, by their doing *righteousness*: the latter, by committing sin. This made an essential difference in the apostle's time, and he wanted it should be kept up, and

so remembered, as that saints might know the vast difference betwixt them and others; so as that they might not be deceived by a bare profession. As also, that they might be fully persuaded every tree was known by its fruits—that “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: And an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” It was so in our Lord’s day. It was so in the apostle’s day. It is so in our day. It will be so to the end of time. It cannot be otherwise. But to begin what is here before us. I am

*First*, To begin with this most awful assertion. *He that committeth sin is of the devil.* This is affirmed by the apostle: and it is a most tremendous sentence: designed by the apostle to deter from sin. There most certainly is enough in it, were it properly considered, to put us all, on dreading to commit sin: it being the devil’s work: we having communion with him thereby. Yea, it is a justifying him, in his sin and revolt from the Lord. Who then, would, who names the name of Christ, venture to commit sin, even on this very consideration? The devil was the first who sinned against God. He found out the cursed art of sinning. He was the introducer of it. From him it entirely sprang. It was from him it came. It originated from him. He conveyed it to some of the angels of God’s presence, and they became apostates. He introduced it into our world, and the first man fell by it. From him it affected and corrupted the whole nature of man; so that the whole of Adam’s posterity, all sinned in him. This is the truth of this matter, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. And by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified.” The devil is the father of sin, as he is the father of lies: never a sin committed by saint, or sinner, but he hath his hand in it, *He that committeth sin is of the devil.*

*Secondly*, As the word *committeth*, is repeated and in the present tense, I would take particular notice of it. We have had it in the former verses. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* I have quoted all these verses, merely for the connection of them; otherwise, it is but the one word, *sinneth* which I have mine eye upon: on which I would offer the following remarks; it is in the present tense; it includes a continuation in the act of sinning; it is made use of to express the devil’s sinfulness. *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* Surely some peculiar sinfulness is included in the word, as here used by the apostle; and that such, as the children of God, are saved from: or, he had never said, *He that committeth sin is of the devil*: seeing, “there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” This word *committeth* in the former verses, seems to be designed to run into this verse, now under consideration, that here its full meaning might appear; I conceive it, to be expressive of the sin unto death. The word *committeth*, carries with it in

my view, a continual course, and exercise of sin, without the least cessation. It is, therefore, said, *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* Why is he that sinneth, said to be of the devil, if it be not to compare the one with the other, for a continuance in the same? As the word *committeth* is a present word, and used here to express the sinfulness of those who are of the devil, and his sinfulness also, I think the observations made on the same, will be found to be most awfully just: also, that as the word occurs as is used here, it is expressive of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which as nearly resembles the devil's sin, and comes the nearest to it in guilt and demerit, of any which can possibly be committed by any sinner of the fallen race of men. It is here said of him that committeth sin, *He is of the devil.* Surely it implies he is so, in a very particular and extraordinary manner. He is singularly and personally so.

*Thirdly*, I would notice what is here said of the devil: it is this, *he sinneth from the beginning.* *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.* He whom the scriptures call *devil*, was once a pure angelic spirit: pure as the light; bright as the sun: there was no impurity in him: he was created in, and together with the heavens: it may be on the first day of the creation. We read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Gen. i. 1. As the earth was created as an habitation for man, and then he was created and brought into it: so it seems to have been, that the heavens were created, and angels together with them, to inhabit them. Their number was according to the good pleasure of God's will. They were all pure and holy: of vast intellectual wisdom: and he, who is now a devil was one of them. It is here said of him, *he sinneth from the beginning*: not from the beginning of his creation; for he was created pure and holy: nothing unholy ever came out of the forming hands of God. He was as holy, pure, and upright by creation, as the elect angels were: but he fell from that state of purity in which he was placed in his creation state. This is a subject which we may receive some light into from the sacred Scriptures: therefore I will make some enquiry into this subject: together with the fall of the rebel angels with him, and give some scriptural account thereof. Only give me leave to present you with a general account of these, before their fall—How they came to fall—What the devil's first sin was; by the which he became irrecoverably sinful—What the scripture says expressly concerning the fall of the non-elect angels: and then set before you, what our Lord says expressly, concerning the devil and hell. I apprehend by setting before you first, the general account of all this, the other will be the more clearly understood and apprehended by you. The Lord God created the angels, and he created man, in the course of the first six days of the creation: the one in the heavens; the other in this world. Man was created in the image of God. This was agreeable to what had been expressed by the Eternal Three. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: that is, after the Proto-Type, drawn in the infinite mind of the Three in Jehovah, of the God-Man. This being done, and the first man *Adam*, a figure of Christ, being formed, and soon after *Eve* as an help-meet for him, it is very probable, the Lord God made it known to all the angels of his presence, that it was his pleasure, God-Man should be the Head of the whole creation, the Head of all principalities and powers—That they all

should be under Him—He should be their one universal Head. This was what the mind of one of these bright intellectual ones could not brook: to submit to one in the nature of man, to be Lord Paramount over the whole creation of God: over all the angels, whose nature is beyond that of man; this he cannot submit unto. He hears this made known to be the will of Jehovah, and he immediately sins against this Person: and by one sudden motion of thought, influences the minds of an innumerable number of angels, with his own thought: their minds receive the impression: they, together with him, rebel and oppose this will of God in Christ, concerning them, and they fall with him into an act of open rebellion against the sovereign will and pleasure of the Most High. They will not submit that the God-Man, shall be Lord over them: thus they all united with one head, and they all fell by one head: and his name being devil, they receive their names from him, and are called *devils*, throughout the sacred scriptures, both of the Old, and New Testament. Our Lord says, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” Luke x. 18. *Peter* says, “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.” 2 Epis. ii. 4. *Jude* says, “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” v. 6. Being cast out of their heaven, in the which they were created, *Satan*, their chief, attempted his craft and skill on man: and by the serpent, he entering into it, he overcame the woman, and by her the man: and thus he overcame man; and is from hence called the devil—The old serpent—Satan—The deceiver of the whole world. It was hereby he obtained his design upon the whole human race; in all which he manifested his utter contempt of Christ, God-Man; and the whole human race. Now as this was from the beginning, very soon after the beginning of the creation of God, so what is said of him in the words before us, is this, *he sinneth from the beginning*: from his fall to the present moment; it is one continual act of sinning in him. His whole will is sin. He is continually sinning. He sinneth. There is not the least cessation. He is wholly intellectual. He needs no sleep. He is all activity: it is his very element to sin, with all the faculties of his mind against God. And hating man, next to God, for the object and subject, and having completely corrupted the nature of man, by the fall, he does all he can, and all his angels with him, fallen under the same eternal curse of God with him, to stir up, and continually to draw out all that depth of sin and sinfulness which is in the nature of fallen man, into act and exercise. It is conceived by our greatest divines, such as *Dr. Goodwin*, and others of a like depth of judgment, that the devil's original sin and fall are hinted at, and expressed by our Lord, in what is recorded in his discourses with the Jews, in the 8th chapter of *John's* gospel. He had been speaking of his divine mission, and of God's being his Father: this they most obstinately resisted. He then, as he proceeds on in his discourse with them, tells them who their father was; “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” v. 44. In the which words, our Lord pronounces the devil a liar, and the father of lies. He

styles him a murderer from the beginning: of being destitute of all truth: of his not continuing in the truth. And this opens up to us the originality of the devil's sin. He was by creation in a state of truth and purity: he abode not therein: his fall was of, and from himself alone. He did not sin immediately against Godhead: it was against a Person in the Godhead, set up from everlasting agreeable with the will of each of the Persons in the Godhead, to be God-Man, in one Person. He would not, he would rather perish for ever, than be under, and submit to the Person, rule, government, and kingly authority of Christ, God-Man. He would rather prefer damnation to all eternity than be subjected to the God-Man. His pride contained in this crime, of all crimes the greatest, seems to be referred to by the apostle, when directing Timothy concerning church officers, he says, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." 1 Tim. iii. 6; which implies, pride was the devil's sin: as it has been opened, it is plain it was so. He was full of hatred against God, so far as he could express it, for his will concerning his appointment of the union of our nature to the Person of his coequal, coessential, and coeternal Son. As our Lord here charges these Jews, with being the children of the devil, and being guilty of the same sin he was, in their measure and degree, and this in their rejection of Him, and his Messiahship; so it is to be observed, the passage is a very suitable one, to give light into the devil's sin. The devil hath no bodily lusts; he is wholly incorporeal: our Lord, therefore, saying to these, *Ye are not of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*; and the sin of these men, whom Christ was then addressing, consisted in their entire rejection of the same most adorable Person, God-Man, who came down from heaven, who declared that God was his Father, and himself the glorious and promised Messiah—In this they expressed themselves to be of the same spirit with the devil. *He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.* The truth which he abode not in, was what concerned the Person of Christ: which he hath set himself against in all ages, to oppose, and blaspheme, by various ways, and means. He corrupted the minds of those persons, whom our Lord was then conversing with, so as that they hated him, and denied his eternal Power and Godhead. The devil's original sin, was his rejection of Christ, God-Man, to be a Head to him; this was very soon after his creation: it was from this sin his fall commenced. And he became a murderer, *He was a murderer from the beginning*; this was by his corrupting all mankind, by the fall of Adam in Paradise. I hope I have thus far cleared up the subjects which have been proposed. And as all this was designed, for giving an account of what our Lord hath said, concerning the sin against the Holy Ghost—wherein it consists. To clear this the more I will 1. Recite what Christ himself says of it. Then 2. To free this the more from all ambiguity, I will give a general outline of the state of the visible church of Christ, at, and after the day of *Pentecost*, to the close of the apostolical hour. Then 3. After all this hath been treated of, I shall observe this tremendous sin was committed during that period, and give proofs from the scripture of the same. What is to follow, shall be mentioned, when I have filled up these particulars, which may the Lord enable me to do, that his great name may be glorified thereby. I am

*First, To recite what our Lord Jesus Christ hath uttered concern-*



ing the sin against the Holy Ghost, which he hath pronounced to be unpardonable: with the occasion thereof. I will first mention our Lord's words, and afterwards mention on what account they came to be uttered, and I conceive this will be the only way rightly to understand the same. The words are these, "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Thus they stand in the 12th chapter of *Matthew's Gospel*, v. 31, 32. In *Mark's Gospel*, they are expressed thus; chap. iii. v. 28, 29. "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." Our Lord adds; or, it may be, it is the Evangelist gives this, as the reason, why our Lord expressed himself at this time thus. "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." v. 30. The season and occasion on which our Lord spake thus, was as follows; one was brought unto him, who was possessed with a devil, who was blind and dumb: our Lord healed him: he was not only freed from the possession, but he also spake and saw. At this all the people present were amazed, and they cried out, *Is not this the son of David?* by whom, they meant the Messiah: this so drew out the minds of the Pharisees present, who heard it, that they immediately blasphemed, saying, *This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.* Our Lord who knew their thoughts, as well as heard their words, discourses on what they had thus uttered: and at the close of the same, expresses in the words before quoted, the most extreme danger of their case and sin. Read the 12th chapter of *Matthew*, from verse 22nd to the close of the 32nd, and you will see the truth of all this: read also the 3rd chapter of *Mark*, from verse 22nd to the close of the 29th, and you will conclude both accounts are one and the same; as for the occasion and substance of them. Let this be closely attended unto, and it will most clearly appear, what the sin committed by these persons was, and wherein its tremendous guilt lay. Here was our Lord Jesus Christ, exercising the power, and giving full and true evidence before the people, of his Messiahship. His inveterate enemies with such malice against him, as could only be injected into their minds from the devil himself, and in direct opposition to the conviction of their own consciences, profanely ascribe these very miraculous acts of Christ, which he wrought by the Holy Ghost, to the devil. This was a most horrible crime. It was to blaspheme the Spirit of God indeed—To impute Christ's miracles to the devil—To pronounce he was in compact with *Beelzebub* the prince, or chief of the devils—To attribute the great acts performed by Jesus of Nazareth, under the anointings of the Holy Ghost, to our Lord's being possessed of the devil—This was the sin these wretches were at this time guilty of. It is from hence our Lord took occasion to utter these words, in the which he sets forth the horrible guilt, and tremendous sinfulness contained in this sin: and that there is no forgiveness of it, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.

I would add to all the former, this—Our Lord in his Incarnate state,

as the Messiah, gave full and ocular demonstration he was, what he declared Himself to be. He was testified of, by the Father, and the Holy Ghost, to be the Son of the living God. He wrought, and spoke as never man did. Therefore, to withstand all this, and to speak so virulently and blasphemously of him, as to say, he was in compact with the devil, this was to sin the sin against the Holy Ghost. And it was on this occasion our Lord spoke of it, and pronounced it to be unpardonable: saying, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Or, as the other evangelist hath it, "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." I should hope, there hath been enough expressed, to give light into what this sin against the Holy Ghost consists in—what its nature and sinfulness consist in. It could not be committed, before the Incarnation of our Lord. It has been since; but that only during one period. And conceiving, what may make this still the more clear and evident is yet to come, I leave what hath been delivered; earnestly requesting the simplicity of what hath been freely stated, may be closely attended unto: as being persuaded it will be all-sufficient, as the ground work, on which all that may be further said in the prosecution of this discourse may be referred unto. I come therefore,

*Secondly*, To clear this from all ambiguity, by giving you a general outline of the state of the visible church of Christ, at, and after the day of *Pentecost*, to the close of the apostolic hour, or, the apostolic age.

On the day of *Pentecost* according to Christ's most faithful and true promise, he sent down the Holy Ghost, on his church, then congregated at Jerusalem; their whole and complete number was, about 120: they were sanctified as a church of Christ, by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost on them, in the form and figure of cloven tongues, resting on each and every one of them. Hereby was proved that our Lord Jesus Christ, was what he had declared himself to be. Hence the apostle *Peter* expressed himself, to the persons who came together on that occasion, to the place where the apostles were; "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." They saw, and heard, the sound of a rushing wind; in the which the Lord the Spirit descended. They saw the visible evidence of his being descended, in the flames of fire, which was in appearance of Tongues parted into parts, cloven, or rent, which sat visibly on each of the holy brethren and sisters. This the apostle refers the spectators to, when he says, speaking of the glorious, and glorified Lord, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Acts. ii. 33. On the day of *Pentecost*, the church of Christ, was most divinely anointed with the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Lord Christ shed Him, most richly, in all the fulness of his gifts and graces on his apostles, ministers, and people: 3000 were immediately converted unto the Lord: 5000 soon after: multitudes both

of men and women, so that their number was not attempted to be mentioned. And the ministers, both apostles, and others were most extraordinarily qualified to prove that Jesus of Nazareth, was the true Messiah: acknowledged to be so by God himself; by his Resurrection, Ascension, Glorification, and sending down the Holy Ghost, who inspired some of these men, to work miracles in his most glorious name, such as exceeded all ever wrought before them, except by their Lord himself. And theirs in number, and variety exceeded his. Which was agreeable unto his own promise unto them before his departure from them. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." John xiv. 12. All which was most fully realized in the apostles, and fulfilled by them in the apostolic day. The Lord Jesus Christ sent them to express, what at the first began to be spoken by Him, and had been most fully accomplished by Him, in his own Person, life, sufferings, and death. These were sent to confirm it: so says the apostle. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" Heb. ii. 3, 4. These were all, and each of them apostolical gifts: none but the apostles were invested with these: and they were continued for a season, to answer particular ends, which were to prove the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the true Messiah, of whom all the Prophets had testified. The miracles wrought in his Name, by his holy apostles, were to confirm the truths which they delivered. So that more clear attestations could not be produced, than were, in their testimony, of the Person and Messiahship of our Lord Jesus Christ. The ministers at, and after the day of *Pentecost*, in the apostolic church of Christ, were Apostles, Evangelists, Prophets, Teachers. In these there was an infallibility; because they were under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. There were some ordinances in that state of the Church, which are not now, and are ceased for ever: such as the kiss of love, or the holy kiss. The unction, or anointing of the sick with oil in the name of the Lord, as an outward sign of their recovery. The apostle *James* makes mention of this. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." James v. 14, 15. The foundation of this was laid, in what is recorded by the evangelist *Mark*: that our Lord sent out the twelve, "And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." chap. vi. 7, 12, 13. *Paul* says to the saints of *Rome*; *Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. Peter* calls it, *the kiss of charity, or love.* The apostles were all of them inspired by the Holy Ghost. They had all of them seen and conversed with Christ in his resurrection state. Their particular office was to bear witness of the same—To preach the gospel—To plant churches—To settle them in all the truths, and ordinances of the everlasting gospel. They wrought miracles. They spake with Tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. They had apostolical gifts suited

peculiarly to their office. They could strike dead. They could raise the dead. They could eject devils. They could deliver over offenders to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. They had all the ordinances of Christ which he himself ever made use of, such as anointing with oil such as were sick, in token of their recovery. And the holy kiss: all which seem to have lasted throughout the Apostolic Period: then, ceased. Yet throughout all this period, many were admitted into the churches, who were not the Lord's: but these were externally enlightened. They enjoyed all sorts of spiritual privileges; yet this did not make them spiritual: so that as this age went on, and drew to its close, all sorts of evils and errors abounded. And as this dispensation of the Spirit was the means, of spreading the gospel over the whole Roman empire, one great design of which, was to prove our Lord Jesus Christ was the true Messiah, so towards the close of this age, or state, the sin against the Holy Ghost: or, sinning against the Person, and testimony of the Holy Ghost prevailed and was most awfully the case with many. So that I am brought

*Thirdly*, To observe, and give proof from scripture, that this tremendous sin was committed during that period: which can very easily be done.

The glorious gospel of the blessed God, had been most divinely dispensed for a long season. A glorious harvest of souls had been gathered in to Christ. At the close of this was the Autumn: then many who were but mere professors began to fall off. Some fell into one damnable error, and others into another, and some into vile sins. The *Romans*, and the *Jews* who continued in their unbelief, began to rage and storm, at the Christians. This made way for the real saints to be in very dangerous circumstances. They had never been free from persecution for Christ's sake: but now in a more vehement way and manner it came on them. *Jerusalem* was soon to be destroyed: the Temple also. The people of the Jews to be carried captive into all nations. This our Lord had foretold. This the apostles gave warning to the churches of. This the professors of Christ's gospel in the land of Judea, were in very particular danger from. Hence it is, there is so much said concerning falling away from the same. As persecution always serves to prove who are on the Lord's side, and who are not: so it was here. The church of Christ, according to his own most holy institution began at Jerusalem: it had been blessed with the ministry of all the gospel. It continued 30 years with them. As the ruin of the city drew nigh, many who professed Christ, began to be very cold and lukewarm in their profession: they fell off; so as to absent themselves from church assemblies, some of these became apostates. They denied Christ. They renounced Him totally. They joined in the same cry with the apostate Jews, saying, He was no other than an impostor. Now this was to commit the sin against the Holy Ghost; which sin consisted in a total rejection of Christ, as the Messiah, the sent One of God: and that all his miracles were wholly owing to the devil, who possessed Him. Nothing could exceed the most horrible sinfulness contained in this: it was the sin of the *Pharisees*, who have been noticed before: it was the sin of some after the day of *Pentecost*; which, in some senses, was more aggravated than it was before seeing the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, his ascension, session, and coronation in

heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, and the wonders they had wrought in the Name of Jesus of Nazareth; this must of necessity have been an aggravation of this most tremendous crime. I am to give evidence, and that from the Scriptures, that this tremendous sin was committed in the apostolic period, and before the final close thereof. I will quote the scriptures, and then explain them; they will be out of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. The first, in the 6th chap. v. 4—6: the other, from the 10th chap. v. 26—31. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.—For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” These are the most alarming scriptures in all the Book of God. They concern those who had committed the sin unto death. They shew what that sin consists in: and express the vengeance and wrath of God against it: and they concern none but such apostates: and such were found at Jerusalem. To prevent them, if possible from being such desperate sinners, the apostle writes as he doth. They were enlightened, and had a clear theory of the doctrine of grace. They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, in his external operations, and gifts. They had tasted of the heavenly gift, so as to be filled with inward ravishments at the thoughts of Christ, that he should be given to be salvation. They had tasted of the good word of God. They could speak of it. They professed it; and it may be, preached it; yet it was only so far as nature elevated with all this, could go. They tasted of the powers of the world to come. Had like *Balaam*, some elevation of spirit, at what will befall the church of Christ in the last day: yet all this never went further than to work on their natural minds. It was possible for them to fall from all this. There was no Holy Ghost in them. He only wrought externally upon them. They were not born again. Therefore they fell from all this. They became apostates. They fell back again to Judaism. It was impossible to renew them again unto repentance. They sully proved their inveteracy against Christ by their open rejection of Him; “Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” If I may throw more light on this, I would add, the persons here spoken of, having professed Christ, been baptized in his Name, been at his Table, and been thus and thus gifted, as expressed, wholly abjured Christ, and would have it, he was an impostor. Of these same, the apostle speaks, when he says, “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth

no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." These were such wretches, as denied our Jesus, to be Christ, the Son of God. They rejected his Sacrifice. They contemned it, so as to account the blood of Christ to be of no worth. They looked on him as a false Messiah; and counted his blood and sacrifice to be an unholy thing. They did despite to the Spirit of grace: and all this after they had been so wrought externally on, and been professors of Christ, and his gospel. Surely if ever any committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, these did. No marvel, therefore, the apostle expresses the most awful curses which could possibly fall upon them, out of hell, or in it: saying, "there is a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." It appears from both these quotations, the sin against the Person of the Holy Ghost, which *John* styles the sin unto death, is fully explained in the case of these apostates. And that they were guilty of it, and it consisted in, their rejecting the testimony of the Holy Ghost, concerning Christ, and his mediation wholly: and this under the clearest evidence which could be given of it: so that their damnation was inevitable. He might, therefore, well add, "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And thus I drop this part of this most awful and solemn subject; and shall now proceed to assert positively, that this sin cannot be committed now; nor will it evermore: this may compose the mind, relieve and set it at rest, from all fears on this account. This will be established on the scripture.

We read not of this sin under the Old Testament dispensation; yet we read of the Israelites, that "they tempted and provoked the most high God." Ps. lxxviii. 56: that "they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." Isa. lxiii. 10. It could not be committed then because our Lord Jesus Christ was not in his incarnate state; when He was, it was committed solely and entirely by attributing his stupendous acts and miracles, which were wrought by the power and influence of the Holy Ghost, to the devil. This was the very essence of this sin: by which the Holy Ghost was blasphemed. When our Lord had finished his work, and was gone into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God, He sent down the Holy Ghost to testify of Him. Under that special dispensation of the Holy Ghost, which commenced at *Pentecost*, the effects of which in a very special manner, more or less, lasted until the expiration of the Apostolic Age, this sin could be, and instances have been given, that it was committed. And it consisted in a total renunciation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the true Messiah, and despising his Mediation wholly and altogether. And this in immediate opposition to all the evidence given of the same, by the open witness and testimony thereof—given by the Personal descent of the Holy Ghost, on the apostles, and by his testimony of Christ's Person, Messiahship, and Mediation, given

in their ministry, and by the wonderful signs and wonders, wrought by the Spirit of God, in confirmation of the same. Now to sin wilfully and maliciously against all this evidence and testimony given by the Holy Ghost, against this truth, that Christ was the Son of God, and the true Messiah, and this too, after these persons had made a confession of Him, and been baptized in his most holy Name, been at his holy Table, and made an open profession of Him, this was to commit the sin unto death: which cannot now, nor evermore be committed for the following reasons: which I look upon to be scriptural, and established on the scriptures— Because we are not under the same Dispensation. We have neither apostles, nor miracles: so that we are in this respect, just what the Old Testament Church was, before the coming of Christ. They had the writings of the Prophets to direct them to Christ. We have the scriptures, both theirs, and the New Testament, to give us the true knowledge of Christ. There was none under that dispensation charged with this unpardonable sin: neither was it committed until Christ was actually in his incarnate state: then, it was, by some. So it cannot be committed *now*, because we have not the testimony of the Spirit concerning Christ, as was given by the Holy Ghost on the day of *Pentecost*; and by Him, in the ministry of, and by the apostles, concerning Christ, his mission, life, death, burial, and resurrection, as was by these testified of. We have the substance of all they delivered, and the same Holy Ghost bearing witness to the same Jesus, and to all recorded of Him in the word, but not in the same way. It was then, by outward ocular demonstration. It is now, by spiritual regeneration, revelation, and an inward apprehension of the whole, from the word of grace. From these views, I positively assert, this sin cannot be committed now: because we have not the same ministry, neither have we the same outward evidences and miracles. So that whilst all sin is against the Holy Ghost, as truly as it is against the Father, and the Son; yet this particular sin, spoken of by the apostle, is not comprehended in our sins, and sinnings. It cannot be committed now: nor will it evermore: and this I conceive may be established from scripture; as in all the epistles, when, and where, there is mention made of this sin, it is either confined to the season our Lord was on the earth: or, to those who lived in the apostles' times, and before the destruction of Jerusalem: or, just about the close of the last hour, as our apostle doth. And here I drop this subject; leaving this full and particular statement of it, with you, to receive it, or reject it, as may seem good unto you. I proceed

3. To take notice of the purpose, end, and design for which the Son of God was manifested. It was, *that he might destroy the works of the devil. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

Sin is the devil's work. The sin unto death is the devil's sin. None of the elect fall by it: they are all preserved from it. And no sin beside; either before, or after conversion, take the whole bulk of election in Adam's posterity, but some or other of them fall into: Yet here is a most blessed relief and cordial for us; *The son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* If the Son of God was

manifested, he must have been before his manifestation. Neither was he the Son of God by his manifestation. He was so, Personally, and Essentially: as One in the incomprehensibly glorious Essence, coequal with the Father, and the Spirit. He was manifested by his open and visible Incarnation, by the which he became true and very man: made in all things like unto his brethren: the express purpose of which was, *that he might destroy the works of the devil.* This great enemy of God and Man, hateth Christ with an invincible and never-ceasing hatred. He is deciphered and set forth in all his titles thus: *The great dragon, the old serpent, the Devil, Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.* Rev. xii. 9. This great enemy, whose sinfulness can never be conceived, nor described; The Son of God became the Seed of the woman, to crush him finally: to dissolve his works: to undermine his kingdom: to deliver the elect out of his hands, and deliver them from the power of darkness. This was the accomplishment of this most blessed sentence: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it, or he, shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. iii. 15: our Lord in his own body on the tree, bore the sins of many; made intercession for the transgressors; and poured out his soul unto death. Thus he pursued and completed the great end and design of his manifestation in the flesh. The apostle speaking on this subject expresseth himself thus. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Heb. ii. 14. Our Lord Jesus Christ, hath trodden upon the head of the old serpent, called the devil, and given a death-blow to his kingdom and power. This he did when crucified in weakness, when he hung on the cross. The apostle gives us the following beautiful account of it. "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it, or, on it." See Col. ii. 15. If the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil; and all sin is his work; then most assuredly, such as are made know to be the Lord's, *cannot live in it.* And if we survey the whole of our text, we shall find this to be the very true genuine doctrine thereof. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* Our Lord hath destroyed the power, guilt, and dominion of sin, in the souls of all his called people. He on the cross destroyed the damning guilt of sin; and also the damning Power of sin. And to his most efficacious Sacrifice we are to look for the complete mortification of the whole body of sin: and for our entire and everlasting discharge from the same. His Death is our everlasting security from all condemnation. His life is our everlasting Perfection. In Him we have justification unto life. We shall reign in life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. It is truly good for us to view the triumphs, victories, and conquests of our Lord, and bless him for all his strength, which he hath put forth over all the power of the enemy. Let us never fear the devil. He is conquered by our Omnipotent Jesus. Let us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, renounce and avoid all sin: it being the work of the devil. To commit sin, is the devil's element—The very means



whereby he hath fellowship with sinners, and they with him, in every act of it. Let us not therefore please the enemy of our souls, by any cursed compliances with Him. May the Lord grant, that the purpose, end, and design of the manifestation of the Son of God, which was to destroy the works of the devil, may be more and more evidenced in us, in all the fruits and effects thereof. May the Lord bless what hath been laid before you. May he render it efficacious to your minds; so as that it may answer the end which is wished for—The instruction of your souls—The comfort of your hearts—The removing of discouraging fears from you—the peace and comfort of your minds, and his own glory—That you seeing your deliverance in him, and his victory over the devil for you, may rejoice as your brethren before you have done, “Saying, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” Rev. xii. 10. And pray remember how they overcame him. It was “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.” v. xi. xii. The Lord bless what hath been delivered, so far as seemeth good in his sight. Amen.

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## SERMON XL.

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*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.—1 JOHN iii. 9.*

WE have here an important declaration: it comes from the pen of an infallible apostle; and contains an everlasting truth; which all the saints of the Most High God, have in their own souls the real experience of; which they also give more or less evidence of in their lives, walk, and conversation. The apostle in the former part of this chapter had been speaking to the same effect: he now is going to divide what he had said, and what he hath further to say, into two large particulars: such as may include and comprehend all which may be expressed in real holy hatred against sin; and also in the grace contained and expressed, and exercised in loving the brethren. As our being the Lord's is proved outwardly by keeping God's commandments, so there are two ways whereby this is done, which are both of them here hinted at by our beloved *John*: the one is by an abstinence from all evil: the other is by loving the Lord's beloved one's. The love of God hath a beauty and sweetness in it, which so far as we are led into a spiritual knowledge and apprehension of the same, most sweetly and efficaciously operates on our mind: it influences us both inwardly and outwardly. Sin is an object of God's immutable hatred. We are saved from the guilt of it—From the power of it—From the love of it. The Lord the Holy Spirit increaseth our hatred of it, from such considerations as these—It is a transgression of God's most

holy law—It is a filthy act—It is a work of the devil—It is in its own nature abominable—It fully demonstrates such as live, and act, and are under the full power and influence of it, to be the children of the devil—This is the essential difference between one born of God, and one who is not. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* Sin interrupts communion with God: it is that which Christ came into the world to destroy. Our love to the brethren, must have its true and proper extension: it must extend to all the holy brethren; even to all who profess faith in, and love to, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not to be verbal, and hypocritical. No; it must be in deed and truth. These reasons are to be considered by us, as motives to draw it forth in us, and that we may be excited to the acts and exercises of the same. The Lord Jesus Christ hath commanded it, He himself hath exemplified it unto us. It is both an evidence and outward proof of our adoption—That we are the sons of God—That we have the true knowledge of God; and that we love God. Keep these things in view, and you will find in the same a general outline of this chapter, and of what in it is yet to come before us. Our present text naturally divides itself thus. Here is

1. An assertion. *Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin.*

2. Here is the ground and foundation on which this assertion is made. It is this. *For his seed remaineth in him.*

3. This is confirmed thus. *He cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

There are various interpretations given by learned and truly excellent men, on these words. Most assuredly none ought by any means to be admitted of, which at all abate, or weaken the energy and importance of them. It would be far better that any of us should confess we cannot comprehend the meaning of the Holy Ghost in them, than go about to darken counsel, with words without knowledge. May the Lord ever give you and me, the most profound reverence for every part, sentence, and truth contained in the holy and inspired volume. I would ever desire to retain in memory, what Wisdom Mediator, by whom I understand our Lord Jesus Christ himself, says in the 8th chapter of the *Proverbs*, v. 8, 9. "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge." I am according to my plan

1. To consider and explain this assertion, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.*

These words have been very distressing to some real saints; who finding themselves the subjects of sin, and that there are, and have been times since they were brought to the knowledge of Christ, in which they have been guilty of sin, have looked on this positive assertion before us, as cutting them up by the roots; and proving to demonstration they positively have no part nor lot in the matter—that they were never right yet: if they had, they would never have sinned after they were partakers of grace. Although the apostle proves it is not so with any of the saints; yet this does not always satisfy a real child of God: but, if he has fallen by his besetting sin, it is very common for him to bring forward this passage to condemn himself, and weaken his confidence of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. To prevent which, many blessed men in their inter-

pretation of it, have shewed, that such as are born of God, do not sin as wicked men do, who are not born of God—That the regenerate man does not allow himself in sin—If he falls into it, this is more by accident, and surprize: not out of purpose and resolution—That his constant and the settled bent of his will is not to sin. It is also said, when the regenerate sins, it is not with his will—He does not yield full consent to it—When he does it, it is not so, but he would most gladly avoid it—What he does, is in a sort against his inclination—He does not delight in it—He is most sorely grieved for it—He complains of it—He mourns for it—He repents of it—He does not continue in it—He turns from it. There is a truth in all this: it seems to be founded on what the apostle *Paul* says of himself in the 7th chapter of his Epistle to the *Romans*. He says as follows, on the subject of indwelling sin, and concerning himself as the subject of the same. “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.—I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” As there cannot be more bitter exclamations, and lamentations made by any regenerate person, under the sad and awful experience of indwelling sin, and the prevailing of corruption, than are here expressed, so it is generally concluded from hence, no regenerate person, ever sins with the consent of his will. So that this may be concluded to be in part the apostle’s meaning in these words, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. The emphasis of the text is most certainly laid on being *born of God*. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. So that this is generally given as the full interpretation of these words—That the regenerate person never sins with the full bent of his will—That the regenerate part does not sin: as there is no sin in the new creature, the new man, the hidden man of the heart, the new Adam nature created and produced in us by the Holy Ghost, so we may in this sense be said not to sin. Not as being free from a body of sin, or from falls into it: but we so differ from what we were in our unregenerate state, and the bias of the mind is so effectually changed, and so altered, that we do not commit the same acts, nor fall by the same besetting sins, we did heretofore. Whilst this may have afforded some relief to some of the Lord’s people, when their minds have been distressed in consequence of their falls into sin, and by reason of their being overtaken by their own inherent corruptions, yet this, has not been found an all-sufficient remedy for the assuaging the grief of mind many of the Lord’s people have been the subjects of. Therefore, it has been conceived, this scripture must contain something of a deeper nature than all this amounts unto. Some of the most laborious and faithful of the Lord’s ministering servants, have declared upon the most diligent search into the scriptures, they have not found any one scripture, or promise, which secures the Lord’s people from falling into sin—Into their particular and besetting

sin—Into any sort of sin, except one; which they say is the sin unto death; or what we commonly stile the sin against the Holy Ghost; which they say the elect are preserved from. And some of them say, this is what *John* is here in this place speaking of; which he affirms they do not commit, when he says, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* It most assuredly is the same with all the people of God, in some of these following respects. They have all sin in them: the old man is never altered: his dominion is taken away; yet the life of it remains: the same natural affections, and sinful infirmities remain. These lift up their head; these break out into such discoveries of the same, as to give full proof that there are seasons, when they are too strong for the inherency of grace to prevent us from being led captive by them. As to what is generally said concerning not falling by the same sin after conversion as we did before, some of us have found, and do find, this is not really the fact. It is not so with us; it is quite different with us; let others say of themselves what they may. This is what must be acknowledged; we are in a regenerate state, out of the state we were in before: we are not now in a state of sin: we are not under the dominion of sin; nor can it have dominion over us. We are in the kingdom of God's dear Son: we are in the state of grace, of life, and liberty. We have the same sin in us we ever had: it is alive in us: it is sometimes very active: we are sometimes overtaken by it: we are overcome with it: yea, in a way we never expected: it rages; it storms; it overpasses all bounds: we fall into such sins as we never expected. I rather think some of us are more overcome mentally, and others more openly. I would fain maintain, that I really think, the Lord's people, are in general, kept from outward, and open, public transgression; so as that it is not a common case for them to bring an open scandal, on the cause of God, and Truth. And the Lord be praised for this: it being wholly owing to grace. We may conceive, with *Dr. Goodwin* that the Lord's people in general, are kept by him in such bounds as are altogether agreeable to the rules of his most holy word, and as equal to his most holy promises. I do conceive this should be contended for; it should be expected by us. So far as this goes, we most certainly have great reason to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. It most assuredly becomes us to look to the Lord Jesus Christ continually for his life-giving Spirit to influence us—For his life-giving word to quicken us—For his promise to encourage us—For his arm to defend us—For his grace to be all sufficient for us—For his strength to be made perfect in our weakness—For him to preserve an invincible hatred in our souls, at all times, and in all places against all sin—For him to keep us in the hour of temptation; and from entering into temptation. Surely all this is the real evidence of the new-birth in us. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* It is not his trade and business. It is not his life and element. If he falls by sin, he is out of his own proper element. His heart is not wholly swallowed up in it. He may be led captive by it; yet he is not conquered: so far from it, that his very fall, let it be into what it may, serves to increase his hatred, even against that very sin which he falls by. I do think I have done the subject justice, without saying too much, or too little. I do not conceive I have expressed any thing to weaken the importance of what is before us, as if to sin were a light matter: or, as if sin had not its cursed influence,

within, and upon real believers; nor have I, in my own conception, said any thing to set aside this most solemn assertion of the apostle, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. It is by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the word, we are begotten, or born again. Regeneration is the reigning governing principle in the soul born of God. Such as are born again, they are enlightened into a knowledge of God, and Christ: they are under the teaching and government of the Spirit: in them, sin is subdued and mortified. The regenerated cannot evermore come again absolutely under the power and dominion of sin. Such may fall into acts of sin; but such can never cease to be regenerate persons. They may fall into, and they may have many sinful cases of their own to lament, and bewail, but they can never fall into a sinful state. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. It hath been already suggested, some by these words, understand the sin against the Holy Ghost is intended, which the elect of God are preserved from; so as that they are wholly exempted from it. And it must be granted, there is this to lead to such an apprehension—This sin was the subject of the former verse; *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*. Now the words of my text having a close connection with the former, it may be concluded the one does most certainly serve to open and explain the other. Such as are born of God, cannot commit the devil's sin: this is impossible, it being wholly out of the power of such, as are born from above. Then this should yield comfort and satisfaction to the called ones of God. This being asserted here in this place by the apostle, it should be looked on, and received into our minds, with all that reverence, as if we had heard it pronounced by the apostle himself; this is the way for it to work effectually in us, who believe. We being in Christ, are perfectly preserved from this most tremendous guilt—From this most deadly sin. We need not therefore at any time, case, or season, be cast down in our own minds, as if we had committed it. Most assuredly it was for this very purpose, the apostle inserted these words here: and the whole contained in the verse seems to confirm it. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God*. Take the words as they have been explained, there is nothing more suited, to relieve the hearts of the Lord's people, under their various sins, and sinnings, and various sinful cases. Satan will be sure to distress their minds, so often as they fall into sin: it will be chiefly about the guilt of it. He will aim to bring them, if possible, to conclude they have committed the devil's sin. Therefore the words before us, furnish an argument for our minds, to prevent us from falling under such a charge, and accusation; for surely, that sin which it is wholly impossible I should ever commit, I need not give myself such a concern about, as if I had committed it. But as the authority of a great saint, may give weight to what hath been delivered, I would say, that man of renown, *Mr. Joseph Hussey*, is of this opinion, that the sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin here intended. And it, he conceives, the only sin, God has engaged to keep his people from: all others they fall into: some before their conversion; some after conversion: but into this they do not. And indeed, according to what was delivered in the former Sermon, it is impossible they should; seeing they can never be so left by

the Lord, as to renounce the Lord Jesus Christ, and renounce Him, as their everlasting Saviour. But I hasten to my next particular.

2. To observe, here is the ground and foundation, on which this assertion is made. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him.* This is the reason assigned. And here it will be necessary to observe in opening the full scope of the text, what this seed is, which remaineth in the believer: and also what we are to apprehend by its remaining in him. This is the subject to be examined into, in this our present particular. I have recited, and will again recite, the former part of the verse, that we may be no losers by its omission, and that the strength of the words may be the better preserved, and maintained. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him.*

The words are general. They are extensive. They concern all the saints: not one of them more than another: this the word *whosoever* testifies. It is the new-born they concern; we had mention of the new-birth before, in these words, *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.* chap. ii. 29. And here it is, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him.* Our new-birth is that which makes an essential difference in us, yea within us; between us, and all beside. It is most certainly made use of by our apostle, in this very place, as also in the former for this identical purpose. It is an internal and an abiding evidence, between us, and all sorts of professors beside. They may have clear apprehensions of Truth, yet they have not a spiritual apprehension and perception of it, so as inwardly to receive, enjoy, and digest it: the apostle says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." I Cor. ii. 14. Such only have a spiritual discernment, as have a spiritual faculty: and it is those only who are born again of the Holy Spirit, who have a spiritual faculty, who have minds suited to receive, to feed on, and are nourished with divine truth. As the new-birth is the essential distinguishing difference between one and another, so our apostle makes his use of it, to express hereby that this is an inward evidence of the reality of what the Lord hath done for us, beyond what he hath done for others: and also to shew it is from hence we are distinguished, by the fruits and effects which flow herefrom, to be what we are really—the children of God: it is the life, the root, the foundation, the spring of all grace within us. Our love to God, hatred of sin, are contained in regeneration as its root. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* He does not live in the practice of it; neither is it his constant settled purpose and resolution. He is grieved for it, he complains of it, he turns again and again from it. He does not sin the sin unto death. All these are so many fruits of his being born of God: they are the very effects thereof: what *Job* calls the root of the matter, is in him. He hath the new and divine nature, the principle, or habit of grace and holiness wrought in his soul, and the Holy Ghost indwelling in him to uphold the same, so as that it cannot decay. This I conceive to be a fair outline of the words before us, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* This part, *for his seed remaineth in him,* is the ground and foundation, on which the former words, which contain this assertion, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,*

is founded; *for his seed remaineth in him*. He is endued with such a faculty, or principle, or nature, as will not suffer him so to do. I have suggested, to understand the full scope of these words before us, it will be necessary to enquire what is to be understood by this seed which remaineth in the regenerate, and also what we are to apprehend by its remaining in the regenerate. I will cast this into a twofold division. 1. What this seed is. 2. How it remaineth in the regenerate. It seems to me to be obvious, that it is to be distinguished from the grace of regeneration itself: the subject being expressed thus, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*. The whole of regeneration is here comprehended. It admits of no increase, nor decrease: when it is wrought, it is once for all. The discovery and drawing it forth is successive; but there will never be any addition to it: no, not in heaven to all eternity. The apostle is not here speaking of the work of regeneration, but of the upholding it in the soul. As there can be no sin in this divine birth, so it cannot in any one instance yield to sin. The person who is the subject of it may: but this new-birth, principle, faculty, call it by what scriptural term you please, cannot. Now the ground and sole foundation of this assertion is this, *For his seed remaineth in him*. Our Lord when he spoke on the subject of regeneration, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 5. When the apostle *James* speaks of it: he says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." chap. i. 17, 18. And *Peter* speaking on the same subject, says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Epis. i. 23. To be born again of water and of the Spirit—To be begotten with the word of truth—To be born again of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever; I should consider we may conceive the following particulars implied. By being born of water and of the Spirit, I apprehend, the word and Spirit may be meant. By being begotten by the word of truth, I should conceive the gospel is designed: agreeable to which, *Peter* says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Pet. i. 3: and the word of God is the incorruptible seed by which we are born again, which liveth, and remaineth, and abideth in us. Yet it must be confessed, our Lord Jesus Christ himself is styled by *Peter* in those words of his here referred unto, by these titles, *Incorruptible seed, The word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*. Let us look at them, and see if it be not so. *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*. The quotation from the prophet confirms all this. *The word of the Lord endureth for ever,—And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*. 1 Pet. i. 25. Here is the Essential Word, and the Gospel in which he is revealed, and by the which he is revealed and made known, distinguished one from the other. I therefore should conceive herefrom, if we make use of this to reflect light on our text, we might gather this from it. That the knowledge of Christ formed in

our minds, from the word of the gospel, through the Spirit, is regeneration : and Christ's dwelling in us, which is the fruit thereof, is the seed which remaineth in us. If I mistake not, *Dr. Gill*, understands the Holy Spirit who dwelleth in the believer, to be intended by the seed ; which seems to be agreeable with our Lord's words. " Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John iv. 14. To this it may be added, the word of God is most certainly the seed of eternal life : this at all times is in the souls of the regenerate : it is by it, as the means, that they are nourished up in words of faith and sound doctrine : it contains the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the seed which is incorruptible. He indwells and abides in all the regenerate. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him.* If by the seed, therefore, spoken of, we understand the word of God, or Christ the essential Word, or the Holy Ghost, who is the very life of it, who imparts life and light unto us, both from the gospel which is the revelation of Christ, or from Christ who is the life, light, and glory of the same, we may in a measure apprehend the apostle's meaning, concerning what we are to understand by the word *seed* here. And 2. what we are also to understand by this seed remaining in us. Where Christ is, there he will remain and abide : otherwise all spiritual life must be extinct : then it could not be everlasting ; whereas our Lord says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.* The Holy Spirit dwells in the person, whom he has formed for his praise, in regeneration. Every act of spiritual life, grace, and holiness, drawn forth in the regenerate, is by his divine power : not by external, but by internal influence. He works inwardly ; invisibly, and imperceptibly unto us ; so that our graces are excited, and brought into act and exercise, imperceptibly. We feel the good and blessed effects of the same ; yet in the drawing forth thereof, we are altogether passive. Now our spiritual seed, the word of God, which is by the Holy Spirit, so concocted in our minds, as to be in us seminally the ground and foundation of all inherent grace and holiness, this always, and at all times remaineth in us : The Author of all these, who has formed the same in our renewed minds, he ever remaineth in us. It is because he doth, that we cannot sin. This is what our text declares. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him.* He of whom he was born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, is in Him, dwelleth in him. He ever remaineth in him ; to fulfil that great promise, which belongs to all the called people of God. " And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. xxxii. 40. So that the apostle's assertion is well founded. And having to the utmost of my very slender ability, shewn you the ground and foundation of the assertion, I will again recite the whole text ; that you may judge for yourselves, of what is contained in the same : as also of what hath been delivered, and what will be proposed to be farther delivered thereon : *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* It is easy to be observed, all in the words belongs to each and every individual who is born of God : by



the which they are manifested to be the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. God in the person of the Father, is here spoken of as their Father: how, otherwise, are they here said to be born of Him? The words are, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* The whole blessedness of preserving these from committing sin, is here attributed to their being begotten: and to the seed of which, or of whom they were begotten: this is generally ascribed to the Holy Spirit. He preserves what he hath begotten in them. The seed of God, the word of the kingdom, the Spirit who created them anew in Christ Jesus, remaineth in them, so as that they cannot sin, as they did in their days of unregeneracy. They may fall into sin; yet they cannot fall into their past state of unregeneracy: neither can they commit the sin against the Holy Ghost. This therefore brings me to my last particular.

3. The assertion in the text is thus confirmed. *He cannot sin because he is born of God. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

This is one of the most inestimable blessings of regeneration. It cannot be overvalued; nor the Lord sufficiently praised for the same. The death of Christ is our complete discharge from all sin in the sight of the Lord. The blood of Jesus Christ is our everlasting purity in the sight, and before the Majesty, of our heavenly Father. In the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ unto death, even the death of the cross, we have complete salvation. In regeneration we are formed by the Holy Ghost, so as to have minds and faculties, to receive the knowledge of all this, and enjoy the same, so as to have fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in every distinct and particular branch of this most glorious display of grace: now in this present time state; and anon in the state of everlasting glory. To be born of God is to be meet for all the vision of his manifestative Glory in the face of Jesus Christ, by open vision, and sense within the veil; and cannot but gladden the heart. It is also very suited to the genius of a new born soul, to apprehend what blessings are his, and are contained in regeneration, and that he shall be infallibly preserved, notwithstanding all the assaults of earth and hell. It is, doubtless, here brought forth, as an universal comfort and matter of consolation to the whole family of the Most High God, to sustain their minds, under all they were exercised with, under the sights they had of sin, and human frailty; they had that already wrought in their souls, by God himself, and this by the energy of his most holy and blessed Spirit, as that they could never cease from hating sin with an invincible hatred; nor should they ever cease from having that principle in their souls, which would never yield to sin, whilst they themselves, might be overcome with partial falls, and backslidings into it. The assertion in the text, most assuredly must serve to keep up, and maintain their hope; it could not but be so: and this as farther confirmed, must have had its weight upon their minds. It could not but have done their souls good. *For his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* It must afford satisfaction to the mind of all born of God; they had that inherent in them which would never yield to sin. Though, Gad, a troop should overcome him, yet he should overcome at the last. None of the saints are without their personal, and particular conflicts with sin; nor are

there any of these, but what arise from within themselves: so that to deny themselves, is their one continual exercise: in the which their personal, and peculiar conflict consists: in the course of which warfare, sometimes the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that the real saint cannot do the things which he would. It must to such, as properly received into their minds, and rightly received into their hearts, be a very blessed support; the very words, and expressions contained in the text before us. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* They are suited to the spiritual mind in this twofold point of view. In the 1st place, as they are evidentially expressive of this—That there is nothing in the everlasting gospel, in the whole scheme of salvation, in the whole revelation of grace, in all the oracles of God, in the fullest knowledge of what is contained, maintained, believed, and professed of them, which does not in its own nature and design, discountenance sin—which subdues it, lifts above the love, power, practice, and influence of the same: and promotes an eternal hatred of it in the real and spiritual mind. All this is very acceptable to the knowledge of a regenerated person. In the 2nd place, they fully suggest this most important and desirable truth, that there is in the believer in Jesus, a real faculty, or principle in the regenerate mind, of hatred of sin, which all hell cannot overcome; whilst they may overcome the person, who is the subject of all this, over and over again. All believers are not alike saved from their constitutional and besetting corruptions. It is not to be doubted but some fall by them, over, and over again; even to old age: let their communion with God, be what it may. No doubt but they are at times swallowed up with grief, at this being their case. It may be, the whole of their views, as also their griefs, sorrows, and exercises may be so concealed, that it is only known to God and themselves. We may imagine, and it will not exceed the truth, should we apprehend these to conceive their sinfulness and cases to be such, as that Satan may find a suitable opportunity of suggesting to their minds; you will before you die, be finally prevailed with, and entirely overcome with such and such a corruption: indeed, your having been so often overcome already, and the easiness with which you slide into the evil, render it very suspicious whether you will ever get above it; for it is impossible for you to deny this. You have had your intermissions, yet you have had your relapses: nor is it age, or ordinances, nor even communion with God, which preserves you in the hour of temptation: if this be not the sin against the Holy Ghost, the unpardonable sin, for which there is no forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world to come, pray what can it be? I say, when Satan may suggest so and so, and, it may be, almost operates upon the mind, to make such conclusions, how very refreshing must what is contained in the words of the text before us be, as brought home to the minds of the people of God, who may be exercised, as hath been freely expressed. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* Such an one, can neither fear his falling into the sin against the Holy Ghost, nor of his being wholly, and finally swallowed up by his own personal sin, so as to be finally conquered by it: for it is here declared by an apostle, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him:*

and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. He hath that principle of grace in him, wrought and maintained in him by the Spirit of God, which neither inherent sin, nor the strength of it, with all its cursed workings and propensities, nor the malice, rage, and power of the devil, no, nor of the world which lieth in wickedness, will ever be able finally to overcome. *For his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* There is that in grace, as implanted in the mind, which cannot be overcome; nor will it ever yield to sin; whilst the person who is the subject of all this may. I hope I have made this very clear and easy to your spiritual apprehension. I cannot but conclude it must be so, as it respects your experience. All the children of the Most High having the same, one as the other, in their spiritual birth, must for the substance of it, have the very same inward trials and conflicts. And to be assured from the word of the Lord, and the servant of the Lord, that what he hath wrought in our souls shall continue for ever, even throughout the ages of eternity, must yield us unspeakable consolation. Here we feel our inward sinful maladies. Now we have those sights and real apprehensions of our inward depravity, as, it may be, I may say of the same, and that without any one of the saints' contradiction thereof, as none can fully express. We are well assured it will all soon cease. Death will discharge us from our warfare; it will deliver us from the whole body of sin and death for ever: but this will not fit us for eternal, personal, and uninterrupted fellowship with God. No; we being admitted into the immediate presence of Christ, and having in our souls, faculties, senses, and graces, wrought in our souls, suited to the enjoyment of Him; the Holy Spirit operating on the same, and He dwelling in us, and drawing these out into free and full exercise on Him, and the Father's everlasting love to our persons in Him, it is herein our fitness for communion with God and the Lamb will for ever consist. There will nothing be drawn out of our minds in Glory, which is not in them. This is a very comfortable thought: nor will this by any means take us off from centering wholly and alone in Christ, even when our whole souls shall be fully, and immediately exercised in personal communion with Him in his glory. And this may be given as the reason of it—Because we shall never have any consideration there of our own acts, and the exercises of our own minds. It is Christ, and the vision of Him, will swallow up our whole minds, so as that our own exercises on Him will be lost entirely in our real views of Him. The Lord be praised, that all we feel and find of sin within us, believers, cannot undo the work of the Holy Ghost in our souls. We cannot at present conceive what it will be, to be wholly delivered from a body of sin, and death: much less can we conceive what it will be to be all life, all light—To be all act and exercise in the full vigour of all our spiritual faculties, on the Person of Christ, God-Man, and on all the eternal acts of the Divine Persons in Him, towards the whole election of grace, and to have no evil existing in us, but be as free from all sin as Christ is Himself,—this is a state which is altogether congenial to the new-born soul: and which he is prepared and fitted for by his spiritual birth: and which he will immediately enter upon, on his departure from the body. Then he will be delivered in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye from all sin; so as it will never be in him any more: nor will he be capable of sinning any more; no, not throughout the ages of eternity. If the words before us, therefore, *Who-*

*soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God,* are spoken by way of discrimination, and all calculated to afford us comfort and encouragement in this our state of warfare; then most assuredly, we may much more comfort ourselves with the prospect before us, of our complete deliverance and discharge from all sin at death. We shall enter into glory sinless: we are now in the sight of our heavenly Father, as he beholds us in Christ, without all sin: we shall then be so inherently: and enter heaven without the least spot of sin, imputed to us, or inherent in us. A very blessed subject this for our meditation; and which if rightly improved cannot but make us long to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. Whilst in the body we shall never cease from being the subjects of sin; nor shall we cease more or less from some acts of sin; nor shall we ever be safe, from its being a possible case, of falling into any sort of evil, if left to the deceit of our own hearts, and the strength and influence of temptation. It is only the sin unto death we are secured from: what that sin is, and wherein the malignity of it consists, was freely and fully opened in the former sermon; I, therefore, say nothing of it here. Only would remark by putting the two former verses and this together, the true connection may most evidently appear. I will, therefore, here do it for you. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* If read thus in connection, it seems fully to prove, it is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which, whosoever is born of God doth not commit. May the Lord bless what hath been delivered, if he pleases. Amen.

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## SERMON XLI.

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*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.—I JOHN iii. 10.*

OUR apostle is here, as he had been several times before, drawing a line of distinction, between the children of God, and the children of the devil. All sin being the devil's work, let it be in what act, or form it may, is of the devil: most certainly then, the children of God, will be manifest, by their abstaining from it: and the devil's children will be manifest by their commission of it. To walk as becometh the gospel, is an evidence of our adoption: so is, also, our love to the brethren. The ground of our love to the brethren, must be the love of God: and this must extend itself to all who profess Christ: it must neither be verbal, nor hypocritical: it must be real, and sincere. The very reasons

why it must be so, are, because our Lord hath commanded it; and because it is an outward evidence of our knowledge of God—of our love to God—of the truth of our conversion. It proves the happiness of our state in Christ—That we have passed from death to life: and in, and by the practice of the same, we have a blessed assurance, before the Lord, that we are possessed in our own souls, of this grace of the Spirit, the loving the sons and children of God, for Christ's sake, and according to his commandment. In the remainder of this chapter, these things are spoken of, and made particular subjects; which are for the engagement of such minds, as are renewed by the Spirit of God, and are as so many internal and external evidences of the grace of God to such and such. There are some who are, in this our world children of God: there are others who are the children of the devil: the one are manifested by their righteous acts: the other by their unrighteous ones. This is very distinguishable by the one loving for Christ's sake the brethren, the other for hating them: it is hereby manifested whose children we are. He who lives an holy righteous life, is a child of God: he who lives an unholy and an unrighteous life, is a child of the devil. This is the real language, and true interpretation of our text. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* I would cast the text into the following division.

1. There are two sorts of persons, or people in our world: one are the children of God, the other are the children of the devil.

2. These are particularly manifest, by their actions. The one by doing good, and acting righteously: the other by their evil doings, and acting unrighteously. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God.*

3. A very singular and complete manifestation of the devil's children. Such love not the real children of God. No; not even if they are professors, and should even be in the same church state with them. *Neither he that loveth not his brother*; which must imply brotherhood by way of church relationship; for the children of God, and the children of the devil, never all of them, could have the same father. No; not even in the very same state of nature, this neither was, nor could be the case; it can therefore be only interpreted on the footing of outward profession, which sometimes issues in church relationship. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* I am in proceeding with the subjects before me,

1. To shew, that there are two sorts of persons, or people, in our world: one are the children of God, the other are the children of the devil. The original terms of distinction were, *the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent.* "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. iii. 15.

*Adam* is called the son of God. Luke iii. 38. It is said of *Seth*, he had a son born unto him, whom he called *Enos*. It is added, *then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.* In the margin it is, or, *to call themselves by the name of the LORD.* Gen. iv. 26. And in the 6th chapter of *Genesis*, those who were professors of Christ are

distinguished from the serpent's seed, by this title, *the sons of God*. And by their intermarriages with the *Cainites*, brought on that universal corruption of men, and the worship of God, as brought the deluge of waters upon the world of the ungodly. When that catastrophe was finished, and the earth renovated, there was the same distinction of the two distinct seeds found upon earth. They were so distinguished, the one from the other, they could not be blended; there was no uniting so as to become one; it was wholly impossible; they were distinguishable even by their actions, and by the motives from whence they acted; as also the end to which their actions tended. This is the subject on the which the apostle is now treating. He viewed it to be of importance, then; it must be of the same importance, now. The title of the children of God, is of vast importance: it is delightful; it is refreshing; it is encouraging; it is strengthening and serves to be very invigorating to the mind. He began this chapter by calling upon the saints, to admire the grace of the divine Father towards them, in Adoption; he had affirmed them to be the sons of God. He had declared when Christ should appear, they also should appear with Him in Glory. He expressed the fruit and effect this would produce inwardly and effectually in, and upon the new-born. He had also shewn a manifest and clear distinction between one professor of Christ and another. He had expressed what the devil's sin consisted in, and that the Son of God was manifested to destroy his works—That such as were born of God did not commit sin: and, now, in the text before us, he distinguishes between God's children, and the devil's children—that there is an essential difference, the one can by no means be swallowed up in the other; nor easily taken the one for the other; for though the children of God may sin, do sin, yet they never sin the devil's sin: this they cannot; this they are preserved from: nor are they called of God in Christ Jesus, in a state of sin; nor bond slaves to sin and satan; nor are they akin to the devil's children. They are the objects of God's everlasting love: the sons and children of God, by the grace of eternal adoption. They were one with Christ from eternity; before ever sin had defiled their nature. They were redeemed from all iniquity by their Almighty Surety, in the fulness of time. These persons here spoken of, had been renewed by the Holy Ghost, and were born again, and had been made by him new creatures in Christ Jesus; so that they were distinguished from their former selves, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which had been shed on them abundantly, through the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ their Saviour. These were the persons who were the children of God in *John's* time; on such he bestows this high epithet; and of these he further says, that they are manifest, by doing righteousness. The others he speaks of, he styles the children of the devil; then he must be their father; they must be united in heart and affection with him; he must be their master: they must be his obedient and willing slaves: it must be their delight to serve him; sin must be their element: they must be under the power and dominion of it. All this must be the case of such as are under the power and dominion of sin, and the devil; yet I should think the apostle must be conceived here, in a very particular manner, as speaking of such as were so notoriously wicked, as to carry the mark of reprobation in their forehead, and to give full evidences by their notorious ways of sinning, they were eternally rejected of God. Or, that he hath his eye

on some apostates, and false teachers, who had defiled the temple of God, his church, with damnable errors and heresies. My reason for this is, because so long as the elect are amongst the rubbish of the fall, they cannot be distinguished, by us: and are found, many of them, in their sinful, unregenerate state, to commit for the outward acts, as great crimes as the non-elect: as he is therefore speaking of outward manifestation, saying, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil*, I conceive he must have had, some atrocious sinners in his eye: so that it is not all sinners he here calls the children of the devil: for all sinners are not. All sin is of the devil: and the whole human race are sinners; this is the case even with the elect of God: they also fall into sin, both in their unregenerate state, and also when in their state of regeneracy: yet these were never the children of the devil; though they have, it may be, performed as sinful acts as the other; yet as election put an everlasting distinction, between the elect and non-elect: and immediately upon the fall the difference was put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; so the apostle never lost sight of this. Therefore, I conceive, for the reasons aforesaid, he does not involve and include all sinners in what he saith concerning those whom he gives the title of the devil's children unto: but unto some who were so superlatively wicked, as that they were full of him, and so inwardly filled by him, as most fully to evidence themselves to be his children, they bearing his own most exact and true image. It deserves an observation, that here in this present world, in which we now are; there are two sorts of persons, the one the children of God, the other the children of the devil: and they are both very clearly discernable: they are easily known one from the other. It is our mercy to know them also: as hereby we cannot but delight in the one, and by all means avoid the other; this seems to be the end the apostle has in view for mentioning them here. It is a solemn thought! there are amongst the number of those we daily see and converse with; some who will be for ever most completely blessed; and some who will be eternally miserable, and under the curse: and it cannot be otherwise. All the devil's children, by their every act of sin, and their continuance in the same, justify the devil in his first act of rebellion against the Lord God Almighty. Therefore it is most equitable they should be confined with him in the same prison, and be tormented with him with the same expressions of divine wrath. This is to be the case; this sentence being to be executed on them; *Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. Sin is a cursed work: it is this renders the sinner cursed. For the curse of God to seize the sinner, who lives and dies in his sins, this is just and righteous: nor will this ever be called into question by the damned in hell; no, not to all eternity. As some of the children of God, are most blessed, sealed up by the Holy Spirit unto the day of eternal redemption, and have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts; so there are some reprobates who have a sense of damnation let in upon their minds, so as to have awful and most solemn presages of the same. But we will not dwell upon these subjects. To distinguish and separate between the children of God, and the children of the devil, was all the apostle here meant. Therefore to keep to this is all which is necessary for us. They are distinct: they belong to two distinct heads: they are of two distinct families: they have two distinct interests: they belong to two distinct

kingdoms: the one are, what the others are not: they have two distinct ways of manifesting to whom they belong. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.* The evidence is very easily to be perceived. It may be observed, it must have been common in the apostle's time, to have called such and such the children of God: and to say of such and such, they were the children of the devil. And whilst the nature of sin, of every one sin, will be never changed—there will be always the same evil in all, and every kind of sin there ever was: so such as commit all uncleanness, and delight in the same, and in the workers of iniquity, will be as truly the children of the devil, as they were in the apostle's time: and may as justly be termed the children of the devil now, as they were then. I proceed

2. To observe, that these, viz, the children of God, and the children of the devil, are very particularly manifested by their actions—The one by doing good, and acting righteously: The other by their evil doings, and acting unrighteously. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.*

The children of God, and the children of the devil, are outwardly noticed, and manifestly distinguished. This the apostle had before, in a variety of particulars evidenced; not indeed, but with this distinction, that hitherto, he had only been speaking of professors of Christ, and his gospel: to these he had not given this title, *the children of the devil*: I therefore conceive those here spoken of, were such as differed from those formerly touched on. However this might be, we will omit it for the present, and go on to observe the manifest difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil. The children of God are manifest. They do *righteousness*. *Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.* By righteousness we must here understand, all comprehended in the observance and practice of all enjoined, to be by us attended unto, in the revealed will of our Lord Jesus Christ. This term *righteousness*, must not be here confined, but it must be as extensive as the object and subject, in this place requires. We cannot make ourselves holy; neither can we make ourselves righteous: we cannot walk, so as we may be beloved and accepted of God: we cannot purify our hearts; nor live Christ by any act of our own: yet the scriptures of the New Testament, speak forth in precepts and exhortations many of these, so as to give us to know, what a walk as becometh the gospel of Christ consists in; and also how we are to walk and to please God. And in the right apprehension of these, with a walk influenced, and regulated by these, the true grace of the gospel is manifested and discovered. There can be no spiritual acts, without spiritual life: neither can there be spiritual life, without spiritual acts: the one cannot but produce the other. We cannot be the children of God, but it must be manifested we are so. This must be outwardly, so as that it may be seen and known; not for our own benefit; nor to be an evidence to ourselves; or that we may make any use of it, in our accesses to the Lord; it is all for outward ends and purposes—That the Lord may be glorified—His saints comforted—His enemies silenced—That others seeing our good works may glorify our Father which is in heaven. What is here spoken of—if the true genuine spirit and design of what throughout the whole of this Epistle, respecting internal and external marks and evidences of christianity and grace, were rightly understood, there would be more glory put upon both the outside



and inside of it, than is generally apprehended, than is most generally comprehended in either; and also greater worth and emphasis stamped on both. What our text is speaking of, is not an outward evidence, without an inward evidence of grace. No; it is what arises from, and is the very fruit of internal grace; yet it is wholly, as here it is set before us, an outward evidence of inward grace: and it is this wholly and altogether. If I have understood my own meaning, which I most certainly have aimed most clearly to express, over and over again, relative to the inward and outward expressions, of inward and outward evidences of our personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, these are not the means whereby we are assured of our personal interest in Him: these most certainly flow from, and accompany our knowledge of Him, and are increased and promoted by our increasing knowledge of our full persuasion of our personal apprehension of Him, and communion with Him: but no part of our knowledge of and communion with Christ, is known and maintained in our souls hereby. It is here, in the which the whole contention of real christians consists—some of them contending thus—you cannot know Christ, neither can you know you are interested in Christ, neither can you have any foundation for asserting you are in Christ, nor can you stand forth as a witness for Christ, if you have not both these internal and external evidences of interest of being in Him, which the apostle *John* sets forth in his Epistle. Other real christians go thus—we are led to apprehend thus and thus of Christ, we have received the same as we have expressed them, into our minds, they have thus and thus operated on our hearts; they produce thus and thus in our lives and conversations; but they are but the natural effects of the true knowledge of Christ, and the Truth as it is in Him. The first will reply, but you cannot know, you could not know you were in Christ; but by your walking as the children of God. Here the others answer, we could not walk as the children of the Most High God, were we not fully persuaded we were so: our persuasion does not arise from our walking with the Lord, and before the Lord, that we are his children, or that we shall be his children in consequence thereof; but we have been led to know Jesus, to believe in Him, and also in his free and full redemption; and it is hereby we know our interest in the everlasting love of the Father, and in the Person, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ: and it is from hence, we are stimulated to walk with the Lord, to walk before the Lord, and to walk as may be for the glory and praise of the Lord, in all we say and do. There are many contentions between the Lord's professing people, which would soon be put an end unto, were it they rightly understood the ground on which they express what they have to declare. Grace and Salvation, are the foundation on which they all of them, called by the Holy Ghost, into the state of life and conversion to the Lord, profess to be founded. The reality of this is not now going to be questioned: but in the explanation of this, it will be found, one part of those we call the Lord's people have all their hopes of being the Lord's, altogether built, on what they inwardly feel, and enjoy of the Lord in their own souls: and the other, have all their faith and hope founded on the revelation of Christ, set before them in the written word: and the real apprehension the Holy Ghost hath made to their minds of the same in the written word. It would be a real benefit to the professing people of God, if this statement of the subject was clearly understood, and

and acknowledged; it would carry this evidence with it—That one party of Christians were not more for real godliness, in all its parts, and in all its bearings, in all its branches, fruits, and effects, than the other; yet they variously express themselves on these same points—The one fearing lest there is a believing on Christ, without being concerned with the fruits and consequents faith should produce, as they express it. And the other is apprehensive, so much attention, so much insisting on these inward and outward effects, as inward and outward evidences of grace, is very likely to swallow up our minds, so as for Christ and grace to be wholly forgotten: and so we be left to look wholly at, and ponder on our internal, and external evidences, to prove that we are the children of God. No part of scripture hath more to do with the real evidences of *christianity*, than this Epistle: the words before us, contain an outward evidence of it; *In this the children of God are manifest*. The apostle is not exhorting to this; neither is he shewing the expedience of the same. He is here declaring what is the case with all the children of God—They are all of them righteous persons—They all of them act righteously—They are all of them distinguished hereby; it is their habitual walk: they cannot act otherwise. He is not speaking of what they are in Christ as righteous persons: they being in Him, and clothed with Him, the Lord their Righteousness. He is speaking of what they are, outwardly and openly in the view of others; it must, therefore, be in their walk and conduct. *In this the children of God are manifest*. I ask, in doing what? I reply, in acting, in walking in every respect worthy of God; agreeable with his revealed will: it is hereby they manifest themselves to be the children of God; then, this is not an evidence to themselves; this is not that which they look at, so as to build any part of their confidence in the Lord upon it. It is their knowledge of God, and Christ, set before them in the everlasting gospel, and made known to them by the revelation and teaching of the Holy Ghost, which is the foundation of their hope and confidence in the Lord: their souls' satisfaction ariseth from the apprehensions they are favoured with, of the Father's everlasting love to them, in the Person of Christ, and their personal interest in Him, as their Saviour; it is as their minds are possessed with the true knowledge of God in Christ, they are lifted up above, and beyond all doubting. As the apostle here distinguishes between the children of God, and the children of the devil, so he shews the outward manifestation between these, consists in this—The one performs righteous acts—The other evil ones. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God*: consequently whosoever doeth righteousness, is of God: the expression is universal. Let the profession of Christ, the Truth, and Gospel, be what it may, if there is not the practice of righteousness, as the natural and necessary concomitant of the same, there is no reality in the profession: therefore such are not of God: they are not born again: they are not the sons of God: they are but what all persons out of Christ are—in their sins, and in their blood. You may, says our apostle, know the children of the devil; you need not be deceived in them; they declare themselves to whom they belong; they do no righteous acts; they act sinfully. The apostle does not here enumerate their evil; nor point out any one particular instance of their wickedness; it was sufficient to call them the children of the devil: nothing worse could be said of them; all was in-

cluded in the very title: no good could possibly be found in them; therefore the title given them was altogether sufficient: their temper, conduct, words, and works, were so many continual evidences to whom they belonged: as the children of God, by their walking righteously, gave continual proof and evidence to whom they belonged. Whilst the children of God, and the children of the devil, are here mentioned together, yet they are not mixed together: they are kept distinct and apart from each other: they are also distinguished, so as that they may be properly known. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* As the line of distinction is very clear and evident, so I cannot doubt of its being designed to distinguish between professor and professor. If not, why should he make mention of a brother, and as not loving a brother, to be a fruit and evidence of such an one's belonging to the devil? For so the words naturally lead the mind to conceive of the same: most assuredly none of the devil's children, who are wholly in their sins, who have nothing to do with any profession of christianity, have any claim, neither can they have the least appearance, for calling any of the saints, *a brother*, in the sense the apostle is here treating the subject. If therefore, some of those he here speaks of, and entitles the devil's children, had not been mixed with the professors of the times, in the which the apostle lived, and wrote, I am at a loss how he could write as he did. It must most certainly be so that they were; and the several following verses, concerning brotherly love, and what is said of those who were not possessors of this love, and the comparing them to *Cain*, and calling such murderers, is to me sufficient proof of the same. I conceive our present verse, is introductory to all which follows, to the end of verse 21: what follows after, seems to me to be a distinct subject. There is such a connection in the ensuing verses, as may serve for a confirmation of this. There are two sorts of people in the world; so there are in the church. These are both in the world, and in the church distinguished; one by acting righteously; the other by their unrighteous acts. And in the church, this is a very distinguished proof and manifestation, who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil—their loving, or not loving the brethren. So I come to my last particular, which is this,

3. To speak of a very singular, and complete manifestation of the devil's children: it is this—Such love not the real children of God. No; not even if they are professors, and should even be in the same church state with them; this is implied in these words; *Neither he that loveth not his brother.* Surely this is expressive of brotherhood by way of church relation; for the children of God, and the children of the devil, never, all of them, could have the same father. No; not even in the very same state of nature; this neither was, nor could be the case; it can therefore, be only interpreted on the footing of outward profession, which sometimes issues in church relationship. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

The saints in the churches of Christ, on, and after the day of *Pentecost*, were remarkable for their love to Christ, and to each other, for his sake. Towards the close of that period there was a vast abatement of this; hence it is our apostle says so much on this subject: here he makes

it out as a clear proof, that such an one as did not love his brother, was positively a child of the devil; his words are these, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* Most undoubtedly it is one great proof of our love to Christ, to love for his sake: to love where, and whom he loves: to love those on whom he hath stamped his image in regeneration: to love the children of God, who are manifest, by their doing righteousness. It is an evidence against such, who are in a church state, yet love not the members of the same community; yet they are united to one and the same body, by the same bonds of the gospel. Our apostle here speaks of this, under the views he had of it, in the day in which he lived, as such an evil, that he knew no lower terms for it, than hatred, murder, and that such were of the devil. He sets it down here as a full proof and manifestation of being a child of the devil. If you ask him, who is a child of the devil? his reply is, *whosoever doeth not righteousness—he that loveth not his brother.* Without all doubt, saints as saints cannot be conceived of as coming under the charges our apostle expresseth in these words, and in this Epistle. It appears to me, rightly to conceive of the same, it seems as though in the apostle's time, some crept into the churches, with a design to corrupt the true doctrine, and worship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and also to be very plagues to real saints, so as when there was a suited opportunity, to betray them to their persecuting enemies. There was not merely a want of loving affection unto them; but there was also hatred and rancour: so as these were evidentially the children of the devil, let them be as they might, numbered amongst them. It cannot be, that every little disrespect shewn by one professor of Christ to another, can amount so high, and be so grievous in the sight of God, and the church, as to prove such and such, children of the devil; yet I would by no means aim to weaken the force of the apostle's words, by attempting the least alteration in them; God forbid. They are of importance in the place where they are; nor were they pronounced by the apostle in any warmth of temper; it was by the immediate direction of the Holy Ghost he wrote them: and they are to remain where they are, for to give light to the church, down to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It may be they are for solemn use and caution: to prevent saints themselves, from being cold and indifferent in their love and affection to each other, for Christ's sake; just as those most tremendous words of the apostle *Paul*, are, as I conceive, to be understood: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Such a tremendous expression, seems to be designed, to alarm the minds of real saints, and keep them very jealous over their hearts, affections, frames and conversations, lest the same should in any one instance, bear the least evidence of their abatement in love to their unseen, and most precious Lord: so here, it may be considered under the same view; and serve not only to point out, who they are who love not the brethren of Christ, and also the great evil contained in the same: but it may also serve to be a preventative from our being remiss in real brotherly love to all the saints and thereby give evidence of our being cold in our love and affection to our most precious Lord Jesus Christ himself. Our love to Him, and and to his saints should go hand in hand together: for sometimes they

can be evidenced openly, no otherwise. I cannot but in my own mind conceive, the apostle must here, and in the following verses, have some respect to such as might have fallen into the sin against the Holy Ghost: whose hatred to the brotherhood broke out very awfully: otherwise I cannot conceive how hatred of the brethren, and such as in his estimation was no otherwise than murder in the sight of God, and even a declaration that such had not eternal life abiding in them, should be declared of, and concerning them. It is true, the first christians were most truly remarkable for their love to Christ, and to each other for his sake: we are too much to be remarked for very little love to our most adorable Lord Jesus, and to each other for his sake; yet I should hope in no case, let us be ever so cold, and indifferent at times as we may to fellow Christians, does it by any many means, amount to hatred and contempt of each other. We may be allowed to love one above what we do another. One saint, his views of truth, and his experience of the power and grace of it, may be allowed to suit some of us to an hair's breadth, and others of the saints less, and yet we by no means despise any other saints because they are not suited in a particular manner to any of us, personally, and individually. I should hope this does by no means amount to murder, hatred, and a proof we have not eternal life abiding in us: yet I would by all this, retain all the apostle's expressions: neither would I abate the force and energy of them: only seek out for the real genuine meaning and interpretation of the same. Let me therefore observe, he is here speaking on this subject to a quite different purpose than that which he had in his view, in the 2nd chapter of this epistle: it is therefore it issues in a different stream. I would recite some of the former verses and so come to this before us, as thinking it will contribute some light and evidence into the propriety of the observations which have been suggested. I will begin at verse 4: *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is horn of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* Let all this be read in its right order; then say, if at least it does not carry the appearance of being concerned with, and a spawn of that sin, which may be truly called the devil's sin, mentioned verse 8: if so, then the terms used by the holy apostle, concerning those persons who did not love the brethren, will not appear too strong: nor shall we find any thing implied in them, which will be too severe for the subject. Surely it is incompatible with real grace in any mind, to hate the brethren. Surely the want of the exercise of brotherly love, in a vigorous way, and fervent expressions of the same, cannot draw forth an holy apostle, to say simply on this, such are the children of the devil: which is what is declared in my text; *In this the children of*

*God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* Such as had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, it may be, were not presently known: it is not unlikely their hatred and malice against the Lord's saints, secretly appeared, before it more openly broke forth; so that being for a season members in the various churches to which they belonged, their ill will against the saints openly manifested itself: and the apostle gives them to understand, that in his view and apprehension, it could be derived from no other root and fountain, but that of apostacy; and it could end in nothing but final rejection of Christ: his gospel, and church, totally, and altogether, and for ever. I have, beloved, suggested this to you; whilst I must say, to me it seems to cast clear light on the present subject; and it really does so to me; yet I by no means want to force your minds, but would freely leave you to judge in this matter for yourselves. It is not what your salvation is concerned in; yet it is most truly pleasant and desirable, to have such an interpretation as may cast such light on any passage of scripture, as may be easy and congenial to the spiritual mind; so as to free it from all uneasiness and ambiguity. As the whole of these Scriptures quoted, are used by the apostle by way of discrimination, so this should be improved in the reading, and explanation of them; which I conclude would serve to fix the idea I have freely suggested. May the Lord the Spirit, give us his own light into the whole, so far as will be for our benefit, and for his glory. We cannot mistake this—It gives us to know wherein consists the difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil. To know ourselves to be the Lord's, will be for our consolation; it will encourage our hearts, and hopes in God; it will enable us to fight the Lord's battles against the world, the flesh, and the devil: it will enable us to stand fast in the evil day: it will naturally draw out our hearts to the saints of the Most High, to love them for the Lord's sake. Our walking in fellowship with God, as our heavenly Father, by faith in Christ Jesus, through the grace of the Eternal Spirit, is our best evidence of our being children of God. It is by this means we shall be kept alive, in our love and affection to the real brotherhood: and be distinguished to be who, and what we are. May the truths of the everlasting gospel, at all times prevail in us, and over us, so as that we may act, walk, think, and speak, as the beloved of the Lord: loving God as our Father; Christ as our Saviour; the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier; the saints and children of God, as the excellent of the earth: and have a clear discernment of such, as do not belong to the family of God, so as to avoid them; most especially such, whose company and conversation, carry evident proofs with the same, that they are of the family of hell; and such, as with all their profession, do not love a brother in Christ. Let us ever remember these words, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* May it be given us to love where God loves, and to hate where God hates: and to walk in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. The Lord grant this for his Name's sake. Amen.

## S E R M O N   X L I I .

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*For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.—1 JOHN iii. 11, 12.*

THE subject of brotherly love, or love of the brethren, is here quite different, I conceive, from what the apostle is upon in the former chapter, and carried on with a different design. There, it seems to be directed to the observation of saints and professors, to discover to them how the want of the due and proper exercise of it, shewed how far below the command and example of the Lord Jesus Christ they lived, and acted. Here, it seems to be spoken of, to shew that the real want of not only its proper exercise, but when it amounted to no love at all, and to hatred of a brother, this argued there could indeed be no love in such a heart: it was in the sight of God, equal to being a murderer: such an one had not eternal life abiding in him. To hate a brother is to wear the badge of the children of the devil. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* The reason for which is given; *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* In the which words, we have the following subjects.

1. The message, doctrine, or command which they heard from the beginning of their hearing the gospel: it concerned their loving one another; *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love another.*

2. Here is a recital of *Cain's* murder of his brother *Abel*. As also who *Cain* was of: with the reason why he slew his brother. It was out of hatred and ill will: it was out of envy. It was because *Cain* was of that wicked one—The devil. It was also, *because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

May the Lord so guide me through the explanation of it, as may reflect light on the whole context, so that it may most clearly appear, the apostle is not treating of mere indifference to the brethren; nor of simply expressing our love with some kind of indifferency; but of such, as in the nature and kind of it, proves such and such to be of the devil. It deserves to be remarked by us, in our own minds, the holy apostle is for speaking the truth, and calling persons, and things by their proper names, and terms—Such and such an one is a liar—Such an one walketh in darkness—Such an one knoweth not whither he goeth—Such an one, darkness hath blinded his eyes—He that committeth sin transgresseth also the law—He that committeth sin is of the devil. Here are no compliments: no equivocation, or mental reservation. It is all plain, positive assertions: such as became an apostle of Christ to express. So in his

declaration who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil, it is equally decisive. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* It cannot be; he that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. It cannot be, because the message, or commandment we received from the beginning, was that we should love another; which love is not to be with such dissimulation as *Cain*, the first reprobate of the human race, exercised towards *Abel*, whom he slew. *And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Thus we have the words in part opened and explained. In going through them, I am thus to proceed.

1. To take notice of the message, doctrine, or command, which they whom the apostle here addresses, had received from the beginning, concerning loving one another.

He had been on this subject in the former chapter. He used the word *message* in the first chapter, saying, *This then is the message which we have heard from the beginning, or of him, that is of Christ, which was from the beginning. This was, That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* The apostle, speaking of the doctrine delivered by Christ, from the beginning unto them, says in Chapter 2, "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." v. 7, 8. And here upon the same subject, the apostle says, *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.* From their very first hearing of Christ, so soon as they were brought under his most heavenly ministry, it pleased him to instil this heavenly principle and truth on their minds, that they should love one another as he had loved them. This was a commandment which he gave them. They heard him pronounce it. This precept was received into their minds. It was inscribed on their hearts. They could not cease to remember it. He spoke it out with such grace and majesty they could by no means forget the same. He had said, a very little while before his Passion, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John xiii. 34, 35. This therefore the apostle again and again inculcates: he being himself most remarkably filled with this grace; and very singular in the display and exercise of the same; insomuch as it is said by some, he lived so long, that when in his extreme old age, when he came into church assemblies, all he could say, or did, was only this, *Little children, love one another.* I confess I cannot think, our Lord Jesus Christ would keep such a saint as *John* out of heaven, to be of no more use to the church, than merely to pronounce this. It is the message of Christ, delivered by this apostle from him, to the church, that we should love one the other: the apostle lays a mighty emphasis on it; he does so, because it was from the very first delivery of the gospel unto them. All the apostles had heard and received it: so had all the primitive believers, who heard Christ from the beginning; neither was it a doctrine which might be dropped. It was a commandment which was to be received,



and universally practised. It was that which made it evident who were the children of God. All under a profession of the gospel, who were destitute of it, were children of the devil. To love one another, and to manifest the same, in, and by all sort, and kind of ways, was their bounden duty and service: so says the holy apostle in the words before us. *Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.* None of us, no, not one of the true disciples of Christ, is excluded from this. It is equally obligatory on each, and all of them alike. It is a spiritual act and affection of the mind, wrought in the renewed by the Spirit of God. It is the real fruit of love to Christ himself. It originates and springs from it. The command of Christ which enforces it, is the very means of exciting, and increasing it. *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

2. What this love should be, is suggested to them, whom the apostle is addressing, from what it should not be; and the distinction between the children of God, and the children of the devil, further kept up, and explained. Love to the saints, and the love of saints towards each other, is not to be like *Cain's* love to his brother *Abel*. No; the wretch is expressly declared to be of the devil—one of his children. He manifested this. He slew his brother, who was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason why *Cain* slew *Abel* was so exceeding clear and plain, that a question is asked concerning it; to the intent it might be so noticed as never to be forgotten: No, not by the godly, in all ages, and throughout all generations. *Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

We are not to love him we style brother in Christ, and church relationship, as *Cain* did his brother, which is here expressed by a negation. *Not as Cain.* The verse here before us is a very solemn one; it being the introduction to the following ones, in which he that hateth his brother is called a murderer, and it is declared of him, that he hath not eternal life abiding in him. I could therefore wish for very clear light into the real meaning of all this; so as that no part of these assertions might be invalidated, nor any unjustifiable censure laid upon the truly godly. As it cannot be conceived every degree of coldness and indifference one to another, as brothers in Christ, can prove we have not eternal life abiding in us; I do think, the true interpretation of this versé, will be a most complete clue, to open, and guide clearly into the reality of what the apostle means; which may serve to ease our minds, and may save us from very many perplexities. If our faith, in its actings on Christ, is not perfect, nor any other of our graces in their actings are; then surely our love to the brethren for our Lord's sake, is not; nor are we to expect it to be so, in any one instance, or act of it, whilst we remain in a time state. Therefore it cannot be, the simple deficiency of the same which the apostle is here treating on; he would never instance in a son of reprobation, if this was his subject. Whilst no one is more free to speak out what should be expressed, and give proper terms to the same, as hath been before noticed, than our *John*, yet he is here very particular in expressing himself on this subject, now before him. *Cain's* hatred to his brother, is here, not positively, it is

negatively expressed. "*Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*" He who loveth not his brother, cannot act righteously, because he must be a transgressor of a positive precept. *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love another.* And this is binding upon all; it should be so extensive, to all the holy brethren; it should not be cramped; it should consist in acts and expressions of positive love; it should not be like *Cain's*. It was wholly and altogether of a negative kind: he had no positive love in his mind towards his brother *Abel*; so far from it, his mind was towards him for evil, and not for good. He was of that wicked one. The devil was his father. He was one of the children of the devil: and as he was a murderer from the beginning, so it might be said of this his son. Such in our world, also, as belong to *Cain*, are of the same murderous disposition with him. The apostle here gives an account of, and makes a recital of him: it is a most melancholy one. He was the first man who was born into our world. He was a non-elect. He had a name given him by his mother, which signified *Possession*. She said, *I have gotten a man from the LORD.* Or, *I have gotten the man, the very Jehovah*: expressing her faith in the promised seed, who was to bruise the serpent's head: she was a real saint: a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; but she was mistaken here: yet I confess, I incline to conceive, she did not so much refer to the child born, as to her having, by being permitted to be a mother, a full proof of the continuance of the world, and of a succession of men on the earth: which was full evidence to her faith, that in the fulness of time, Messiah would be incarnate. At the same birth it is conceived, she also bore *Abel*. Which name signifies *Vanity*. We have the following account of this. Gen. iv. 1, 2. "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel." Together with these, it is generally apprehended were daughters born; which when grown up were wives to *Cain* and *Abel*: as most assuredly it must have been the case, they must have had their own sisters. The employment of these two men is expressed. The one was a keeper of sheep; the other was a tiller of the ground: thus they had different employments. *Abel* was a type and figure of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the great Shepherd of the flock of God. He hath them all in his eye: on his heart. He encircles them all in his arms of everlasting mercy. He values them at a very high rate. He loves them with an infinite degree of affection. He hath washed them clean from all sin in his own blood. He heals all their wounds with his own stripes. He warms them with his own love. He clothes them in his own robe of righteousness. He is their Feeder: and he nourishes them with his own body and blood: with his own word and the doctrine of free and sovereign grace.

*Abel* was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; one of the first: he was instructed into the nature of instituted worship: he was led into an acquaintance with what was represented and expressed in the symbol and figure of the Cherubim: he was well acquainted with it as representitive of the Great Ones—That it most clearly expressed both the material, and immaterial Trinity; both in nature and grace—Fire, Light, and Air, the three great agents in nature: and Father, Son, and Spirit, the Three in the One Incomprehensible Jehovah, who had willed the salvation of an

innumerable company of sinners, of Adam's posterity in the covenant of grace. The flaming sword, or fire, revolving in upon itself, was a solemn evidence, that the wrath and curse due to the sins of the elect would be executed *upon the man of God's right hand, on the son of man whom he had made strong for himself.* This was afterwards more fully testified of in these words, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd." Zech. xiii. 7. That *Abel* was a believer, we have the apostle *Paul's* testimony unto. He refers to what is recorded of him, in the 4th chapter of *Genesis*, where we read as follows. "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." v. 3, 4, 5. This is the comment given on it. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh:" or "is yet spoken of." Heb. xi. 4. As the record of the covenant of the Eternal Three, was in the Sacred Figure of the Great Ones expressed; so how it was to be executed, was set forth in the sacrifices, ordained by the Lord immediately upon the fall. The nature, use, end, and design, *Abel* well knew: this he must have received from his father *Adam*. He came with a lamb, a type of Christ, the Lamb of God: he offered it before the Lord, in the full belief of the future oblation of the Lamb of God: he did this before the faces of the Cherubic Figure, which was the seat of divine worship. Jehovah had "placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Gen. iii. 24. Or rather, the flaming sword, turned every way to point to Christ the tree of life. *Abel* presented his offering. The Lord gave an outward evidence of his acceptance of it. It is probable this was by sending fire to consume it: this being the way in which the divine majesty was pleased in after times to express his acceptance of sacrificial services; as at the consecration of *Aaron* and his sons; Lev. ix. 24: and at the dedication of the temple; 2 Chron. vii. 1. The token God had given of his having accepted *Abel's* sacrifice being visible, and his rejection of *Cain's* oblation being equally as evident, *Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.* He was under the covenant of works: he became sullen because the Lord had preferred his brother unto him. The Lord interrogated him upon the subject; yet the doctrine of divine sovereignty he could not, it may be added he would not admit of, No; not he: he talks with his brother, when he had a suited opportunity. "And Cain talked with Abel his brother." v. 8. The learned tell us there is here a remarkable pause in the Hebrew text, which the Jews are disposed to supply: suggesting how *Cain* says to this effect; there is no judgment to come, &c. &c.: which *Abel* insists on there is, &c. &c.: which drew out the malice and envy of his brother, and so filled him with rage, that he murdered his brother, and was the first murderer in our world of the human race: this is supposed to have been in the year of the world from the creation 128. This will lead me further to observe what is said of this murderer in my text: *Cain was of that wicked one.* This the apostle declares, without the least hesitation. The title he gives

the devil here, is, *that wicked one*. He had before called him *the wicked one*. chap. ii. 13. "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." He calls him by the same term in the next verse. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." The next title he gives him is *devil*; which is the same with *Apollyon*; and signifies a *destroyer*. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." He is all wickedness. He is emphatically *the wicked one*. He is the devil, who sinneth continually; unceasingly; without the least abatement, or intermission. *Cain* was of this wicked one. Nothing worse could be said of him. *He was of that wicked one*. In whom all sin and wickedness hath its fullest existence: who was the first sinner; who is the chiefest of all sinners; who acts with energy in all the children of disobedience; who hates Christ and all his beloved with an invincible hatred; who stirred up *Cain* to kill *Abel*; who is the fomentor of strife as much as in him lieth, amongst real saints. How awful to say of any one, what is here said of *Cain*, he was, or he is of that wicked one! As it comes from the apostle, it is designed for our instruction. It not only declares the state and wickedness of *Cain*, but it expresses what all the children of the devil are. Whilst they are not all alike and equal in every act of sin, yet they all hate Christ, and they all hate the real disciples of Christ. It is to give us to know this, the instance of *Cain's* killing his brother *Abel*, is here mentioned. To set clear what the apostle had further to say on the subject of the hatred and contempt cast on the children of God, this was expressed. It seems as if the apostle had in immediate view and remembrance, what he records of Christ, in the 8th chapter of his gospel; when he said to the Jews: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh it of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." v. 44. *Cain* was of the wicked one, and slew his brother. All the children of the devil, who are *Cain's* brethren, are of the same spirit with him. They would do the same; they do the same, so far as it is in their power. *He was of that wicked one*; this is the proof of it: *He slew his brother*. The ties of nature, the relation he stood in to him according to the flesh, did not prevent him from this most desperate act. He must have known the law of God; yet he was not restrained thereby. No one of the human race had ever perpetrated such a crime before; yet he leaps above all bounds, and deprives *Abel* of his life. His blood cries for vengeance on him; yet his heart is most desperately hardened: he only cries out in the language of despair. "My punishment is greater than I can bear." or "mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven." Gen. iv. 14. It was in the cause of religion, *Abel* was the first martyr for Christ. It was almost as soon as there could be any public profession made of Christ, except by *Adam* and his wife: it was shed in the cause of Christ, and Truth. Our Lord calls it on this account, righteous blood. And says to the Jews, "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous *Abel* unto the blood of *Zacharias* son of *Barachias*, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation." Matt. xxiii. 35, 36.

There is a question proposed in my text: it is this, *wherefore slew he him?* The reply is this, *Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* This answers the account given before of him; for he being a child of the devil, he being of the wicked one, he could not but be destitute of all righteousness: he could not but be filled with all evil: he could not but hate the very appearance of righteousness: he could not but oppose and seek the destruction of the same, where he saw the reality thereof. Let us read over again the whole of our present text. *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother: And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Thus you have the very cause assigned, why *Cain* murdered his brother *Abel*. He perceived his own sacrifice displeased God; he was persuaded the Lord accepted his brother's person, and sacrifice; this he could by no means bear: there is therefore no alternative; he must be slain; his life must be taken from the earth. Thus the wicked one worked effectually in this wicked man, and he killed his brother for this reason, *because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* And the apostle would have the saints know, it must be expected the same wicked one, the devil, would work equally as maliciously, towards real saints by false brethren, on all occasions. This seems the reason why he introduces this account here: which as it gives the very first account of the manifest distinction there is, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; so it shews the latter is irreconcilable to the former: it is such an enmity as cannot be subdued: it chiefly breaks out in matters of worship, and in that which concerns it; therefore it is saints as saints are so often opposed, and that by such as are incorporated together with them in church fellowship. It may be this may be more designed here, than we may easily comprehend; these two, *Cain* and *Abel* may be considered as in one and the same outward church state: they had the same external revelation of the divine will: the same mode of worship: the same seat of worship; yet they were in two distinct states; and possessed of two very distinct spirits: they both acted accordingly; and this was the reason why the one slew the other. *Cain* was a natural man; he was under the covenant of works; he did not want to be without professing to believe, and worship the Lord; he likes to do this in his own way, and make his acknowledgements in that which will suit him best; he does not like his brother's peculiarities; as if a lamb was more suited to the Divine Majesty, than the fruit of the ground. It is just so with all under a profession, who are but natural men; they cannot conceive, if the heart as they phrase it be sincere, it cannot be of any moment what their creed is. *Abel* was a child of God; a regenerate man; he was enlightened into the true knowledge of God, in his Nature, Persons, Perfections, Love and Grace in Christ, the glorious Mediator. He was led into an acquaintance with the Person, and Salvation, into the word, and worship of the glorious Mediator; therefore he would by no means presume to approach the Divine Majesty, but in the order, and ordinance of access which had been prescribed. The Lord meeting him, blessing him, and giving him full evidence of this, it could not but gladden his heart. An outward and full evidence being given of the same, it fills the mind of *Cain* with discontent. Why am I not accepted as well as he? What can

there be in him, more than there is in me? it proves God hath respect to persons: this comes up to what I always thought: my brother is in his own conceit above me: he is no brother of mine: if we worship together, he is determined to act as if we were not of the same religion, and did not worship one and the self same God: I hope I shall be accepted as well as he. Why should I not; yet I am mortified; that I am; and touched to the very quick. How so? why by looking before me, I see the smoke of the altar; the fire of the Lord hath most assuredly descended, and consumed his offering; whilst mine remains where it was: no marks of divine favor are on it: this will not do for me: I cannot bear this: I will away with him: his life shall go for it. So here began the quarrel between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The one is contrary to the other. The apostle sets it forth here before us, in this instance and example of *Cain* and *Abel*. Our Lord himself, his apostles, and beloved saints, have all along taught, and inculcated this doctrine upon us—To love one another—To promote one another's real advantage—Not in any instance to imitate *Cain*. He was the first-born of our apostate parents; he was a notorious child of the devil, who under his infernal influence, murdered his brother *Abel*, for no other reason, but on account of knowledge, faith, and worship. *Abel's* works were better in themselves, and more respected by God, than his own abominable conduct. Let this be considered as a picture to represent what is the real case of such as are earthly minded professors, and such as are heavenly: we shall find some striking resemblance. Nothing makes more real and manifest divisions among the sons of men, than the true profession of the Lord Jesus Christ, doth. No enmity is comparable with that which is expressed by one professor of Christ to another. Whilst the apostle is here speaking on this subject, I cannot go so far about, as to confine it to persons in their sins and in their blood. I must include such, as by some measure or other, or for some motives or other, made a profession of the gospel, which the people of the world, merely considered as such, do not. He has also been pursuing a subject for a long season, on antichristian errors, and preachers—How these persons had been in the true churches of Christ—They were gone out of them: and the Lord had preserved the saints from falling by them. These he had again and again exhorted to stand fast in the faith, truth, worship, and purity of the gospel. He had expressed many motives, and delivered many most important truths to them, to obtain, and serve that end: and in an inimitable manner, fully expressed himself on this part of the subject, respecting hope of eternal Glory, and communion with Christ, that it most infallibly promoted holiness in the mind, and real hatred of all sin. This led him to shew how love to saints, is a real evidence of saintship. It was this which produced the subject now before us: therefore I cannot but conclude he is, in speaking of *Cain*, expressing what may be found correspondent to the same, which might even at the time he wrote, be found similar therewith. If you read some of the ensuing verses, I think you will see there is some propriety in the remark: I also conceive you will receive some additional light on them. He is not introducing *Cain* as an example for imitation: it is as a child of the devil; and his behaviour to a saint of the Most High, as an instance of what might be expected by the children of God, from the devil's children. The present

subject, in its very beginning proves this: which I mention again, not for the sake of so many repetitions, as that you may have the connection of the whole fixed in your minds, and understand for your own selves what you read. Pardon me therefore in this: it may be peculiar to myself, and it may also be, I fail as much as any one in the same, yet so it is; I labour to understand the meaning of scripture, and the connection of scripture, as conceiving it the only right vehicle rightly of understanding the same. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

Now what can be deduced from the whole of this, but that there are in the churches of Christ, persons who resemble *Cain*: who are not of the family of heaven: who are unregenerate; who neither love Christ, the Truth, nor brethren, in their hearts: from whom hatred is to be expected: unto whom there can never be any spiritual union: and whose disunion, hatred, and persecution, will most certainly arise from, and be expressed on account of what we express by the term *Religion*. It is the true religion of Jesus, and the false religion of antichrist, which make the whole contest between the children of God, and the children of the devil. It is the Truth of the one, with the close attachment of saints thereto: and the selfishness of the other, and its want of a foundation, with the zeal of its professed votaries to it, and struggle for it, are the cause of all the strife and opposition found in the professing world. As there is a church within a church, so sometimes there is abundance of corrupt opinions, which spring up, and are to be found in a church of Christ. Not that there is any error belongs to a church of Christ, yet are there many errors and erroneous persons found in Christ's church. I might here say, it would be well, if the distinct churches of Christ were not so solicitous to increase their numbers: it is in many instances but an increase of misery. The holiness, light, and knowledge of the members of a gospel church, are of far greater honour to it, than the number of its members. There cannot be numbers but there must be mixtures; nor can it always be, but disorders must appear and break forth: there is no avoiding the same. It is here, the church of Christ is so awfully corrupted in this present day. We have *Abel*—we have *Cain*, both in one church, and they will never agree long together: the one cannot love the other: nor can any means be found out for so doing. You will ask me how these may be found out, and distinguished amongst ourselves? I will most readily express myself, as clearly as I can. You will be pleased to observe, and I have already intimated so much, that *Cain* and *Abel* are to be looked for in the church of Christ, as in the history of the same as recorded by *Moses* in the book of Genesis. I do not mean the *Cainites* are members of Christ. No; that cannot be; but they are many of them members of churches: yea, of such as are sound and regular, so as thereby to be numbered with some real saints, who are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Now that which is the very thing which gives uneasiness is the doctrine, in its purity; together with the true worship which is most closely connected with it. Such saints and churches, as are most clearly enlightened into the clear apprehension of Truth, find so far as it pre-

vails in them, it produces its true and proper effects; which sublimate their minds, and render them very jealous, with a godly jealousy, of the truths, worship, ordinances, and all connected with the manifestation of the declarative glory of the Essential and Incomprehensible Three in the Incomprehensible Jehovah. For a season those who are of a different spirit are not discovered: when they are, they generally by little and little discover they are not so much taken with the Truth as the others are—That it seems to them, a life and conversation outwardly regular, with an attendance on the ordinances, ought to satisfy the minds of all—That the principal stress should be laid here. Which is to such as know Truth as Truth a sad evidence that those which have been numbered with them, are not by any means what they looked on them to be: this is a means of some discourse on the prime points of divinity: such as contain the essence and spring from whence all spiritual life, holiness, salvation, and blessedness originate: which as it is brought to its point, and surveyed in all its causes, effects, in all its connections and with all its bearing, is the very means of producing the same effects in each as it did in *Cain* and *Abel*, when God accepted the sacrifice of the one, and rejected that of the other; so that there is an irreconcilable difference between the one, and the other. There is such an inward disgust in the one mind against the other, that no brotherly love exists: no love for Christ's sake; nor for his Truth's sake. This is so fully discovered, that at times it breaks forth, from those who are, with all their profession, unacquainted with the true Christ of God, so that it knows no bounds: it exceeds all limits: it is spent in expressions of hatred, of malice and ill will: which is here cautioned against, in these words before us: it being wholly, and altogether contrary to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. *For this is the message which we had from the beginning, that we should love one another: or, this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* If what hath been delivered is rightly understood, I think it will amount to this—That the antichrists in *John's* time, brought into the churches, many corrupt mixtures, both of persons, and doctrines: which gave the apostle to make such discriminations between one professor and another, as he doth throughout the whole of this Epistle—That the sin of *Cain*, and such in the churches as sinned as he did, sinned in a measure the sin unto death: it was a spice of that sin. No real believer could so sin, as to hate a fellow saint: therefore none of the Lord's people need to give themselves any concern about it; for as it is impossible they should be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost; so it is as impossible they should at any time be in such a state of mind, as to hate saints as saints; and be destitute of having eternal life abiding in them. But as more will be said of this in the two succeeding sermons, I will say no more at this time; but leave it, short as it is, for your consideration. It is the light it may convey, not any thing else, is to be attended to. If it enlightens the three following verses, so as for us to receive the apostle's meaning in them, this cannot but be of advantage: and this is one benefit we expect from comments—To give us a more particular apprehension of particular passages than we should otherwise have. May this be the case here, and the Lord shall be praised. Amen.



## SERMON XLIII.

*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you: We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*—1 JOHN iii. 13, 14.

IN the former verses the apostle shewed how the doctrines of the grace of God, by the which we receive the true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ into our minds, by the supernatural light and teaching of the Holy Ghost, operate on the minds of saints. They are by them preserved from the commission of sin. They are by them excited to love the holy brethren. They are kept from the sin unto death: so as they cannot fall by it, nor into it. He had expressed how the children of God, and the children of the devil were manifest; the one by doing righteousness, the other by not doing it, as also by not loving his brother. He then gives an instance as a proof of the truth of what he had asserted, in the examples of *Cain* and *Abel*: the former of whom killed the latter; for this very reason, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. He then expresses and sets before those he wrote to, and us in them, wherein the truth of our conversion to God, and the happiness of our state thereby consists—we are out of the state of death, in the which we were, so long as we remained unregenerate: and the state in which we are—being born again. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* The whole of these words contain in them the following particulars, which I will endeavour to cast into the following order.

1. The introduction into the subject contained in them, which is thus expressed. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

2. The knowledge the apostle, and these persons had concerning their state in Christ. *We know that we have passed from death unto life.*

3. The outward proof and reality of this, evidenced, so as to be confirmed hereby. *Because we love the brethren.*

4. A proof and outward evidence of a contrary state to this. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* He is an unregenerate man! He is wholly in a state of nature, let his profession be as it may. These are the particulars which are to be opened, that thereby we may attain the true knowledge of the subject matter contained in the words before us.

I cannot but conceive, the apostle is here treating on the subject of loving the brethren, in a different manner, and for a different end and purpose, than what he has in view in the second chapter of this Epistle. It seems to me, he is here making it an essential criterion of such belonging to the Lord, as of those who did not, of positively belonging to the devil. I also conceive as he here treats the subject, he speaks of what is the real state of such minds as had sinned the devil's sin, the sin unto death: and therefore it is he instances the sin of *Cain*, who was of the devil, and murdered his brother. My reasons are as follows. He having

spoken of the devil's sinning from the beginning, and that the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, immediately subjoins these words, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Now as these verses are read in their connection, it appears to me, it is easily discernable, the subject is all of a piece with what is the case of such as are the Lord's, and those who had sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost: and like as Cain was of the devil, and this was fully manifested by his killing righteous Abel; so such were in the like state and case with him, who did that which was evil; who loved not the brethren, as Cain did not. He was one who had no name, part, or interest in Christ: he was a child of the devil; a murderer; he was in the state of death: he was unregenerate; he was a murderer, even the first of the human race. Let all this be considered, it will then follow, those whom the apostle compares with him, must be in the very same state he was in when he killed his brother. As he was a murderer, so are they: as he had not eternal life in him, so neither have they. Thus I conceive we have the true outline of the whole of these verses to the very close of the fifteenth. The words of my present text, come in on the back of these; *For this is the message, or commandment, that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* He then says in the words before us, *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

My first particular is the words of introduction with which our subject is commenced. They are these, *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

In these words are several things to be observed. He would not have the children of God, marvel, or wonder they were hated by the world. It could not be expected it should be otherwise. By the world here, it seems to appear to me, we are not only to conceive and apprehend such as are wholly without any acknowledgment of God, and Christ, but such also as make some acknowledgments of the Lord, externally, and professedly of Him. It can never be a marvel, or wonder, such as are wholly without the pale of the church, should hate the saints of the Most High; yet it cannot but be marvellous, such as profess to be in, and to belong to the church should hate the brethren. It is by no means improbable, the false teachers, and antichrists of that age, are some of those here glanced at, and intended: they might be looked at, and spoken of as the world, they being in their sins, and as they were followed by such, and embraced by earthly minded, and worldly professors. This may receive some confirmation from many things said of them in the next chapter. The persons here addressed are the true brethren: the children of God: they were the apostle's brethren in Christ. He, and they were

the objects of the world's hatred : even of such as professed Christ ; yet in word and doctrine denied him : as also of those who had nothing to do with him, by making any confession of him. It was no marvel these latter should hate the brethren ; nor need it be wondered at if such as were under some form of profession also did ; because they being *Cain's* brood, how could it be otherwise but they would imitate him ? If he loved not righteous *Abel*, how could it be these should ever love those who were the Lord's ? This could not be in the nature of things. It was not therefore to be marvelled at, should this hatred break forth into act, and the most awful proofs be given of the same. The apostle's putting himself in the number of the brethren whom the world hated, and would continue to hate with an invincible hatred, shews his very great attachment unto them. His calling them *my brethren* shews his love for them : his relationship unto them in Christ, and in the profession of the same faith in the same gospel, truths and ordinances. It is a knitting together all contained in the former verses, which concerned the distinction made betwixt them and others, affirming them to be the children of God, believers in Christ, and saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. The hatred of such as were under a profession of the same truths, in very many particulars, was not to be wondered at : much less was the hatred of such, as were departed from the faith, and turned aside to error and heresies, which dishonoured the Person, and Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ : this was not to be marvelled at. No ; neither the hatred of the world who lay in the arms of the wicked one : it was what they must have had full and ample proof of. Yet that they might not be shaken in their minds in what might further arise, and they might again and again be exercised withal, he uses this sentence by way of prevention. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.* The apostle when he spoke in his 2nd chapter on the subject of loving, and not loving, used the word *hateth* his brother ; used it twice : here he most certainly useth it, at least as I conceive, in a stronger sense than he does there. Here we have *hate* and *hateth* ; and such an one is a murderer : this is a most awful charge : it seems, to prepare for it he gives this affectionate address ; that when he comes to pronounce it, they may know it does not belong to them, and thereby be relieved in their minds, and not charge themselves with what they were not. This was most admirably done by his most affectionate address, in which he includes them with himself. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.* That he puts in himself with them, most fully appears by what follows, and which we are next to consider.

2. The knowledge which the apostle, and these persons had, concerning their state in Christ. *We know that we have passed from death unto life.*

It is of vast importance to know Christ—To know that we are in Christ—To know our state in Christ : as it saves from many perplexities of mind ; it emboldens us in our walk with God ; it renders us happy and cheerful ; it lifts us up above the trials and miseries of this present time-state ; it keeps us stedfast in our faith and profession of the gospel : it makes us valiant for the Truth ; it increases our love one to another for Christ's sake ; it knits our hearts to each other, and to the Lord ; it hath a most blessed and gracious effect upon us, to mortify our inward corruptions ; to keep down the body of sin ; to excite and draw forth our

graces; it is as an armour of proof in the day of our spiritual battle; so that we are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. The apostle knew Christ: so did these he here addresses. He knew he was in Christ: so did they also. He knew hereby Christ's interest in him, and he from hence knew his interest in Christ: so did these saints whom he is here speaking unto. He knew his state in Christ, so did they also. He speaks to them as being equal in all these blessed and substantial realities with himself. His words are, *We know that we have passed from death unto life.* I cannot hesitate a moment, but must assuredly conceive, the apostle's knowledge of all which hath been expressed, must have been more full and enlarged than any of their's; but it was not more true. Yet as he received it immediately from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and many of these persons had received it from the apostle, and others, who had been the means of conveying it to them, which had been brought home to their minds by the Holy Ghost, it may be with safety inferred, their own knowledge in a certain sense and degree, was not equal to the apostle's: yet in all things necessary to their enjoyment of everlasting life, they were here one and the same. We know Christ. We know our state in Christ. We know the blessedness of our state in Him. We know the fixedness and permanency thereof. *We know that we have passed from death unto life.* To know this is to be truly blessed, happy, holy. It is a great misery which befalls many, whom we call the people of God, they have no clear and scriptural ideas, of what the knowledge of Christ consists in—How we receive the knowledge of Him into our minds—How we clearly apprehend our interest in Him—How this is kept up, and maintained in our minds by the Holy Ghost. Nor, in general, have the Lord's people that scriptural knowledge of their state in Christ, which would make them most truly blessed, happy, and holy. It is universally acknowledged by all under a profession of Christ, we cannot know these important things but by the Spirit: we generally rest in this acknowledgment, without ever considering in what way, and by what means it pleases Him to make these things known to the mind: we commonly pray, the mind may be affected with divine truth, but we seldom pray the mind may be enlightened into the knowledge and right gospel apprehension of the same. Hence it is so very few are found to live out, and off themselves, on Christ as revealed in the word of truth—On the Father's love as set forth therein—On his record and testimony concerning his Son; and on what our state in Christ is, before the Lord. Now at this time, we most assuredly have a very proper opportunity to touch on some of these subjects, and especially on our state in Christ, the text of itself leading thereunto: *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life.* Here is the state we were in expressed.—The state we are now in, declared: our passing from the one to the other is over; and we know what our present state is. We were in our nature-head, by his fall and ours in him, in a state of death. We, as one with Christ in eternal election, He being our Head of Grace, we had in Him life before the world began. He became our Surety, hereby we were preserved from the imputation of sin: yet we were not preserved from the total and final corruption of our nature, by Adam's fall, and transgression; but were conceived and born in sins, and were transgressors from the womb. We have had full proof of this; having lived in an unregenerate state: this we have lived in:

which state for evil, cannot be exceeded but by the state of wrath and damnation. Out of this state we have been brought, by the Omnipotent power of God the Spirit: we are therefore passed from one state to another: from a state of death, to a state of life. The means by which we passed was regeneration: we are now out of our former state; nor can we ever be in it again. We are in a state now which will never cease to be our state in Christ: we are in a state of life: of grace: of free and perfect acceptation: of justification: of pardon: of salvation: of everlasting life: and by this means we are prepared to be removed into the state of Glorification: where we shall be absent from the body and present with the Lord. *We know that we have passed from death unto life.* I have thrown these subjects as fully as I could together, that you having a general scheme of them, might be the better prepared for to receive some important proofs from the scriptures, of the reality of all this. The apostle *Paul* writing to the church in Christ, at *Colosse*, addresses them thus, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." chap. i. 12, 13. These persons were made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light: they were also translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son: the one is expressive of their regeneration, the other of the state into which they, as regenerated ones, were introduced: which is very agreeable with our Lord's own declaration; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3: and with what the apostle declares of the accomplishment of this in his own soul, and the souls of others, and the knowledge he, and they had of the same, *We know that we have passed from death unto life.* Some say, our meetness for heaven and glory is in Christ. No; it is not; it is in us; intuitively and inherently; it consists in the work of the Holy Ghost: our souls are the subjects of it: and hereby we have supernatural faculties, senses, graces, life and light, which will exist in us for ever. It is by our being enlightened into the knowledge of Christ, that our being born again is discovered unto us. We are at regeneration brought into a state suitable thereunto—even into Christ's world: or, to keep to the apostle's words, into the kingdom of God's dear Son: in the which Christ shines forth. He is in it the Light of everlasting Life—The Sun of everlasting righteousness—The Tree of Life—The fountain of Life—The Lord our Righteousness—Our feast—Our All. This kingdom of God consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost: we are hereby brought into the true knowledge of Christ—To have communion with Him—To know our state in Him; which is that of acceptation in his Person; of the free, full, and irrevocable pardon of all our sins. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace: Justification unto life: a right and title, openly and manifestatively, to all spiritual blessings: all which is made known to us, by the shedding abroad the love of the Divine Father in our hearts; and by the Holy Ghost's sealing us up unto the day of eternal redemption. In this state we have freedom from all condemnation: our Lord says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John v. 24. Now the

apostle knew that himself, and those brethren to whom he writes, were in this state of regeneration. He also knew the blessings they were hereby instated in. He says with confidence, *We know that we have passed from death unto life.* The state of death is that of unregeneracy. The state of life is that of grace—of being in it. These states are distinct ones: we cannot be in both at one and the same time. When we are out of the state of unregeneracy and are regenerated, we are out of it for ever: we can never be in it again: no; not to eternity: when we are in the state of life and salvation, we are in it for ever. This is thus expressed in our text, *We know that we have passed from death unto life. Have passed.* The act of regeneration where it hath taken place, is a past act: it is once for all: it cannot be repeated: it makes an entire change in our state. We are not in a state of condemnation: we are in a state of free, full, and complete pardon, and justification: we are openly declared to be in Christ—To be clothed in his righteousness—To be washed in his blood—To be heirs of eternal life—To be those very persons whose names are enrolled in heaven: so that it would be of great benefit to us, if we distinguished between the grace of regeneration, and the state we are in before God, in consequence of our regeneration. We are the subjects of regeneration: this is wrought within us: our state by means of it, is that of life and salvation; which if we had more clear and spiritual apprehensions of, would be an excitement unto us, to live up unto our high rank, and dignity, as the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. We know ourselves to be in Christ by the testimony of the Spirit of Christ, who bears witness to our spirits, that we are the children of God. As he brings us to live on Christ, and enables us to bring Christ into all our actions, and look and rest on Him continually, we have in our own souls the clearest evidence we can have of all this: so that we hereby know as truly, as it is here declared, *we have passed from death unto life.* The apostle does not speak of this knowledge as personally his own: he speaks in the plural number; it is *we.* So the saints with him, were one and the same, in the real knowledge of this: and so are we also: we who are born of God are as truly possessed with the grace, fruits, and evidences of the new birth, as those were to whom the apostle wrote. I do not say we may have so clear a perception of the same, they had. He spake of them, as not committing sin; as having the seed of God remaining in them; of acting righteously; as not being like *Cain* who slew his brother *Abel*; of not hating, but loving the brethren. These were so many inward, and outward evidences and fruits of their new-birth: so they are of ours. Yet I would here add, we are not to look into ourselves for them: for though they spring from inward and inherent principles and dispositions wrought in our new nature, produced in us, by the operation of the Spirit of God, yet these are drawn out into act and exercise openly and visibly, so as to be seen and manifested unto others. Neither are we, as hath been again and again expressed, in opening these subjects, in going through the preceding Sermons, to conceive ourselves without sin, or without the acts of sin: we cannot commit the sin against the Holy Ghost: we cannot become unregenerate persons: we cannot hate the brethren: we cannot be without eternal life in our souls; we need not therefore be distressed in our minds, by any expressions which are adopted, or may follow. *We have,* once for all, in regeneration, *passed from death unto life.* We both

know it, and enjoy it. And all we would be looking out for, is to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Now beloved, seeing the world, and carnal professors of the gospel, are as fully possessed with the same spirit against Christ, his Truth, and people, as *Cain* was; we need not marvel if the world hate us: we are not of the world: we are chosen out of it: we know that we are chosen out of it; *we have passed from death unto life*. This is one open evidence of it—*we love the brethren*. The world and earthly minded professors do not love the brethren: so far from it, they hate us. Thus having gone through as well as I could, the 2nd particular of my sermon, I proceed to the next: which is this,

3. To shew the outward proof and reality of the new-birth, as evidenced, so as to be confirmed hereby. *We love the brethren*. I will here recite the whole of my text. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*. This last clause is to come into consideration, not now, but in the closing head of this discourse.

Love to the brethren, is the fruit and effect of a new and supernatural birth, wrought in our souls, by the Holy Ghost, as the blessed evidence of our having been chosen in Christ, by the Divine Father, before the world was. To love Christ, and His, and our brethren in Him, is congenial to that divine nature he hath made us the partakers of by his Holy Spirit: it is neither a cause, nor any part of our salvation; yet it is a fruit and effect of our salvation, as we partake of it, in our new and spiritual life, as it springs therefrom. Our spiritual life proceeds from Christ, the Essential Word of the Father, and it is manifested to be in us, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. And this is an outward demonstration of it: we have a new and heavenly nature in us: we are in a new state: we have new faculties—new objects—new joys—new sorrows—new relations—new friends—new enemies—we love where Christ loves—we love those whom he loves—we love them out of love to Him—we love them because they are beloved of Him—we know them, because they all speak the same things, in their measure, and degree, of, and concerning Him. In the day the apostle lived, love to Christ, and to the brethren, had been drawn out, and exercised to a very great degree. At the time of his writing this Epistle it was, by means of the erroneous persons who were amongst the churches, and by the means of the heresies taught by them, very greatly abated. There was therefore so much necessity of speaking on this subject: and the apostle hereupon makes it a distinguishing evidence of their being actually to be known by it, as the children of God; and the want of it to be an evidence that such were the children of the devil. He has been on this in the foregoing verses; as he is here in this, shewing it to be the mark and evidence of the new-birth. He is not leading us by these things to Christ: but he is shewing these things flow from those fixed and settled habits, graces, and that holy disposition the Holy Ghost hath wrought in us; and which are concreated in our new and heavenly birth: which the Divine Spirit produced in us, when it pleased him to call us out of darkness, into his marvellous light. It is what we are in Christ, the world hates us for: not that the world, or any unregenerate professor can possibly know what we are in Christ—what our blessedness is in Him—what our

state before the Lord in Christ is—what our comforts in communion with Him are. They may hear us speak on these most divine and important subjects. There may be some general and external influences of the Holy Ghost, reflected on their natural minds, when they are hearing of these things. They may with *Balaam* cry out, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his:” yet it cannot be they should ever see spiritual and heavenly things in their true glory and excellency; so as inwardly to relish and delight themselves in them. There must be seasons, when their inward hatred and dislike of the children of God, will break forth: then it will appear, they belong to two different heads: that they are two distinct seeds, as *Cain* and *Abel* were. The one cannot but love each other, and that for the Lord’s sake; the other cannot but hate them, seeing they are opposite to them: they are not of their clan: their profession is opposite to all the seed of the serpent delight in: so that the holy apostle might well say to the children of the Most High God, in the age and time in which he lived; and we may well consider it, as spoken by him at this time, to us, who are the Lord’s, *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.* It would be to be wondered at if they did not. From the very beginning of the gospel, we received this message and command from our dearest Lord, that we should love one another: this we are to attend closely to—to pursue and practise. We are not to love as *Cain* the first son of reprobation did: he was of the wicked one, a child of the devil: he slew his brother, because he was a righteous man in Christ, having his righteousness imputed unto him: he slew him for this very reason, because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. The same spirit still exists in the minds of all false teachers—In heretics of every description: it exists in a greater, or less degree, in all professors of the gospel, who have not the true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the case with us: *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* Our love to the brethren in Christ, is an evidence of our love to Him, and we hereby give an outward evidence we belong to Him: this is an outward, stated evidence of our state and condition—of what we really are before the Lord: we are born of God: we are converted unto Him: Christ is our centre: we are fixed on Him. Regeneration goes before conversion: the former is the act of God within us; the latter is our act towards God: it is the fruit of the former. The truth of our regeneration and conversion, with the blessedness of our state before the Lord, in Christ, with the safety and happiness of our condition, as the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, our having passed from a state of death into a state of life, are declaratively and openly manifested, so far as we are under the true belief thereof, by our loving the brethren. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren:* which love of the brethren must be a peculiar love, such as none but the regenerate are the subjects of, and which none but they can exercise, or the apostle would not have so particularly mentioned it: it is such, as those who have it not, are in a state of unregeneracy; so it follows. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* This is much the same with what the apostle said in the former chapter, on the same subject: he had there said on the same subject, “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none



occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." chap. ii. 9—11. He then dropped the subject, and took up others: he resumed this subject at the tenth verse of this chapter now before us, and pursues it in this, and the following verses; and that in stronger terms, as appears in the following sentence. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*: which brings me

4. To shew, that it is an outward proof, of a contrary state to that of regeneration and conversion to God, not to love the brethren; but to hate them. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*: that is, in a state of unregeneracy: this will fully appear to be the true and genuine scope of the words, by reciting the whole verse, *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*: which must be a state and condition contrary to that which had been spoken of, under the term *life*: into the which *John* and those with him, included in the word *we*, were entered. Which, it being clear, was a state of regeneration, justification, pardon, salvation, and free access to God, this contrary state, must therefore be, an unregenerate one. The apostle enters tenderly on this subject: though, when he pursues it, he speaks very strongly concerning the sin and guilt contracted by the persons in it. He had said, when he began this subject at the 10th verse of this chapter, and expressed himself thus, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Here in our text it is the same: only the state of such an one is declared to be death; yet we shall find him in the pursuit of his subject to affirm such an one to be declared by the apostle, to be a *murderer*: still as all along, he is speaking of the distinction there is, between the children of God, and the children of the devil; and goes on from such not loving the brethren, and then to say they are murderers, and have not eternal life abiding in them, I here again confess, what I have before hinted, the apostle is treating of this subject, as a species of the sin against the Holy Ghost: and it is for this reason, he places these professors on the list with *Cain*, who murdered his brother *Abel*. I would leave this with the reader and hearer to judge of the propriety or impropriety of, as may seem right, agreeable to the whole of this subject: yet it will be a little more touched on, when we shall be on the next words; and that because of the strong expressions in them. I have now only to shew, a proof and an outward evidence of being in an unregenerate state, is fully set forth, in not loving the brethren. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*. As such as have, and are passed from death unto life, love the brethren: so such under a profession of the gospel, as love not the brethren, are in a state of death. They are, therefore, what they ever have been, abstracted from their having been professors of Christ, and his gospel, viz. unregenerated persons. A most awful state to be found in—Christ being near in their mouths, and far from their reins: this was the case with many in the apostolical churches. It is doubtless the case with all the churches now: if not, such a passage as this before us, would be altogether needless: therefore, we must not conceive, but in a certain sense, and to a certain degree, the churches of Christ in all ages, and even down to the end of time, will have such found

in them, as will in some degree answer to such as are here spoken of: sin is sin: want of love to the brethren, and that let it be in what sense and degree it may, which amounts unto, and is in its nature, and by its consequences, hatred of, or an hating the brethren, must in the sight of the Lord our God be what it was in the apostle's days. If such were in a state of death then, the very same, and such like persons, who sin in the same, and such like manner, must be as truly abiding in death, in a state of unregeneracy now. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* We may see from hence, a man under a very high profession of Christ, may be a very great sinner: and that mentally: in his heart, and without outward act: here is nothing said, or in what is to follow, of any thing but what is negative and positive in the mind only: not of any act committed: yet it is put in the scale, and reckoned with the act of *Cain*, who killed his brother. We should learn, that even not to love the brethren is a sin: yea, even of the same nature and kind with that of *Cain*. It is from this negative the positive originates: even of hatred and ill will towards a brother: which will so far prove such in whom it dwells, that they are the devil's children, the brood of *Cain*: not only in a state of unregeneracy, but even under the sentence of eternal death, and destitute of eternal life abiding in them: there must therefore be such guilt in this, of not loving the brethren, as is not easily describable. I therefore confess, I think as the apostle sets it forth, and according to what he hath of it in view, it can be no other, than what follows in the lives and tempers of such, as have been guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost. And he is here setting forth such in distinction from all other professors; and especially from such as were true professors of the everlasting gospel of the blessed God. The hatred of these persons, might be more inveterate and malicious, and break out into greater acts of hatred, even in the church of Christ, and towards it, than even the malice of the world, and those of it who made no sort of profession. Hence the caution is suited to such a sense and apprehension of the words; *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* The word *hateth* denoteth the fixed abiding state and temper of the mind; as the expression of *abiding in death*, doth the state of the person: it is not to be merely out of temper with a brother, but it implies a fixed, rooted, settled, implacable spirit, which harbours that sentiment of a brother, which by no means is to be overcome. I aim to set it forth as clearly, and fully as I can; because I most certainly hope, and sincerely too, none of us are by any means chargeable with it; neither do I think all who are in the very state of unregeneracy are. Not all who are persecutors of the Lord's people are chargeable with this sin of hating the brethren, in the sense the apostle here expresseth it: they hate the saints: that they do: they hate them because they are such: that it is also a truth: but they do not hate them, as having been numbered amongst them, as those who were professors of the same faith in Christ with them. No; it wholly belongs to those who are, or have been in a church state: whose spirits are malignant against such as are in every appearance, most truly one with Christ; yet by such a spirit breaking out from them, and exercised on, and towards the real children of God, prove themselves

hereby to be in the state of death. The Lord save us from such a spirit, and state, for his great Name's sake. Amen.

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## SERMON XLIV.

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*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* 1 JOHN III. 15.

THE apostle in the pursuit of his present subject, which contains this solemn and awful assertion, that *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*, adds what must eventually follow upon it, as being the real character of each individual who was in this case, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* The word *Whosoever* is a word which takes in all who are under a profession of the Lord Jesus Christ: yet it belongs but to some of them; and these to whom it belongs are unregenerate; for they are those of whom it was said in the last clause of the former verse, *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* It begins there with a negative: it is here a positive: it is expressed in the singular—*He*: not, they. Here, though the word *Whosoever* is comprehending, yet it is brought down, as extending itself personally and individually; so that it is expressive of this. The person spoken of is most certainly a professor, or how could it be said he hateth a brother? It must be one who professeth in some sense and measure, the same faith with him whom he calls his brother; yet at the same time he is so far from being of the same mind and will with him that he hates him in his heart. To open and explain this, will be the elucidation of what is contained in the text, which I will attempt under the following particulars: and divide them thus.

1. By considering what is to be understood by *hating a brother*, and what such an one is. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.*

2. An appeal to the saints both of the state and case of such an one as hateth his brother. *And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* I hope under both these heads to compress and contain all which may serve to cast light, on the substance of what is contained in the passage. May the Lord himself shine, and reflect his own light on the same: that the Truth may be maintained, and all error concerning what is before us, entirely secluded: this is the desire and prayer of my heart. The Lord grant it for his great Name's sake, to the praise of the glory of his grace. I am now entering on it.

1. By considering what is to be understood by *hating a brother*: and what such an one is; *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* This will be best entered on in a very gradual manner; so that this head may be divided, and subdivided into a variety of particulars; contained for the substance of them, in the general division; so as to explain the

whole contained therein by giving an account of the word, *Whosoever*—Then of those who are expressed under the term brother—Then why and wherefore such and such hateth his brother: and in what sense they are murderers. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* The word *Whosoever*, includes all persons implied and contained in the subject that is here expressed: so that let those be who or what they might, in name, in dignity, in profession, in office, in the visible church of Christ; or let him be who, or what he may, whosoever, or whatsoever, let it be general, or personal, who hateth his brother, is a murderer. The word *hateth* is expressive of what is very positive in its nature and degree. It is not a mere want of love, so as not to have that respect to the brother which may, as properly considered, be due unto him; but it suggests bearing a positive ill will unto him, even such as amounts to hatred. To hate is to bear an ill will to one who is the object of our hatred. It not only implies, not to love; but *hatred* is a deep-rooted ill will at one, disposing us to vex, injure, or destroy him who is the object of our hatred: and this is accounted murder before God. Whosoever he be, under the profession of the gospel of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, a member of a visible church of Christ, or be he only one, who without this tie and obligation on him, hateth his brother; or, who instead of cultivating a truly christian temper towards his brother, indulges wrath, malice, envy, and revenge, is in the sight, and reckoning of the Lord God, a murderer: and is by real saints to be esteemed, as represented by the word of God, as having no spiritual life abiding in him: nor any title to, or meetness for eternal glory. This is most solemn, and awful: yet even this is not fully expressive of what is contained in the text. The person hated is a brother: the person who hateth is a brother too. This must be understood, by profession: as professing the same faith, and church order. And it is on account of what the one values, and the other does not, the hatred of the one, is excited and drawn forth against the other. It is on this account what was instanced in, respecting *Cain* and *Abel* was brought forth, as a proper parallel to express it by. Hence I conceive, it ought to be noticed, that to hate a brother in Christ, is not a general and universal case: nor is every slight shewn to saints, or by saints themselves, at several times to each other, here intended or referred unto. It would be very sad with us if it were so. It must and will be found—we who love Christ with a supreme love, look to him for life and salvation, have the same blessed views and apprehensions thereof, and trust in Him for everlasting life, and love each other in Him, and for his sake; yet we all have our partialities. We love all the saints as saints; but we do not love all saints alike, we do not; nor are we chargeable by means of this, with hating any one of them: we may in very many instances be charged with a partiality in our love towards each other; with a want of that love and fervour of affection, which is most justly due to each other, as members of Christ, and of each other in Him; yet this cannot amount so high as for the apostle, to charge us with hating a brother, with being individually, a murderer; with not having eternal life in us. But this is charged upon, and declared to be the case of, whosoever hateth his brother. He is a murderer. He hath not eternal life in him *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Sure where eternal life is not, the person must be in every sense Christless; yet here we must make this exception

—That such an one as is here spoken of, hath made a profession of Christ, or he could not hate his brother who is truly in Christ: and it is as such, and because he is such, he hates him, which is implied in the term *brother*: as also that the external profession is one and the same. This is very clear from the words themselves, which are these, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* I most assuredly do not think; how suitably soever the aforesaid observations may be to some parts of our text; that they by any means are fully explanatory of it. Whilst what is written in this Epistle, will concern the church of Christ down to the very end of time, yet I am equally persuaded some things in it, could only concern, and be most peculiarly suited to the apostle's days. And, in such a measure, I consider these words, and its foregoing connection to be: for whilst the children of God, and the children of the devil, can never be more completely distinguished than they are by this servant of the Lord; yet as the sin unto death was peculiar to the apostolic age, and I conceive this hatred of the brethren to be a fruit thereof; so I look on what is here said of such an one as loveth not his brother, to belong, at least in its first and primary meaning, to the professors of that day: who having greater gifts, by which I mean spiritual gifts bestowed on them, than are now bestowed, so they sinned, who were left to fall into sin, in a more desperate way, and to a greater degree than any now can. The spiritual gifts bestowed on them, did not make them spiritually minded: this should be considered by us. It is possible to have large portions of the gifts of the Spirit, and be destitute of the indwelling and grace of the Holy Ghost in us. The ministers of Christ, who may excel in gifts and ability others, should be careful to distinguish between growing in gifts, and in grace. They may grow in the one, at the same time that they do not in the other. It is well with them when they grow in both, and that in an equal proportion: without it, they may by their gifts edify the church, but they cannot grow into Christ. The church in *John's* time began, towards the close of his days, to be more and more openly manifested as it respected the materials it was composed of. Many real and eminent saints were found in it: and many antichrists and false brethren also. As some of these had left the communion of saints, and were scattering themselves hither and thither, to spread their cursed and pernicious doctrine: so some in whom their doctrine had been imbibed, still remained with the saints: yet not being in heart and soul united with them in the unity of faith, and bond of the Spirit, they on all occasions shewed how opposite they were in heart and soul. It might be they abode with the saints on purpose to do them an injury, so oft as opportunity served—A most devilish and satanic spirit, which could originally spring from none but the devil himself. These might well be considered as *Cain's* descendents, and to be of their father the devil. They had in their minds an irreconcilable hatred, contempt of, and ill will to the saints as saints, and that on account of their being essentially different in their faith and spirit from themselves; yet this was so concealed, that it went on in the outward appearance as if they were all brethren: hence it is expressed thus, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* To hate a brother is very unnatural. To hate is the utmost expression of ill will. This hatred of a brother, must have been carried to the very uttermost; or the person would not have been charged with being a murderer. It

stands in its immediate and proper connection with the murder *Cain* was guilty of, thus, *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* You see he that hateth his brother, and is declared to be a murderer, is compared unto *Cain*, and set in compare with him: so that the crime, hereby, might be set forth in its utmost degree of sinfulness. No doubt but with a two-fold view—To guard real saints from every thing, which in their conduct and behaviour towards each other, might express even in the least appearance a want of loving each other for the Lord's sake, as brethren in the best of ties, and relationship, in Him: and also that such as were much to be suspected of want of that christian love to each other, which Christ had commanded, and real saints were the examples of, might be led to know, how great a sin it was, to have the least ill will, or even coldness of affection, one brother in Christ towards another. Yet the ultimate design of the apostle seems to me, to suggest there were such amongst them, in, and throughout the churches, who had an habitual hatred in their hearts, to some of the saints: which, it may be, did not break out so as to be discoverable; and if it did not, the devil might deceive them thus—you do such an one no actual injury: you are not, therefore, cognizable for it: you may indulge yourself in thinking of him just as you please: thoughts are free: you may inwardly think and conceive agreeable to your hatred of a brother, just as you think fit; and yet sit at the Lord's Supper with him. The apostle would have such know, that all this was before the Lord, and in his sight, the effects of real hatred to a brother—That such, be they who they might, were murderers. He therefore delivers his thoughts in very general and universal terms; such as might comprehend all those, whom he suspects as not loving a brother in Christ, and for his sake: *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* The word *hateth* is in the present tense. It should be taken particular notice of: it being descriptive of the state of the mind of the person here spoken of, and who is by the apostle here called *murderer* to his face. The person is one, whose mind is continually possessed with ill will: he is glad on every occasion to give vent to it: to express and exercise the same, in every way, and in all sorts of instances: especially and as far as it can be against the most sublime mysteries of grace: the peculiar worship of God: and also towards such as worship him in spirit and in truth. A continual frame, temper, and bent of the mind, most assuredly is the true criterion of the man: therefore, a continual and habitual disposition, which governs and rules the whole man, to hate his brother, must be that which is descriptive of the person of whom the apostle is here speaking, and whom he declares to be a murderer: as truly so, as *Cain* was. It is not to be doubted, our apostle had in remembrance at this time, what the Lord said in his Sermon on the mount, when he thus expressed himself, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his

brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Matt. v. 21, 22. Our apostle seems to elucidate our Lord's meaning, in what he here asserts, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer*. I hope I have given an explanation of the text thus far, as may afford light and satisfaction; and also in such a way, as to give those who are real saints, no cause for uneasiness: which cannot be, if I have rightly described the person who hateth his brother. If the word *hateth* be descriptive of the fixed state of his mind, in the which there always is ill will, rancour, enmity, wrath and malice lodged, against a brother in Christ; as this is wholly incompatible with grace, then none of the Lord's people need take that to themselves, which they are not chargeable with. There may be mistakes amongst the holy brethren: yea, there may be contentions, divisions, ill will, and evil thoughts arise in our hearts one against another; we have cause to bewail the same; yet all this does not amount to what the apostle is here speaking of. It cannot be said of us, on these accounts, that we are murderers, and that we have not eternal life abiding in us. Not but all these things are greatly to be bewailed. It shews how unlike we are to Christ, and how little the weight and authority of his word remains in us, and abideth in us: yet I would say, the text hath a particular respect to what was the case with some, who were, or who had been professors, in the apostle's day: and should be kept I conceive, in its proper place and order. And the use we should make of it should be this—To view the nature, guilt, and demerit of the sin of hatred: of hating the Lord's people: of being under such a frame and temper, as to be chargeable with being with him, be he who he may, that hateth his brother: ever remembering such an one is declared to be a murderer—To be what *Cain* the apostate was—To bear an exact resemblance unto him. So far as we make use of what is here expressed, to avoid every thing which in, and of itself, might give the least suspicion, of our not loving as brethren, with a pure heart fervently, so far we make a right improvement of the same: and so far it becomes us: no further is it of any immediate use to us. I go on and proceed to my next particular, which is this,

2. An appeal made by the apostle, to the saints, both of the state and case of such an one as hateth his brother. *And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

The first murder, recorded in scripture, is that committed by *Cain* who killed *Abel*; and *Cain* slew him: consequently he was the first murderer. The ties of consanguinity did not restrain him. He is held up to view as a child of the devil. His act is recorded and will be to the very end of time, to be detested, and had in horror: so that to be guilty of such an act as he was, seems of itself to be sufficient to shudder and sink one at the very thought. He had and carried about with him the sentence of his own condemnation. He went from the presence of the Lord, the east of the garden of *Eden*, where the primary Cherub had been set up by the Lord God, and which was the true and proper seat of worship, and dwelt in the land of *Nod*, on the east of *Eden*. Gen. iv. 16. The word *Nod* signifies *shaking*. It was very expressive of the state of his own mind. Depend on it, he never enjoyed a comfortable day afterwards; nor will any who follow his example. *Jude*, he speaking of some

in his day, and he was contemporary with our apostle, says, *Woe unto them!* Together with him he names others, who had been tremendous sinners, in their way, and day in the which they lived. *Balaam* the soothsayer, and *Core*, or *Korah*, who rose up against *Moses* and *Aaron*, and withstood them as the Lord's ministers and leaders of his people Israel, out of Egypt, and were with them as their guides in the wilderness of *Arabia*. The apostle having spoken of the false prophets, or, as our *John* styles them, antichrists in his day, says, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." v. 11. The worst of sinners, and their names, and crimes too, are mentioned in the Book of God, that we might tremble at the very idea of being compared unto them, by falling into crimes like theirs. Thus the infamy of the apostate *Judas*, is held, we may almost say, in universal abhorrence, by all who read and hear of the same. Murder is a crime human nature shudders at. God in a very peculiar manner, hath punished, doth, and will punish for it. He says, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Gen. ix. 6. He says, Thou shalt do no murder. "Thou shalt not kill." Exod. xx. 13. He also said, "If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die." Exod. xxi. 14. Murder in every sense, be it killing with sword, in duels, or slaying an individual in cold blood, or self-murder, it is an abomination in the sight of God. Never any age for these crimes, like unto the present. If the cause was enquired into, and rightly examined, it would be found to originate from the Deism and infidelity of the present day. The wounding the person, good name, and defaming the character of any one, is a certain murder in the sight of God. To despise any man, and wish his damnation, is to be in danger of hell fire. Such as are left to murder others, or themselves, are most awfully left of God. We may have had instances of some, who have been for a season great professors who have through violent temptation, been so overcome, as to have been self-murderers. Whilst I would be silent in such cases, and leave what their state is with the Lord: yet I must confess the instances recorded concerning self-murder, in the case of *Ahithophel*, and *Judas Iscariot*; the one the type of the other; make one tremble: so as to have left off, to have any thing to say, about what, or how the Lord may deal with any of his professing ones, who may be so left, as to be their own executioners. The instance of *Samson* which hath been sometimes brought, and that of the Jailor, who drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, are by no means pertinent. The one died as Christ did upon the cross, a conqueror over the Lord's enemies, and His people's: the other would have killed himself, supposing the prisoners had been fled, but was prevented, by the calling out to him, *Do thyself no harm; for we are all here*. The appeal of the apostle to the saints in the words before us, is most solemnly striking; *ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*. It is very expressive of what their judgment was on this point. It is true he does not here treat of the act of killing, or murdering the body: that is granted; yet what is the foundation of his saying this, and bringing it in here, is the murdering the body of *Abel*, whom *Cain* slew. So that a presumptive proof might be raised herefrom, that all, and every sort and kind of murder, may be



included in the appeal here made. It may be said, the apostle is here addressing saints, and these very holy and blessed ones, of whom he had before spoken most highly, therefore it would have been below him, and his subject, to have conceived any thing like this, of, or concerning them. Yet this is to be attended unto, he is here, not addressing them, he is appealing unto them, respecting their knowledge of this matter: he says, *and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Thus he makes his appeal unto them, of what they themselves knew of this. He makes their judgment of the same equal with his own; *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* This they knew as he did also. Yet it is well, and absolutely necessary to confine ourselves to the subject the apostle is upon, which is that of hating a brother. *David* who was a child of God, was guilty of slaying *Uriah the Hittite*, with the sword of the children of *Ammon*. Yet, horrible as the sin was, which hath so stained the annals of his history, together with the cause, and circumstances connected with it, so as one can never read it, but it must excite in our minds indignation against him, yet we cannot deny but he had eternal life in his soul, even at the very time he thus fell. He was for the act, guilty of murder, yet it was a transient act: never after reiterated. The murderer spoken of in the text, hath always one and the same disposition: it is a permanent and an abiding disposition inherent in him. *David* murdered, or caused *Uriah*, who might be a child of God, to be slain. The person spoken of in our text, is one who hateth his brother, because he is the Lord's; which as a sin, must vastly exceed in guilt and demerit, the simple breach of the sixth commandment of the Lord's most holy law. Like as the sin against the Holy Ghost exceeds all other transgressions. So that such an one as hath an habitual hatred to a brother in Christ, he that hateth his brother, he, let his profession be what it may, abideth in his natural unconverted state. He is a *murderer*. He hath not eternal life abiding in him. This the apostle affirms. This the saints were well persuaded of. This they knew in their own minds. They could not but set their seals unto it. He therefore makes his appeal unto them: *ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Then he must have in him eternal death.

But what are we here to understand by having eternal life in us? most undoubtedly, Christ. He is Eternal Life. The fountain of it. The very spring by the which the streams and blessings of it, are conveyed into the souls of his believing and called people. He lives in them. He abideth in them. He makes his most blessed abode with them. He bears this title—*Eternal Life*, in the 1st chap. of this Epistle, verse 2: "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." So again in the 2nd chap. v. 25. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." The Lord Jesus Christ is the life of all his people. Their knowledge of Him, is eternal life. Now it cannot be, such an one as hateth his brother, should have eternal life abiding in him: such an one cannot have the true knowledge of Christ: nor any communion with Christ: nor any spiritual apprehensions of Him: nor any high prizings of Him: nor any hungerings and thirstings after Him: nor any reverence for Him: nor yield any practical submission to Him. This is most certainly the case with him, let

his profession be what it may, who hateth his brother. His state is this; he is without Christ. He is Christless: which is altogether the most tremendous: because to call Him Lord, and to sin most grievously against his Majesty, in hating such as he loves; surely no evil can exceed this. The case of such an one is awful: both as considered negatively and positively. He not only is without love to the brethren, but he is in the habitual exercise of positive hatred in his mind towards them. May we learn to profit by the account the apostle hath given us, concerning such as are the children of God, and such as are the children of the devil, May he save us from all want of love to the holy brethren: and may we have right apprehensions of the exceeding misery of such as have not eternal life abiding in them: and never forget how the apostle makes his appeal to real saints concerning this: *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* And now I would close with a short account of the inward blessedness of real saints, who have eternal life abiding in them. Some conceive *eternal life* in this place, respects that principle of spiritual life which is communicated to the souls of the regenerated people of God, when the Holy Ghost is pleased to become the Lord and giver of spiritual life unto them. His whole work within them, and upon them is expressed by the term quickening: *you hath he quickened.* Eph. ii. 1. Nor am I by any means against this to be understood as a part of the meaning of the expressions here. It is by a supernatural life conveyed unto us, in regeneration, we are made alive to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is from Christ our Head, we are made the partakers of it. He saith, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John vi. 47. As we could not live in this world, until we were brought into it by birth, at which time we were introduced into it, and there was in it, every thing most completely provided for clothing, food, and for all we should ever need; I speak of what the Lord, in preparing the world for us, had done: so when we were born again, and thereby brought into Christ's world, we had all provided for us, and when the Holy Ghost was pleased to open the eyes of our spiritual minds, He set before us Christ Jesus: and we found in Him, in his Person, righteousness and salvation, fulness and riches, every thing we shall ever want to eternity. As the Holy Spirit is pleased to reveal Christ in us, so he dwells in us. He is our All. We see our All is in Him. We live on Him for all. We receive Him as he is set before us in the everlasting gospel, as all our salvation and all our desire. So that we have hereby Christ in us. He is our eternal life. He puts forth his life in us. We are partakers of the blessings and benefits of the same. He lives in us. We live in Him: on Him: in a continued dependance on Him, and in real communion with Him. Thus the life we live in the flesh, is a life of faith on the Son of God: in this consists our real inward blessedness. It flows into our minds, we have the actual enjoyment of it in our own souls, as our Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to dwell in our hearts by faith. Now herein consists the real blessedness of saints, which is lasting. It abideth in us. It will be so with us for ever. This is the lot and portion of all saints. All the saints have not the like knowledge, sense, enjoyment, and experience of this: yet they are equally, and all alike interested herein, and have equal right and title to this blessedness. It is in proportion to their faith, or in other words, it is in proportion to the knowledge they are, by

the Lord the Spirit, favoured with, of Christ being their eternal life, they have the enjoyment of Him, and of what He is to them. If saints have eternal life abiding in them, then they are blessed in themselves beyond all they can possibly conceive, or express. What will then their blessedness be when admitted into the state of glory? It will be such as they will never be able fully to comprehend. We may have some apprehensions of it now, but we shall never be able to comprehend it, when we have the fullest enjoyment of it in glory everlasting. Christ is now our eternal Life. He will then be our eternal Glory. He dwells in us now. He shines upon our spiritual and intellectual minds. It is hereby we are made most truly blessed in Him. He will dwell in our souls, and possess all our faculties in Heaven, so as to fill us with all the fulness of Godhead. Our spiritual blessedness on earth, and in glory, is, and will be found to be, wholly incorporeal and intellectual. I have said, and delivered myself, very weakly on these very interesting subjects. May the Lord the Spirit give you his own view of them.

I leave them for your consideration. May his blessed teaching, influence, and blessing follow the same. Amen.

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## SERMON XLV.

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*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*—I JOHN III. 16.

Our apostle had carried on the subject of loving, and not loving the brethren, the members of Christ's mystic body in the former verse, as very expressive of what the state of those persons was, who did, and did not love for Christ's sake. He shewed the extent of real love to others, that it must extend to all who professed faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord had commanded it. And hereby a proof was given of our true knowledge of Him: as also it was an evidence of our conversion to God, and the fruit and effect of our regeneration. It was hereby to be seen, and we ourselves could by no means overlook it, that we were passed from death unto life: we were not in a state of unregeneracy, but in the state of life and salvation. Our love to the members of Christ was a most convincing proof of this. On the contrary, such as were professors of the same truths of the everlasting gospel, yet loved not the brethren for Christ's sake, it proved such were in a state of death. They were, let their profession be what it might, wholly in a state of death and unregeneracy. It was manifest they were the devil's children. The apostle affirms, whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and he appeals to them as knowing, which knowledge must be from the Scriptures of Truth, that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him: then this is the conclusion regarding such, that they are under eternal death. They are void of all spiritual life. He then shews how love to the brethren should be so far extended, as to lay down our lives for each other: that is, if

the case calls for and requires it, which, it may be, was the case in the age in which this Epistle was written. The apostle *Paul* seems to speak of what was like unto this, when he says, "Greet *Priscilla* and *Aquila* my helpers in Christ *Jesus*: Who have for my life laid down their own necks." Rom. xvi. 3, 4. This was a singular expression of the strength of the love they had to Christ; and bore, and were disposed to express and exercise towards each other for his sake. The words of our present text are very expressive of the love of God to us, and what ought as the natural consequence to flow from it; *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* We have in the words before us, one of the greatest and deepest expressions of the love of God to us, which are to be found in all the scriptures: *God laid down his life for us.* I will endeavour to cast the subject before us into the following order.

1. These saints together with *John*, had a perception of the love of God. This they had inwardly and spiritually: *Hereby we perceive, or, Hereby perceive we the love of God.*

2. How and by what means they had the perception of it: *Because he laid down his life for us.*

3. An enquiry into the meaning of this expression, *because he, (that is, God,) laid down his life for us.*

4. What obligation we are hereby laid under: *And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

May the Lord help me to open each of these particulars so as to convey light and understanding to your minds: as it is His glory, and your spiritual profit I would wholly seek after and aim to obtain.

*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* So says that disciple whom *Jesus* loved. I am

1. To notice, how these saints, together with the apostle, had a perception of the love of God. This they could not have had, if there had not been a knowledge of this communicated: nor could they then, if they had not had spiritual senses and faculties suited to the same: and it must have been hereby, they so perceived the love of God to them, as to be impressed and inflamed therewith. *Hereby perceive we the love of God.*

This is very expressive of the clear knowledge and apprehension the apostle and these saints had of the love of the Divine Majesty in all His Persons towards them. To have an understanding of the love of God, to us in Christ, is the blessedness of all the saints. Some have greater perceptions of it, others less, yet they all perceive it more or less. They have inward conceptions of it, so as to admire it: to adore the Lord God for it, and give Him glorious praise for the same. The Holy Ghost sets forth, and before us, the whole mystery of everlasting love, in the Person of Christ: in whom God hath shone forth in the very uttermost display of it, and hath also reflected the glorious splendour of it, on the renewed minds of his saints, so as that they have thereby, an inward, spiritual, and divine apprehension thereof. All our spirituality consists in spiritual perception. And our spirituality consists inwardly. It is in our minds we have Christ formed: and what the Holy Ghost hath there revealed of Him to us, is that which renders Him glorious in our personal view and apprehension. Whilst it is wholly owing to the indwelling of the Holy

Ghost in the saints, that they have spiritual perceptions of Christ, and his amazing love, and of the Father's love to their persons in Him, yet in their spiritual mind, and faculties, these perceptions are formed of the same. It is in a way of intuition, we perceive the love of God. We not only know it, but we perceive it, so as to be inwardly impressed with the same, and so as to go out in heart and affection in consequence of it, towards the Lord. What the apostle is here expressing, for himself, and others, in saying, *Hereby perceive we the love of God*, most undoubtedly constituted, his, and their principal experience. It was the foundation of all which moved and so influenced their souls, as to carry them out, and off themselves, and fix them on God in Christ, as their centre, and their all. It would be well for us to know, and also to acknowledge, it is spiritual apprehensions of Christ Jesus, which can only fix our hearts on Him, and make Him precious to our souls: and this is faith. Such as have no perceptions of Christ, have no faith. Such as have spiritual apprehensions of Christ, they are believers on Him: they receive Him: they live in contemplations on Him. We esteem quick perceptions to arise from great sensibility, and life in its proper animation. It is most assuredly so, as it respects spiritual perceptions: it is the effect of spiritual life: which as exercised on the Lord Jesus Christ, conveys such spiritual views and conceptions of him, as produce effects in the mind correspondent with the same. The mind is most divinely taken with Him. The heart loves Him. The affections are fixed on Him. There is an inward communion with Him. The soul is most truly and sensibly ravished and delighted with Him. All this is through the medium of faith, which as it consists in a scriptural and spiritual conception of Christ formed of Him in the mind, so it is hereby he dwells and abides in us, and we have fellowship with Him. This proves we have an inward spirituality which is suited to Christ and wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, that we knowing Jesus and his love, might be greatly delighted and refreshed in real intercourse and communion with Him. The apostle, and saints in his time, had an inward, spiritual perception of Christ, in their own minds. This is the very substance of the text: *Hereby perceive we the love of God*. It was the case with the apostle: he had an inward, spiritual, realizing apprehension of the love of Christ: so had these saints also: they exercised their minds accordingly: which consisted in ruminating on the love where-with God loved them; and had, from everlasting in his beloved Son; which contained in the same, such evidences, as satisfied their minds most fully of the truth thereof; and made way for their increasing perceptions of it; *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*. The love of God here, must very principally refer, to our Lord Jesus Christ. The word *God* is not in the text: it is, with the word *of*, a supplement: yet I dare not drop it. No; not for millions of worlds. That it here belongs to Christ, may be most truly inferred from the 2nd verse of this chapter, and all the preceding verses: in them the apostle treats on loving, and not loving the brethren. It was the brethren of Christ, the saints were distinguished for loving, as other professors were distinguished from them, for not loving. So that with the greatest confidence, we most assuredly assert, it is Christ who is here spoken of, and it is his love the apostle, and these saints to whom he speaks, were so delighted with, in consequence of those clear and most

blessed perceptions they had of Him. This is full evidence of it, because the apostle makes mention of this most astonishing instance of our Lord's love, his laying down his life for us: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us:* to which he adds, *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* This is sufficient proof, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the Person who is here spoken of, and magnified: with a true and proper confession of his Godhead, as also of his exceeding great grace, which he hath shewed towards his church. He not only loved his people, and gave himself for them: He not only became the Representative and Surety, Mediator and Saviour of his church: He not only became incarnate, and performed all righteousness on her behalf, but he died the death due to sin. He made his soul an offering for sin. He loved her, and washed her from her sins in his own blood: nor was this all: but he laid down his life for us: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.* This I conceive to be the greatest expression of his love, as it respects the phraseology of it, which is to be found in all the Book of God: which I intend to take up, and explicate, when we come to it, in the third head of this Discourse, where an enquiry is to be made into the meaning of this: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he (that is, God,) laid down his life for us.* I now proceed unto, and enter on my next particular; which is this,

2. To shew how, and by what means, the apostle, and these saints, had perceptions of the love of God: it was because he laid down his life for them: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.*

The love of God is a most wonderful subject. It is revealed, set forth, and recorded in the word of God. The love of the Three in Jehovah, Father, Word, and Spirit, had all shone forth in that very age, in which, our apostles, and these saints lived. Yea, it had so shone forth, as it never will again: nor had ever so before. There had been an eclipse of the moon before *John's* time. There was an eclipse of the sun in his time. Both of these were total. The first was very soon after the creation. The second was in the year of the world, according to *Dr. Ferguson*, 4040. It was on a friday, the third day of April, in the year of the Julian period, 4746. By the first, the church of Christ was so darkened, as to lose all her creation beauty and perfection, so as that she will never shine forth in it any more. By the total eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness, our Lord underwent such an infliction of the Father's wrath and curse due to sin, that his Sacrifice is the cause of her everlasting light and splendour. When this eclipse on the Person of Christ, God-Man, body and soul was over, he said, *It is finished.* He then shone forth with all his meridian glory on his Church. Now *John* and the saints whom he here addresseth, had experienced the blessedness of this. At our Lord's incarnation, and also in his own Life, and Passion, the brightest beams of everlasting love were reflected on the church, the elect of God, in their utmost glory and perfection. The glory and grace of this were so brightly reflected on, and into the minds of the apostle, and these saints, as we can scarcely conceive of. The Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate in *John's* days. He had lived and died, He had been buried, and rose again from the grave, all of which our apostle had been a real witness

of. Our Lord ascended Personally into the highest heavens, and shed the Holy Ghost as the fruit and evidence of it, on his church and apostles on the day of Pentecost, all which was still in remembrance. So that he, and these very saints whom he includes with himself, saying, *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*, were more deeply, and profoundly filled with the knowledge of the subject before us, than it may be we can possibly conceive. They, many of them, having it is probable seen Christ in Person: it may be, they had eaten and drank with him, after his resurrection from the dead; which must have had its peculiar effect and influence on their minds. Now this having been transacted within a few years of the present times, in the which they now lived, it must have been in their minds, to their very great advantage; which it cannot have on ours. We are impressed with the revelation given us in the Sacred Volume concerning these eternal, immutable, and important realities. We receive our knowledge of Christ, and the things of Christ, mentally, and by intuition. These received it and them both by this means, and had also outward testimonials, suited to their senses and feelings, to confirm their faith which we have not; nor do we need them. As these could not, but in their views and reviews of the transactions of the Holy Trinity, which had been displayed in the compass of a few years past, in realizing their vast designs of grace, in the gift, mission and commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, witness the demonstrations of that grace, so in and by the same, they had spiritual perceptions of the love of God. More especially this was received into their minds, as they pondered on the love of the Trinity in Unity, as it was so gloriously reflected on them, in the death of Christ. Their minds were filled with the love expressed herein: their mouths with the praises of it: they were never tired of the subject. That Christ should die for them, this was such an effect, proceeding from the Father's love; of the everlasting good will he had borne in his infinite mind, towards them, in distinction from all others, that they could have it no better expressed for them, than the apostle himself had here done; *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*. It is as we contemplate the same love, we are led to the same glorious apprehensions, and admirations of it. We all find, when we apprehend all the love of God, set before us in Christ, manifested to us in Christ, and that the death of Christ is a most stupendous instance of his love to us, we have such perceptions of everlasting love, as leave us without all doubts and suspicions of the same. The little word *us* must not be omitted; *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*. Whilst we shall ever have cause, so long as we are in this present world to renounce ourselves, and all looking at, and dependence on ourselves: yet this cannot be better increased and promoted, than by looking at ourselves in Christ, as one of the *us* for whom he laid down his life. As this will endear him to us, so it will increase our confidence in Him: and the more confidence we have in Him, so much the less we shall have in ourselves: as the more fully we are satisfied with the Lord Jesus Christ, so much the less we shall seek to be satisfied with ourselves. Christ's laying down his life for us, is such an evidence of his own heart toward us, his own delight in us, of his own mindfulness of us, of his interest in us, and of our complete salvation and perfection in Him, that we may well say for ourselves, as truly as

the apostle here doth, *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.* This brings me to my next particular: which is this,

3. To make an enquiry into the meaning of this expression: *Because he laid down his life for us.* I will here recite the former part of the text, that thereby no part may be lost upon us. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.*

It is we who perceive the love of God. The revelation made concerning it, is the mean by which we know it. Our spiritual faculties are the medium by the which we have spiritual, and inward perceptions thereof in our minds. What we are taken with is this vast expression of everlasting love, *God laid down his life for us.* Our present subject is an enquiry into the meaning of this expression. It hath in the former head been stated and expressed, that it is our Lord Jesus Christ is the Person here spoken of. We confess him to be God—The true God—The living God—The everlasting God: and that He who is God over all, blessed for ever, Amen, died for us. All this is right: each particular which hath been expressed is founded on the express testimony of scripture, yet this expression here before us, is peculiar: so as that it needs explanation. Christ is God essentially. He is the Son of the living God, considered Personally or one in the Essence, or Godhead, with the Father and the Holy Ghost. His name is Jehovah: "I, even I, am the LORD," is his own declaration, Isa. xliii. 11: yet Christ did not lay aside his Essential Glory. He did not lay down his life as God. He could no more act thus, than he could cease to be: so that I could wish this to be closely attended unto: that whilst it is here declared, *God laid down his life for us:* it is not the life of God as God: this is altogether impossible. Christ as one in the Godhead, as the incomprehensible Jehovah could neither become Incarnate, nor obey, and die. You will it may be, say, is not Christ the incomprehensible Jehovah? Is he not God? Is not his life called the righteousness of God? Is not his blood styled the blood of God? Is it not here said in the very words before us, *God laid down his life for us?* would you have us leave all this aside? I answer, and reply to each, and every one of these questions, the Lord God forbid. Yet with all these questions, and all this allowance, the Lord Jesus Christ neither laid aside the Essential Glories of his Godhead, nor did he die as God. Neither is that, it cannot, it is impossible it should be, the meaning of these words before us, *God laid down his life for us.* He neither died as the only begotten Son of God, as Essentially and Personally considered: neither did He lay aside his Essential Glory: neither did he obey and suffer merely considered as God. You will it may be, ask, who, what was Christ? I read he had a glory with the Father before the world was—That he was the image of the invisible God—That he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God—That he made himself of no reputation—That he took on him the form of a servant. What? would you have us to set aside all this? would you by any means reject, or have us to reject the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ? I answer, with my whole soul, God forbid. And I express myself on the great and most important subject as I have done, that the same may, if the Lord please, be the more clearly stated. It is too frequently the case, in stating the Godhead of Christ, the Person of Christ is swallowed up, and it is so, that at times



it is wholly lost. When the subject is the Person of Christ, then what he is as the Second in the Essence must be expressed, that what he is as God-Man, may be rightly conceived of and declared. Now Christ as God-Man, is not simply what he is, as a Person in the Godhead: whilst what he is as a Person in the Godhead, is the foundation of his being God-Man. He is in the form of God, the image of the Invisible God, and the Fellow of the Lord of hosts, as God-Man. He had a glory with the Father before the world was, as God-Man. He laid aside this, when he became incarnate. It was then he took upon himself the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man. And being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. This brings our subject to its right latitude. It was that Person in the Godhead, who was set up from everlasting to be God-Man, and had the glory due to his Person, as being One with the only begotten Son of God, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, or Personally, who is here spoken of in the words before us: of whom it is here declared, *God laid down his life for us.* But what life did he lay down, that by any means can come up to such an expression as this before us? *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.* I reply, his life as God-Man, will bear an equality with what is contained in this expression. He lived a life of incomprehensible blessedness and Glory before all time. In the fullest enjoyment and communion of all contained in the love of the Holy Trinity. He was exalted into Personal union with the only begotten Son of God. For the God-Man, the brightness of glory, to descend into the virgin's womb; to tabernacle in flesh; to lay down his life as God-Man for us, contains all expressed in the declaration, *God laid down his life for us.* The life he lived in heaven from everlasting, a life of more worth and value than of all created intellectual beings, either in earth or heaven can ever amount unto, was the life Christ laid down for us. The very life which he had lived in heaven from everlasting. I ask, is not this sufficient? will not this answer and come up to the expression before us? *God laid down his life for us.* So then it is not the Essential Life of Godhead; nor is it the Essential Life of the Son of God, but it is the Life of God-Man, who was set up from everlasting: who laid aside his Personal Glory: who lived in our world and nature, God-Man, the Head and Saviour; who was perfect God and perfect man in one Person. He gave infinite virtue and efficacy to all his actions and doings; He being all which hath been declared of Him. His blood in the word is styled the blood of God. His righteousness the righteousness of God. His life the life of God. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.* "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Rom. x. 3, 4. "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts xx. 28. We are made the righteousness of God in him. 2 Cor. v. 21. I hope I have given an account, sufficient to any enquiry which may be made, regarding the meaning of this expression in the text, concerning God's laying down his life for us. It was Christ, God-Man, who laid aside his glory, took on him the form of a servant, and laid down his life, which was peculiarly his own, which was a life which he had with the

Father before the world was. This life was laid down for us, and our salvation: and this was the very uttermost expression of his love. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, towards us, because he laid down his life for us.* Who can estimate the life of Christ, God and Man? who can say what is contained in this vast expression of his love, his laying down his life for us? I esteem this expression of his love, as containing that which is unspeakable. May we think on it with astonishment. May we go over it in our hearts, and from it be continually receiving into our minds, fresh scriptural perceptions of the same, so as that we may be wholly swallowed up therein. May we so survey it as to be lost in this boundless ocean of love: and seeing what most complete satisfaction our Lord Jesus Christ, hath made to the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father. All his glorious Perfections are most evidently displayed. His law and justice honoured and magnified. The utmost evil and demerit of sin atoned for. And a revenue of glory rises to Godhead therefrom. So that sin is that which cannot be done away, by any, or all the acts of finite creatures. Here is one, in the nature of his people, who is too strong for the imputation of sin, and all contained in the curse due unto it. He is not inherently defiled by the one. He cannot sink with the other. He being the man Jehovah's Fellow. Doth sin in the nature of it strike at the Being of God? Here is one equal with God, who lays down his life to compensate for the dishonour, and evil, contained in this very part of that evil which is thus contained in the essence and nature of sin. Hath sin, to use our expressions concerning it, drawn a veil over the manifestation of the Perfections of Deity? Here is one who is both Essentially, Personally, and manifestatively the Image of God, who veils his glory, empties, and lays down his life. Surely this is all-sufficient to atone for all the evil contained in the sin and apostacy of the whole election of grace. I would add, was our Lord Jesus Christ as one in the Godhead inferior to the Father, he could not have been equal to the work and office of Mediatorship, and work of taking sin away by the Sacrifice of *Himself*. And if he had not been God-Man, he could neither have obeyed the law, nor could He have borne the sins of many in his own body on the tree; without which He could not have put away sin by the Sacrifice of *Himself*. He is in the Old Testament expressly declared, to be *Jehovah* the righteousness of his church. He declares himself to be *Jehovah* the Physician of his people. And in the very lowest state of his humiliation, when sin, and the curse, meet on Him, he is declared by the Father to be his equal, or fellow: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts." Zech. xiii. 7. It is one of the peculiar glories, that Christ in his Person is God-Man; whose glory as such is above the earth and heaven: who came into our world by his open incarnation: and manifested his loving heart, and love to us, by laying down his life for us: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.* O amazing, and transcendent grace! This brings me to my last particular; which is this;

4. To notice the obligation we are hereby laid under, to love each other for his sake: *And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

It is the very fruit and effect of the love of Christ, to love those

whom he loves: and as our love originates from the perceptions of his love to them; so we cannot but love saints in agreement thereunto. As we have gospel perceptions of Christ's love to us, so we love Him in return, and his beloved for his sake. In the primitive age of the gospel, by which I mean the apostolic day, the saints were very remarkable for a burning, flaming love and affection to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to each other for his sake: so that the words before us are expressive, of the love of saints, in some instances, being drawn out to such degrees and lengths, as even to lay down their lives for each other. To us who live in our times, it seems to be stretching the subject beyond all bound to talk at this rate. We scarce think it could ever be so, that saints should love to such a degree. We rather think the very apostle speaks of what ought to be, not of what ever was; yet I conceive this is the fruit of our little knowledge of the love of Christ, and what blessed obligations real saints were under unto Him, for the great love wherewith he had loved them: and for that vast expression of, his laying down his life for them. It is beyond the conception of all the minds of all the host of elect angels in heaven, to conceive the depth of love in the heart of Christ, God-Man, to the elect of Adam's posterity—That He in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, should empty himself of his Personal Glory, and become poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich, this is such a mystery of grace, that let us be favoured as we may, in the real enjoyment of the blessedness thereof, it is beyond what all the election of of grace collected together in one, can ever have the least adequate idea of. It lays under an everlasting obligation to love Christ with our most supreme affection and esteem—To love all his beloved ones—To love them out of love to Him—To love them for his sake—To love them as the elect of God—As the beloved of God—As those whom Christ loved and delighted in from everlasting, and will love and delight in to everlasting—To love them so, as not to think our own lives too much to be parted with for their sakes. This most assuredly is not going beyond what is contained in the words before us: *We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* These were very manifest, who they were, and what they were in the apostle's day. He had been distinguishing between those that were brethren by mere profession, and those who were really so by grace. He had in the former verse, called such an one, be he who he might, a murderer, who loved not his brother, and declared he had not eternal life abiding in him. Here he expresses who those were, who were the true lovers of the brethren. They were those who had perceptions of the love of God, so as to feel and enjoy the love of God in their own minds: and loved the children of God, and the brethren of Christ, out of the true knowledge and apprehension, that our Lord Jesus Christ had laid down his life for them. It should ever be kept in view when we treat of, and hear these subjects, that it is not merely a natural love, which the scripture is treating of: it is as truly a supernatural love, as ours to Christ is: it is a branch of the same: it is a fruit of the spiritual affection we bear unto our Lord Jesus Christ. And we cannot love Him but with our whole hearts, and by giving up our whole persons, bodies and souls to his service, to be the Lord's; so we cannot love the saints as saints, without giving up ourselves to their service, so far as their good, and the honour and glory of Christ may call for, and require: *Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us: and*

*we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* The apostle does not say, it would be well in us, to love to such a degree of affection. But he puts an obligation on us, to love thus; his words are, *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* May the Lord the Spirit, if it please him, shine on what hath been delivered. And whilst none of us may come up unto, or feel in our hearts such love to the brethren, as comes up to such a measure and degree, as to be willing and ready, were we called to it, to lay down our lives for them; yet let us read in the words before us what ought to be the case, and remember also this hath been exemplified in some of the saints who are gone before us to glory. May we see how, as our love to Christ is not for the strength and degree what theirs was, that is the cause of our not loving each other, as saints, as they did. The Lord bestow his blessing on us. Amen.

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## SERMON XLVI.

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*But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?—I JOHN III. 17.*

To love each other as the brethren of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as brethren to each other in Him, is a subject our apostle hath been in this very Epistle dwelling largely upon. In the former chapter he began it: he then dropt it, and went forth to other subjects. He resumes it in this chapter, and treats on it more particularly. He carried it to the uttermost extent and expression in which it can possibly be exercised in these words in the former verse: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* Beyond this, it cannot possibly be extended; for though we shall love one the other in Christ, in heaven, and glory for evermore, yet we cannot express it there but in a mental way and manner. No: nor can we express our love to Christ himself, in any other way. Here on earth, love to Christ may be, and by many of his saints has been expressed, by not loving their lives unto the death. For many of them have laid down their lives, with all the love of their hearts to Him, in the flames of the most fervent affection to Him, for his Name's sake: and where He is loved to such a degree, we should love his people, next to Him, with such a degree of love, as to lay down our lives for them if called thereunto. No love can go farther than this: our love ought to go so far. This is the apostle's doctrine: *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* I most certainly should look on all this, as in a very special maner to be considered, as confined to the apostolic age: and consider these words of the apostle *Paul*, as suited to give some clear light into it: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or

nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Rom. viii. 35—37. I think we may conceive from it, what the suffering state of the saints must have been at that time: so that it made way for the exercise of their love towards each other, and to be ready and willing to lay down their lives for each other. Our apostle having said, *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*, adds to this by way of question, the words of our text; *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* The words are very expressive of the impropriety of that conduct, which is contained in our profession of love to Christ, and to a brother for his sake, when we know such an one to be in a case and state of distress, and it is in our power to remedy the distress, by a communication of worldly good to him, out of the abundance the Lord hath bestowed upon any of us: but to shut up our bowels of compassion from such an one: this is strange conduct in one saint to another. The apostle could give no account of it: he attempts no excuse for it: he only asks this question—*How dwelleth the love of God in him?* this is a question which the apostle proposes: let those answer it who may. It is the will of God, some who are saints, believers, and professors of our Lord Jesus Christ shall have and possess this world's good: that is, they shall be rich; very rich, and have a great abundance of the same. It is the will of God some of his beloved ones, shall neither be rich nor poor; but be in such circumstances as to have a sufficiency; so as neither to abound, nor suffer need. And it is the good pleasure of the Lord that some of his saints shall be in very confined circumstances, so as to have a variety of wants, and be thereby constrained to look for succour and supply from such as have temporal riches in a great abundance. It is the Lord who maketh poor, and maketh rich, he bringeth low, and lifteth up. In the vast and infinite mind of Godhead it was from everlasting settled in the case of every individual person of the election of grace, what their circumstances and conditions in this mortal life should be: who should be poor, and who of them should be rich: and this all in such connection and conformity with election decrees, as the free grace of God, and his supreme will, and divine sovereignty might be displayed and glorified thereby. The apostle *James* says, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" chap. ii. 5. Our Lord saith, "Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good." Mark xiv. 1. And *Paul* recites a sentence which dropt from the mouth of our most precious Lord Jesus Christ on this subject, which none but himself takes notice of; which is this: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts xx. 35. It is the will of Christ to appoint the poor in all his churches; that the rich may communicate out of their abundance to the relief of their necessities. It is not the Lord's will, all his beloved ones, should be in equal circumstances; nor is there any reason to complain. In the house of God, the church of Christ, officers and offices are appointed, and that by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, that the poor of the flock may be attended unto. The offices of Deacons, and Deaconesses (the latter is dropt

now, yet it was by the same appointment with the other, in the primitive church) are for this very purpose—That such members of each individual church, as are in circumstances to need help, may have from the churches they belong unto, a suited portion of relief: so as thereby the church be neither burdened, nor these wholly neglected. Deacons ought to be of a pitiful disposition: they should be faithful men: they being entrusted with the affairs of the church. Their office requires some peculiar gifts, which the Holy Ghost only can bestow on them: these are mentioned in the 1st Epistle of *Paul* to *Timothy*, chap. iii. 8—13. They are to provide for the Lord's Table; the minister's table; and the table of the poor. Not by maintaining them wholly: for in many cases this cannot be done; but by communicating to the necessities of the saints, in proportion to the ability of the church, and no farther. The apostle tells us, "If any would not work, neither should he eat"—A full proof the church of Christ is not to be burdened with such. When the deacons of churches distribute the bounty of the churches, to such of the members thereof as are properly entitled to the same, they are to do it with a cheerful spirit: not bestowing it as an alms; but as the bounty of Christ himself; who hath appointed it as a provision for the poor members of his family. It is therefore to be administered with impartiality: not out of favour and affection; but according to the necessities of the saints. It should be attended unto, when any are for joining churches, what their outward circumstances are; lest the church be oppressed by a number of poor members which they will find themselves incapable of relieving; and this, it may be, will be a means of producing a murmuring amongst them. Neither should there be at any time, a liberality shewn, so as to weaken the good of any particular church. It should in an especial manner, be the study of the officers of each, and every individual church of Christ, to seek, study and lay themselves out for the very special good of that particular body of Christ to which they belong. I thought it good to say all this, by way of introduction to the words before us. *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* For I am not going to preach about alms-giving; nor are we going to have a collection sermon: nor am I about to stir you up to shew you affection to the poor of Christ. I am no friend to these matters. I cannot see any need at present for this. No, indeed I do not. The public mind respecting free and generous collections, for all sorts of charities, as soon as proposed, is beyond what was ever known heretofore. Nor are the circumstances of the poor of God's flock, as I conceive, so very pinching as they may have been in times past: and were it otherwise, this is neither the time, or place, for me to say any thing, or bring it forward. It is true the text is very suitable, and might be made use of with advantage as subservient for such a purpose: but you know it is now before me, in the course of my discourses on this epistle; therefore I shall omit all in and of it, which may concern giving and receiving, to use *Paul's* words, and make use of it as the ground and foundation of setting before you the following subjects.

1. I will give you some general views and observations on the collections made for the poor saints in *Paul's* time, with the reasons therefore, and thereof.

2. I will set before you a method, by the which if the Lord is pleased to dispose your minds to the practice of it, you may shew, and express the uttermost of your love and affection, to saints as saints, and this without any outward affectation; and no ostentation can accompany it: and all the good contained in these words of my text, be maintained and preserved: *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him.*

3. I will recommend this unto you, in the name of the Lord. Being fully persuaded that it cannot but redound to your own advantage, as it will also to the people of God, towards whom you may be particularly disposed, and have a particular affection. May the Lord bless us, in our attention to these subjects. I am

1. To give you some general views and observations, on what we read in the New Testament, and the collections, made for the poor saints in the apostolic age: with the reasons thereof. I conceive this will be a means of casting light upon divers passages of the word; which I conceive must be always attended with some real advantage to an enlightened spiritual mind.

I will begin this part of the subject, with what took place, at, and after the day of *Pentecost*, and give you the ground, and reason that the saints acted as they did. Then the observations which may be raised will appear the more clear and natural unto you: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need." Acts ii. 44, 45. What was the reason of all this? I reply; by what had been delivered in *Peter's* sermon by his quotations from the prophecy of *Joel*, it was understood, *Jerusalem* and the Temple would be burnt, and wrath would come on the nation of the Jews to the uttermost. The Holy Ghost gave such clear ideas of this, and set it home so immediately impressive on the minds of the converts who were brought to the knowledge of Christ, as being the true and promised Messiah, that they being received into communion with the first New Testament church, were immediately concerned that the following things should be attended to—That the church should have temporal support—That they should make one joint and common concern of it. As this could not be done without a church stock, the members of the same, therefore, that there might be a foundation to proceed upon, such as had possessions in *Jerusalem* and *Judea*, sold their possessions and goods, and this was entrusted with the apostles, as the first and chief officers of the church; and out of the same a proper provision was distributed to every member of the church according to their need. Let it be observed, it was in consequence of their being fully persuaded of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the land of *Judea*, they were influenced by the Holy Ghost to act thus. We therefore cannot look on it as an example we are to imitate. After this, the members of the church being very greatly multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the *Grecians*; who were Jews, who had been born in *Greece*, and therefore called *Grecians*, and these murmured against the *Hebrews*, that is, those Jews who were born in and had never been out of the land of *Judea*. The one murmured against the other, as though there was a partiality in the daily ministrations of the bounty of the church. Let me here observe, it is of no real use to any church of Christ, to be too much filled and

crowded with members. It is only the means of uneasiness: neither does it answer the design of church institution as appointed by Christ. The first church needed to be large: it was so, otherwise it would not have had the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples, to have ministered in it; which they all did for a season: and this was but for a season. On the first murmuring in this great church, the twelve apostles called the church together, and informed them, it was not reasonable they should leave the great and important work of preaching the word of God, and attend to offices of a lower order. They therefore gave this direction, that the church should look out among them seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, whom the apostles, might, with the suffrage of the church, appoint over this business. This was accordingly done; and Deacons were appointed. I refer you to the 7th chapter of the Acts, verses 1—6. On the death of *Stephen* the church being greatly persecuted, the preachers were scattered. Hence the gospel spread abroad. It was carried into various parts of Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth, as our Lord said it should be. Acts i. 8. Now it was out of the bank of church stock, these ministers were supplied, and went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles, as our apostle says, in his 3rd Epistle, verse 7. I would here observe, all the churches we read of, and to which many of the Epistles were written and sent, were all distinct churches. Though some of these were but 2 miles distant one from the other: as the churches of *Corinth* and *Cenchrea* are said to be: and the churches of *Colosse*, *Laodicea*, and *Hierapolis* may be conceived not to have been far distant one from the other. We read also of the church which was in the house of *Nymphas*, Col. iv. 15, which seems to have been at *Laodicea*. The apostle speaks of *Philemon* as having a church in his house: also of *Priscilla* and *Aquila* of having a church in their house. Rom. xvi. 5. In all these, were all the officers, such as a pastor, and deacon, or deacons, which were in the number of each of them. Some of these could not have a multitude of members, yet these must have been such a number as all the offices, and ordinances of Christ's appointment might be regularly attended unto, observed, and exercised towards, and amongst them. To close what belongs to having all things common in the church, excepting every thing which belongs to the church of God; this I apprehend of it—That this was only for a season—That the foundation of it hath been given—That it was appropriated for the maintenance of the whole church, with all her officers, and also for sending the everlasting gospel hither and thither; not only throughout the land of *Judea* and *Samaria*, but the Roman empire, and provinces thereof. I will therefore take notice of the collections, made for the poor saints in *Paul's* time, with some observations on the same. The first we read of, the cause and occasion of it, were as follows. A brother in Christ, who was possessed with a Spirit of prophecy, *Agabus* by name, who seems to be engaged in travelling up and down, amongst the churches, he being at *Antioch* in *Syria*, stood up in the church assembly: and he uttered a prophecy by the sacred influence of the Holy Ghost: it was this; "That there should be great dearth throughout all the world." This came to pass in the days of *Claudius Cæsar*. Some say this prophecy was delivered about 3 years before it was fulfilled. This the church of Christ at *Antioch* took into immediate consideration; and determined, every man according to his ability to



make a collection, and send it immediately to the church at *Jerusalem*. This they did "by the hands of Barnabus and Saul." See Acts xi. 27—30. This was well done: the occasion was extraordinary. *Barnabus* and *Saul* returning from *Jerusalem* to *Antioch*, the Holy Ghost commanded the church of Christ there, to separate these two men for the work whereunto he had called them. This was done by fasting, and prayer, and imposition of hands, and sending them forth to preach the gospel to the Gentiles: all this was the act of the church. These apostles went from *Antioch* to *Seleucia*; next to *Cyprus* an island in the Mediterranean: to *Salamis* and *Paphos*, two principal places in it: from thence to *Perga* in *Pamphylia*: from thence to *Antioch* in *Pisidia*: from thence to *Iconium*, and *Lystra*: and passing through many other places, they returned back to *Antioch* in *Syria*; where they gave an account of what the Lord hath done by them amongst the Gentiles. Thus it was evident God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. At this place they continued a long season: until a dispute arising in the church, it was agreed they should go up to *Jerusalem*, as the mother church, to have the case decided. They did so; and the subject being settled at a church-meeting, they returned back to *Antioch* from whence they came. *Saul*, whose name was now changed to *Paul*, after awhile pays a second visit to the churches of Christ amongst the Gentiles, and it seems this made way for the introduction of suggesting to them, the equity of their making a collection for the poor saints at *Jerusalem*. He says in his Epistle to the *Galatians* when he, and *Barnabas* were together at *Jerusalem*, and those three great apostles, *James*, *Cephas*, and *John*, gave them both the right hand of fellowship, they suggested they would have them remember the poor; that is, that they would make a collection for them amongst the churches of the Gentiles; which the apostle was of himself very forward to do. This then being set on foot, the churches being informed of it, is what is referred unto, in the Epistles to the *Corinthians*, in such words as these; "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me." 1 Cor. xvi. 1—4. It is this which is referred unto, and saints are stirred up to make a liberal contribution towards, in the 8th and 9th chapters of the 2nd Epistle to the *Corinthians*; and the churches of *Macedonia*, and their great liberality are mentioned, by way of excitement, to draw out the heart to this good work. It is the same subject the apostle hath in his eye, when he says to the saints at *Rome*, "Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I

come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." Rom. xv. 24—33. I conceive I have given a clear scriptural statement, of the collections made in *Paul's* time. I would observe, there was an absolute necessity for them: nor was it without its obligation. The Gentile churches were first debtors to the church in Judea, which were in Christ; or this collection had not been made. I will

2. Set before you a method, by the which, if the Lord is pleased to dispose your minds to the practice of it, you may shew, and express the uttermost of your love and affection, to saints as saints, and this without any outward affectation; and no ostentation can accompany it, and all the good contained in my text, be maintained and preserved: *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

It is not that I mean to set aside, what may be inferred from the words before us, which may belong to the contribution to the outward necessities of the saints. No; but I am not called to this subject now. I am, as before hinted, not to be on this subject, yet I would improve my text; and that, if I may so say, to far more glorious and important purposes. I have set my plan before you. I will therefore now set myself to fill it up for you. Which is to set a method before you, in the practice of which you may shew, and express, your uttermost affection to saints as saints. Beloved, to know saints, and to love them as saints, this is wholly and altogether supernatural. We must be one with Christ, and be brought to know Him, and ourselves one with Him, before we can love each other for his sake. As it is by the Spirit alone, we can be led rightly to know Christ, and our union unto, and interest in Him: so it is by the same Spirit we can only know who the Lord's beloved ones are. They can only be so to us, as they partake of the same Holy Spirit: as they are born from above: are the subjects of the same joys: the same sorrows: the same enemies: the same temptations: the same griefs. It is not necessary for you and me to be personally acquainted together, that we may express our real love to each other, to fill up, and execute the plan I am about to set before you. No, it is not: if you are believers in Christ, you cannot be without having fellowship with saints: and that too at the throne of grace: and this is the very best place to have and hold fellowship with them: because here you can speak for them, and speak of and concerning them, without being under the least restraint, or doing them the least injury, or giving them the least uneasiness. No one can put on bowels of mercy, neither can any saint exercise his love to another saint for Christ's sake, more, than by praying for him: using all his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ on his behalf, intreating the Lord Jesus to be unto him, just as he would have him to be, were his case just exactly as the case of that brother is at that very particular time. Now in so doing, the bowels of grace and compassion, are drawn forth. All

the Lord's people are the subjects of one and the same bodies of sin and death. They have one and the same common enemy. They are the subjects of the same assaults. They are equally as liable to fall, one as the other. They are before the Lord, and in his sight, the objects and subjects of his everlasting love, favour, and delight. He views them in Christ. They are in Him accepted, and always acceptable: yet in themselves, and in their own persons, cases, frames, and feelings, they have such exercises, as none but they themselves can form any idea of. Sometimes they are on the mount of communion with God: then they are brought low through manifold temptations. Some, it may be, to the commission of actual sin: some by most horrid blasphemous thoughts: so that they cannot but tremble on account of them. It is with them at times, as if the inbeing of sin had wholly swallowed them up, and their besetting sin, had wholly its power and dominion over them. I only mention these, to give an outline of the general exercises of the mind of such as are saints indeed; yet they are not excused, neither are they exempted from such experiences as these: and it is esteemed by them as their greatest miseries in this mortal state. This being the case, I shall now take up the words of my text, and improve it for all those ends and purposes, so as to shew saints as saints, to express and exercise their bowels of compassion, one towards another. I do not mean it is expressly the meaning of the text: I only accommodate it to this use and purpose; *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* Some of us have not this world's good. If we see a brother in need, we cannot do any great service to him, or conveniently part with much to relieve him: yet we do not shut up our bowels of compassion towards him. So far as the love of God dwelleth in us, we can be in a measure serviceable to him, and each other, if it be given us to follow the method I am going to mention; which is this—To make the spiritual concern of all the saints our own; and interest ourselves on their behalf for their real spiritual good at the throne of grace. We know by our own cases, what the frame, feeling, sorrow and complaints, other saints must be the subjects of. We know by our own wounds, how others must at times be wounded. We know by the gracious visits we have from our Lord Jesus Christ, and the sensible impressions made on our spiritual minds and frames thereby, how delightful the same gracious visits must be, and how other saints cannot but esteem the same. Let us therefore at the throne, remember all the holy brethren; for such they are, let our thoughts of them be as they may. Some of them are, it may be, fallen into sin; yet they are the Lord's people, and they are our brethren in Christ: even though it may be so and so with them. Let us therefore carry them and their cases to Him. He is concerned for them: let us be also. He exercises bowels of mercy towards them; it may be they have not the least perception of the same. Let us exercise our bowels of spiritual compassion, in entreating our Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf; this is a method in the practice of which, we may be very beneficial to many of the saints; to some of those we know and converse with; and to some whom we know not. And this will always be attended to ourselves with this advantage—We shall hereby enter so into the subject of our own request we put up to our Lord Jesus Christ, as to understand in a very great measure, what the

frames and feelings, the dejections and sorrows of such a mind must be, for whom we are concerned. It will teach us also to consider, our friends in Christ, are the objects of the devil's invincible and inveterate hatred—That he is continually casting his fiery darts at them; to inflame their lusts; to wound their consciences; to take off their minds from Christ; to lead them, if possible, to act so as to wound the cause of God, to cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and to offend and set their brethren in Christ against them. The true knowledge of this, with a spiritual improvement of the same, will be of real advantage to saints as such. It would be well, for saints as saints, to hold fellowship with each other in prayer, in this way, considering that the communion of saints, and fellowship with each other, and praying for each other, and this without the knowledge of each other, and being with each other, is the way in which we express our love and affection for their persons in Christ: and our real love to them, and for them, by intreating their Lord, and our Lord, to remember them with everlasting kindness. All this, in the nature of it, is to express our love to the saints, our esteem for the saints, our affection and bowels of mercy in Christ, towards them, to the uttermost of the good wishes of our hearts and souls on their behalf. This is also done, without ostentation, or the least affectation. This making supplication for all saints, may be done vocally; it may be mentally; and it may be done continually. The apostle *Paul* was a great man for prayer. In a sense it may be said he prayed continually. He prayed for himself. He prayed for his friends. He prayed for the whole church of Christ upon earth. He prayed for particular churches. He prayed for persons by name; so that he prayed for particular persons. Surely his prayers, let them be ever so comprehensive, could not be long. Some of them must have been no other than a present out-going of the mind to the Lord Jesus Christ, requesting him to have respect to such an one—To consider his present state and case; and deal with him accordingly, out of his own royal bounty. This way of expressing our love to all saints, will endear them to us: as we praying for them as the beloved of God, will increase our love and esteem for them as such. We shall carry about with us, in our hearts, a sense and apprehension of this; which will keep up in our minds a true spiritual affection for them. Another benefit we shall reap in following the method proposed: it will lead us, into a spiritual, experimental, and practical knowledge of what is contained in the Intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ: it concerns the whole church of God, and every individual of the same; it is a personal one: it hath respect to every case, wound, want, sin, and misery of the Lord's people: it is from hence, we receive all the blessings of Christ's righteousness and atonement: so that to have a clear and true idea in our minds of this, is of great advantage to us. And this is very impressive on us, as we become intercessors for others, and carry on our intercession, as depending wholly on our Lord's most gracious and prevalent intercession on our behalf: in his own presentation of us, and advocacy and intercession before the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. I have according to my own apprehensions, done none of you present, any injury, in suggesting this method, by the which, if the Lord is pleased to dispose your minds to the practice of it, you may shew, and express the uttermost of your love to saints as saints: and no outward affectation, nor ostentation can accompany this. Nor will this

hinder any of you, who have this world's good, if you see a brother in need, from communicating to the relief of his necessities. It will most naturally draw out the heart, and open the hand, to the relief of necessitous saints. Having filled up the subject included in this particular, I come

3. To recommend the method which hath been proposed : and this I shall do in the name of the Lord : being fully persuaded that it cannot but redound to your own advantage, as it will also to that of the people of God, towards whom you may be particularly disposed, and have a particular affection for.

If the method which hath been expressed under the preceding head, is agreeable with the Scriptures of Truth, congenial with gospel simplicity, and spiritual love to saints as saints, then it may be very safely put into use and practice. So far as you see agreeable to that love and christian affection for each other, as one with Christ, as members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones, I cannot but recommend the same unto you ; yea, I would do this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Head of saints. He is their Father, Brother, Friend, Shepherd, Saviour, and Advocate. He delights in having communion with his saints ; and they cannot but love to have and hold communion with Him. He has communion with them, at all times, and seasons. There is a necessity they should hold communion with him, let their cases be what they may. This is to them difficult. He therefore so deals with them, that they are not all in one and the same case, at one and the same time. This is of great advantage unto them. Such therefore as are kept near the Lord, and alive unto Him, are well suited, and at times impelled by the secret influence and operation of the Holy Ghost within them, to pray for such and such, as belong to the Lord, whose cases may be so and so. This is very beneficial to the petitioner, and to the person prayed for. I would therefore recommend it to the observance of the Lord's people, to attend to the holy motions and breathings of the Spirit, and his suggestions to their minds in prayer. Let what is suggested concerning a brother in this way, be followed. You may be sure it ought not to be concealed : it should be a part of your prayer. Therefore be sure you attend unto it. I beseech you, who are the Lord's, in the name of the Lord, to take your brethren in Christ, to Christ, and mention their names to him. Recite before Him that which you know of their cases, temporal and spiritual. Let it be done that you may have an opportunity before the Lord, to express your love and esteem for them. It will most assuredly redound to your own real advantage : it will to theirs also for whom you pray. Let nothing prevail with you to drop this : it will make saints and saints, one in heart and soul, more than we can conceive, or express. I pray for you, and you pray for me : this will set a watch before the door of our mouths. We cannot speak disrespectfully of each other : Why ? Because we have recommended each other, in our secret accesses to Christ We cannot therefore break in upon this : why this is very advantageous. We cannot but love those whom we pray for. I think it ties a secret, as well as a sacred knot between such, as nothing, no, not even death itself can dissolve. In such a way as this, we may love one another as Christ hath loved us : not to the same degree and extent ; but in a comparative sense, and in a comparative degree. It

is from our Lord's intercession, he reflects all the love of his heart, now upon us. It is by our intercession to him, on the behalf of those we love for his sake, we express the whole love of our hearts before Him, as it respects those individuals. Our Lord is pleased we should love one another for his sake. Many of us have it not in our power to shew it any other way. The poorest saints as well as the richest, may be of great use and service to other saints in their praying for them. May what hath been delivered, be an excitement to us, to pray one for another; and that in the Spirit, and with the right understanding of our own, and each others particular cases. Let us never keep our eye on each others maladies; but look on each other in Christ, as the objects and subjects of his love: as being washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Let us shew our esteem for saints as saints, by bearing them upon our hearts before the Lord. Surely this will be to fulfil the royal law of love. None of us but need the prayers of fellow saints. It is a real blessing, when this is persevered in, to the exclusion of formality and legality. It is often whilst we are engaged at the throne of grace, the Lord Jesus Christ opens his heart unto us. He communicates his secrets to us. He bestows his spirit on us: admits us to very great nearness of access to him. He causes our face to shine: sends us from his throne rejoicing; and bestows upon us the very petition we have been asking him for. I have no more to say on this subject: all which remains is to put the same into use, and act on it; for I am fully persuaded the Lord never said to the seed of *Jacob*, seek ye me in vain; and hath declared to his saints, that when they call he will answer, saying, Here I am; so he will do in us, and for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. Thus we shall most assuredly find and prove the truth of it in our own souls. May the Lord bless what hath been delivered. Amen.

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## SERMON XLVII.

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*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.—1 JOHN iii. 18, 19.*

THE apostle in order to win the affection of the saints, and improve their minds to the real and constant practice of that brotherly love he had treated so much of; is disposed to go over the subject in the various particulars thereof, that they may the more fully and clearly apprehend him, in what he is here setting before them. To gain them to the practice of it, he said, *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren: to which he adds, by way of question, But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? He does not*

attempt to account for this himself: so far from it, he suggests if they can, he cannot. So that he hereby signifies it cannot be accounted for, unless it be positively pronounced, such have not the love of God abiding in them, any more than he that is a murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. It is one and the same with respect to these effects. He now very plainly addresses them, as drawing near in this chapter to the conclusion of his subject, declaring unto them, what their love ought to be. Here he expresseth the nature and quality of our love to each other: it must not be merely verbal: neither must it be hypocritical: it must be real and sincere. If it be, then we shall be ready to impart of our worldly good, to relieve the wants of our necessitous brethren; and also to suffer for them. This love to one another for Christ's sake, is both an inward, and also an outward evidence of our knowledge of God, and love to Him. The consideration of which should be an excitement to us to abound in the exercise of the same. We are not to boast of loving one the other with our mouths, but to prove it by effects—To shew compassion on such of the Lord's flock, as need any assistance and compassion, either for body, or soul—Not to shut up our bowels of compassion, but exercise and express it, where the case calls for and requires the same. We are by no means to be hard or merciless to any who are the objects and subjects of misery, want, and distress. Can it be said of him, who is under a profession of Christ, the love of God possesseth his heart, who is without a sensible feeling of the affliction of one, whom he calls his brother in Christ? It cannot be: for the love of God, and the children of God, go hand in hand together. It is because they ought to accompany each other, the apostle says in the words of our present text, *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* In explaining the same, I will aim to take notice of the following particulars.

1. The address. *My little children.*

2. What their love must not be. It must not be only verbal. It must not be hypocritical. It must not be negatively. This is dehorted from. *Let us not love in word, neither in tongue.*

3. It must be real and sincere. It must be *in deed and in truth.* This comprehends the first part of our present subject. Then it follows; *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* Hereby we have peace in our minds, and an assurance of our own salvation. What we are to understand by this, I shall aim to set before you in these two particulars. 1. Enquire what this peace is, and that it is founded on our loving one the other *in deed and in truth.* 2. What this assurance of salvation is. Or what it is which the apostle designs by these words, *and shall assure our hearts before him.* And if the Lord please to enable us rightly to search into the context, I doubt not but we shall thereby gain right and scriptural knowledge of the same. I will now recite the whole of our text: *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* Our knowledge of the truth, and assuring our hearts before the Lord Jesus Christ, is, as it stands here connected with the former words, founded on our loving the brethren in deed and in truth. But this I shall speak more fully unto, when I come to that part of the subject: only I could wish this general outline and account

of it, might be kept in remembrance, and be recorded in the memory, so as to be as a clue to guide us to the right apprehension of the same. I now proceed to enter on the Sermon. I will

1. Take notice of the address. *My little children.*

It is very expressive of that love the apostle had in his own heart towards them. It was well suited to introduce what he had now to deliver unto them. He had at the 11th verse of this very chapter, been reminding them of the message, or commandment, which they had heard from the beginning of Christ's ministry, concerning loving one another, as he had loved them. This the apostle tells them is not to be like *Cain's* love to his brother, who having hatred in his heart towards *Abel*, slew him. Neither would the apostle have the true saints, marvel at the world's hatred of them. He would have them make a proper use of it, by exercising their minds concerning it, and also concerning what the Lord had done for them, and given them the knowledge of. They were passed from death unto life. They had the evidence and fruit of this in their own souls. Their love of the brethren was the fruit hereof. As on the contrary, *He*, let it be an individual, or many, it was all one, such an one as loveth not his brother in Christ, abideth in death. As such *he* was a murderer: such an one hath not eternal life abiding in him. On the other side of the subject, such of these who had spiritual perceptions of the love of God, and that *He*, as God-Man, laid down his life for them, were under an obligation, if called unto it, to lay down their lives for the brethren. Such then as had this world's good, and were not willing to impart to their poor brethren, were suspicious persons: such as the apostle could give no account of. He puts this question for others to resolve if they could, he could not—*How dwelleth the love of God in him?* Then he comes to an application of this subject. This is contained in the present words now before us; *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* Let the whole context be surveyed by us, in all our readings of this part of the chapter, and we shall, without breaking either in upon the gospel, or looking for that in our fallen nature which is not to be found in it, have a very comfortable and satisfactory explanation of the meaning of the Holy Ghost in the same. As the address is the same, we have met with before in other parts of this Epistle, so I think it needless to say any thing of it here, but this—That it is very expressive of the apostle's heart towards them. I will therefore consider these words: *Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth:* which I divide thus: *First*, (my 2nd head:) Consider what our love to the brethren must not be. It must not be negatively, and verbally. This is not to love. *Secondly*, (part of my third head:) It must be real and sincere. It must be *in deed and in truth*. The apostle is here exhorting to the practice of this, saying, *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue.* I shall here accordingly, as my

2nd head, Consider what our love must not be. It must not be merely verbal. It must not be hypocritical. It must not be merely and only negative. *Let us not love in word, neither in tongue.*

Words pronounced by the tongue, should be fully expressive of the truth of our minds; when they are not, we lie before the Lord, who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men. Our



apostle was an enemy to all sorts of falsifications. He would admit of none in religious matters whatsoever. It would not do to pronounce a great deal of love, and affection with the lips, and not realize the truth thereof by act and deed. That which is only verbal will not do with him. It were to no purpose to speak kindly and affectionately, whilst the whole consisted in this: and no evidence of the reality of all of it, was given. This being just like what the apostle *James* speaks of. He puts this by way of question to those he wrote unto: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" chap. ii. 14—15. This is equal with our apostle here, *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue.* Let it not be merely a negative love: which only consists in good words and kind expressions, to which no meaning is affixed. Let us not love verbally only: we speak before the Lord: let us consider this; and not dissimulate. Let us not express a verbal kindness, and never give proof of it by actions, which speak louder than words. Let us not love in word only, and in tongue. There is a dissimulation in this, which it becomes us, as the children, and saints of the Most High God, to renounce, and abhor.

Let us, *Secondly* (part of my 3rd head) Be real and sincere in our love. *Let it be in deed and in truth.* Let us be affirmatively in our acts, what we are in our words. Let us express and realize this, in every kind office and service, whereby we may express our love for the Lord's sake, to any of his, and our brethren: to any, or to the whole household and family of faith—In relieving their wants—In assuaging their griefs—In comforting them which are in any trouble, with the comfort, wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God—To suffer with them—To suffer for them: yea, even, where we are called to it, to lay, and be willing to lay down our lives for them. This is the best way of proving the sincerity of our love to each other, for the Lord's sake. It is not, beloved, that any of us, shall ever be called, to give such a proof of our love to each other, as to lay down our lives, for, or on the behalf of each other; yet there is what is almost equivalent to this, which we are at times called unto. It is not unusual to the brotherhood to be persecuted for righteousness sake—For the particular and glorious truths of the everlasting gospel: many a saint at times, is scorned by others, because he professes the peculiar doctrines of grace; the rich scorn him, merely on this very account. It may be he falls into some outward evil: it is then flung at him, that he used to say, he was in Christ—That he was the subject of God's everlasting love—That he was born again—That he was an heir of glory and blessedness. Now, say his, and the enemies of Christ and his glorious gospel, you see what a deceiver and hypocrite this person is, and hath been? thus they triumph over, and insult such an one: and too, too often, it is the case, for some amongst the brethren, and who are numbered with them, to join in such insults also. It should be considered this is to prove, we never cordially loved for Christ's sake: if we had, the case of a poor despised brother, would not cause us to act thus. No; if we love in deed and in truth, a brother in Christ, as one with Christ and on account of his belonging to

Christ, we should love him at all times, and in every case he could be in. The case might give us cause of distress, yet it would not take off our heart, nor abate our affections from him: we should stand by him: plead his cause: and where we could not, we should lament it before the Lord. We should not be amongst those who say, *Report, and we will report it*: which is too often the case with some: we should be willing to conceal the defects we ourselves perceived in a brother. Nay, if we loved not in word only, and in tongue; but in deed and in truth; we should not willingly let our very thoughts work on the weaknesses of any of the brethren. When any call into question the purity and holiness of the Truths and Doctrines of God our Saviour, because certain amongst us, may have fallen into sin, it is extremely wrong in us; or to charge the person with having sinned against the doctrines of grace, and to be ashamed of the same on account of a brother having been deceived and overcome by the deceit of his own heart and the snare of the devil. We should seek to recover him out of the snare of the devil: not to implicate him more and more into the same snare of the hellish fowler. This would be to shew our love to a brother, to be genuine, and to operate as it ought. It becomes us all, to pay attention to our text: not to love in word and in tongue only; but in deed and in truth. Our love to the brethren must be real and sincere: it must be, *in deed and in truth*. It is hereby we know that we are of the truth, *and shall assure our hearts before him*. What we are to understand by the latter parts of the words before us, I am to enquire into, and set before you. The words of my text, which I am now to open and explain are these. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*. Which words before I enter on them, I would by way of general observation make one general remark on. It is very difficult to enter freely and fully into such a subject as this before us, and not to break in upon it either by saying too much, or too little: or dropping it wholly and altogether. Yet most assuredly, there is no one subject in all the Book of God, but ought to have a place therein: more especially so, when it concerns that which is for, and increases the good and benefit of his people, which most assuredly what is here before us doth — To love one the other with truth and in sincerity. But whilst all this cannot but be most freely acknowledged, yet here comes in, what is not easily apprehended. The apostle says, *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*.

I shall, *First*, (as proposed in 3rd head) Enquire what this peace is which we have in our minds, in consequence of our loving in sincerity and godly simplicity: As also what that assurance of our salvation is, which our present text speaks of. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*. The Truth spoken of in the text is Christ. *We know that we are of the truth*, because in obedience to his royal command of loving one another, we do love the brethren. Our hearts are assured before Him of the truth and reality of our love to them. We are confident we are not dissemblers in this matter: neither one to another, nor before Him; to whom, and before whom, are the very secrets of our minds opened. As an inward and outward evidence of our being born of God, this is a very striking proof of the truth and reality of the same: it is so to ourselves: it is so to our

fellow saints: it may be also to others. Our dear Lord having said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John xiii. 35. Surely nothing can be more agreeable to this, than what the apostle here says, *My little children, let us not love in word only, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth*—That we are of Christ: of his real family: that we partake of his Spirit. Herein is the clear evidence of it; because in agreement with his divine and most affectionate command, we love each other for his sake. It is also with our whole hearts: *and shall assure our hearts before him*. This therefore is an evidence of our being in Him, and of our being saved in Him with an everlasting salvation: yet whilst I cannot, neither dare I detract from this: nor would I wish to alter one word with which I have expressed myself on this subject, yet one important remark and observation must be raised; which is this—The apostle is not speaking how Christ was revealed unto them—How it was they became believers on him—How they were brought to know their own personal and particular interest in Him. Therefore this not being the subject, what he treats of, he speaks as being clear and manifest to themselves, and each other, inwardly in their own minds, and outwardly in their lives and conversations in the way he is speaking of. We cannot build our everlasting hopes before the Lord, upon what the apostle is here treating of; yet as sure as Christ is our hope, we shall have more, or less of this sincere love to such as we consider as one with Christ, and Christ as one with them, he is here expressing. It is the sole prerogative of the Holy Ghost, to reveal Christ—To give and create the true scriptural knowledge of Christ in the mind—To give us clear and undoubted evidence of our union to his Person, and interest in his salvation. Let this be remembered by us, and the subject the apostle is upon be kept in view, and we shall never be legalized by reading, or entering, or unfolding any part of this most sacred Epistle; which, as hath been often observed, is, for the subject matter of it, that of communion with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, by the indwelling of the Eternal Spirit. What, therefore, must naturally follow this? most assuredly the blessed fruits hereof. And as love for Christ's sake, is one principal fruit of the Spirit, so the apostle not only treats very largely and particularly of the same, but also of those blessed fruits and effects produced inwardly and spiritually in the mind, and outwardly in the temper, life, and conversation of believers in Christ, one towards another. Read the text in this view of it, and the whole will then most clearly appear unto you; *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him*. On our sincere love of the brethren in Christ, and for his sake, we have peace in our minds: we have an assurance in our own hearts of the truth of this. It proves to a demonstration our knowledge of the truth: of our being under the power, authority, influence, and efficacy of the same. It serves to confirm our assurance of our own salvation. It increases our esteem of the most blessed and precious Lord Jesus, It serves to recommend him to others. They by this outward and inward affection and attachment of the holy brethren, one to the other, cannot but confess, the words and commands of our Lord Jesus Christ, must be considered to be of great importance; seeing they

abide fast in their minds, and are so manifestatively influential in their hearts, lives, and conversations, one towards another. As I have given an account, of what this peace is which we have in our minds, in consequence of our loving the brethren in Christ, in sincerity and godly simplicity; so I go on,

*Secondly*, (in conclusion of 3rd head) To enquire what this assurance is, which arises from the same: *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

It must most assuredly be of the same nature with the peace of mind, which is the fruit of brotherly love. We cannot find at any time, anything in ourselves, to trust in before the Lord. We are without all hope in ourselves. We do not need any: for we have an all-sufficient ground and foundation for hope and confidence in the Lord our God, in the Person, work, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this is altogether without us: our inward graces have nothing to do with it: nor our sins and corruptions. It is a salvation wholly of grace. The foundation of our faith in it, is as truly without us, as our salvation is. Faith hath for its object Christ. It hath for its alone foundation the word of God: and the whole confidence of faith is built upon the revelation made of Christ, in the Scriptures of Truth. Our assurance in Christ is in exact proportion to what we really know of Him, from the word, and by the teachings of the Lord the Spirit. From the knowledge we have of Christ's being mighty to save, we trust in Him entirely for salvation: as we trust in Him for it, so we trust in Him for all the blessings of it: we therefore go to Him for his bestowing these on us. Hereby we get more and more confirmed in Him, that He is our Saviour and our God: and our assurance in Him is strengthened, so as from hence the peace of God flows into our consciences, and the love of God into our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Still this is not the subject before us: yet it is an immutable truth, such as have not this assurance, cannot possibly be the partakers of the assurance spoken of in the words in hand. It is very necessary to observe the expressions before us: *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* The connection of these words with the former has been observed. The assurance here is neither God's assuring us of his everlasting favour, and good will towards us, in Christ Jesus: nor is it our enjoyment of the same: neither is it our own assurance of his heart being set upon, and our confidence that he will remember us with everlasting kindness. The assurance spoken of in the text, is an assurance of our own hearts: it is our own act. Read the words again, and most undoubtedly you will see it is so: *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* You will be ready to say, this makes the matter still more difficult for us to conceive what you will bring out of these words, *and shall assure our hearts before him*: would you have us to be fully persuaded of our interest in Christ, from what we are in ourselves? My friends, No; I would not. I should account this, self-flattery and deceit. Be pleased to stick to the subject before us, and be content with it: and let us bring nothing into it; but clear it, and then proceed. The subject concerns loving one another in Christ, and as the brethren of Christ: and that in deed and in truth, without partiality and without hypocrisy; which if we do, then have we that peace in our minds,

which this produces: and shall have that assurance before the Lord Jesus Christ, that we love such and such, for his sake, as fills us with holy confidence respecting this before him, and maketh not ashamed. Christ is the Truth here spoken of. He it is who hath given us a commandment to love one another. This love is out of a knowledge of the love, wherewith he hath loved, and ever will love, his whole church and people. We loving each other for his sake, is in obedience to his royal command. We doing this in sincerity, is the means of assuring our hearts, in his sight and before him, that we are concerned so to do, and also to continue in the same, to the honor and glory of his most holy name.

This then is my explanation of this assurance—We assure our hearts, before our Lord Jesus Christ, that we love the brethren: so that when we entreat Him to do so and so for them, and bestow such and such gifts, graces, blessings, and consolations upon them, we have in our own hearts the fullest assurance of our being most truly sincere in our requests to his Divine Majesty, in our petitions to him for what we have been requesting him to bestow on them. I hope what is delivered will be found satisfactory. I confess when I have finished this, and got over the two next following verses, I shall conceive I have got over the greatest difficulties in this whole Epistle. When I say so, I do not mean to convey this idea to the mind, as if there were any difficulties in it. No; there may be many in my view; but this must be owing to my darkness; not to the subjects treated of, and set forth in the same. I neither think, neither do I by any means profess to have a clear, and universal knowledge, of every part of sacred writ: God forbid I should. Yet this I say, whatsoever darkness may at any time accompany my unfolding the scriptures, it is not any want of light in them, but it is my want of light to understand and comprehend them.

*And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him:* this is founded on our *loving not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* Therefore the *peace, and assurance* spoken of, as the fruit of this, must be what it hath been declared to be. A serenity of mind, and a confidence in our own hearts, such as bear us up before Christ, at the throne of grace, that we love such for his Name's sake. It is therefore we so often recommend them to his grace, and royal protection. I would now go over the other generals contained in the latter part of these words of my text: *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* The apostle put himself in by using the word *we*, as being one and the same with them in every respect, considered as a brother in Christ. The same inward and outward evidences, which were evidences and testimonials of their being the objects and subjects of divine grace, were equally evidential of his being interested in the same blessings and benefits of Christ's salvation. This might be improved by us, and we may from hence conclude, that as it regards all necessary respecting grace and salvation, belongs to the whole family of faith. The *we* expressed by *John*, is a proof of this. Surely the holy apostle was in knowledge, in utterance, in gifts, graces, consolations, and in real intercourse and personal fellowship with the Lord, more highly advanced than any of us. Yet the way in which he received divine Truth

into his mind, was by the same medium, and by the same agency we do. There is no receiving any spiritual birth, light, gift, and grace, except it be given us from heaven. It is the Holy Ghost working on the same, it can only appear and be made manifest. As he operates on those truths the renewed mind hath received, they influence the regenerated people of God. And it is hereby they are very gloriously transcribed in their hearts, lives, and conversations. Our knowledge that we are of the Truth, is evidenced by our living and acting according to the Lord's most holy word, in the commands and precepts thereof. This is exactly what is here expressed. Love of the children of God, the members of Christ, his children and friends, is one blessed fruit and effect produced, by the Holy Ghost in such as have been brought by Him to the knowledge of Christ. Such being of the same mind and will with Christ Jesus herein, are hereby assured they know Him, because they are conformed to his mind and will in this his command of loving for his sake, and in their expressing their mutual love to others, out of real and spiritual obedience to his will. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth.* Christ is the Truth here spoken of. The saints had evidence, or rather they had given evidence to each other, that they were of the Truth, that they belonged unto Christ, by the love and affection they bore to each other, and manifested to each other. They were so glued in heart and affection to each other for their dear Lord's sake, that it was to them an ordinance of increasing the same—To meet together—To speak to each other—To pray for and with each other—To declare their views of Christ—To express to each other their apprehensions of Christ—To unite in giving Him glorious praise. Whilst with grief it must be confessed, this must in the glory, essence, and perfection of it, be applied to the saints in the first ages of christianity, yet we must not leave it wholly and only there. It is very true, and is matter of lamentation, the love of saints to Christ, and to each other for his sake, is very low, and faint in our day, to what it hath been heretofore: yet, the Lord be praised, he hath not, he doth not, leave himself without witness. I conclude in my own mind, our Lord hath, even now, in the united kingdom, a goodly company of saints. Who love him in the secrets of their minds, as truly, and as fervently as he ever was beloved in this our world. I freely confess, I know not who, nor where they are: neither do I want to know; yet the love of Christ being what it ever was, and it making the same impressions on spiritual minds, when, and on whom it is reflected and manifested, it ever did, it cannot therefore but be the case, that there must be, in this our nation, at this present time, some, whose hearts burn with fervent love and affection to him. It should be remembered, love to Christ is inherent in the souls of all the regenerate. It is with the Holy Ghost to draw it out into act: this he does in a variety of acts, and also in various particular expressions of the same: it is a secret between Christ and the believer. Our Lord knows his own love to each of us individually: and he knows our love to Him, and in what way it is expressed by us, in our individual acts of love towards him. It is a pure affection of a spiritual mind towards him. It is most chiefly expressed, in high prizings of Him—In spiritual estimations of Him—In our delight in conversing with Him—In deep and most profound admiration of His glorious Person, his transcendent love, his most glorious righteousness, bloodshedding, death, victories, triumphs, coronation, and glory which he now wears in heaven.

We may from what we perceive, say of such an one, he is a lover of Christ. We cannot but say to all, and of and respecting all who love the Lord, what the apostle *Paul* doth in the following words, *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.* Such as love Christ will never cease to express their love to him, and others for his sake, and to say *Amen* to this. It is in so doing, their most true, spiritual, and hearty attachment to the blessed Jesus, is discovered: it is at times hereby strengthened, improved, and drawn forth to magnify the Lord, so as that our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour. We love the saints in proportion as we love the Head of saints. As we love him with increasing love, so we by the same, increase in our affection to one the other for his sake. As we love the Truth, so we cannot but love such as are led into gospel and right apprehensions of the same. We have hereby fellowship with them. It is hereby we perceive they belong to the Lord—That they are of the same family with ourselves—That they have tasted that the Lord is gracious—That they are in the same state of grace, and kingdom of God's dear Son with ourselves. It seems therefore to me, that this is the genuine sense and meaning of our text: *And hereby we know that we are of the truth*: because we are brought to the true and right knowledge of the very same Jesus. We profess the same faith concerning Him. We rest wholly and simply in Him, and on Him for our whole salvation: from hence, we loving one the another, not in word only, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth, it is by this, it is clear and plainly evidenced to our spiritual senses, that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him, of the sincerity of our love, in Him, and for Him, towards each other. May the Lord the Spirit shine upon what hath been set before us, and delivered with a design to open, and give a clear view into this passage which hath been descanted on. I have done my best, so far as my present light and spiritual attainments reach: and beyond it I dare not go: the Lord forbid. I must therefore leave the whole to your attention and present and future consideration, praying the Lord to follow it with his own teaching and blessing. The right understanding of what hath been attempted, will most assuredly serve to reflect light on the two next verses, which read thus; *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.* May the Lord give us clear views of the meaning of this; so as that we may have fresh cause to bless and praise his most holy name. It will not be amiss for you all to consider, we have been, and still are, and shall be on practical Divinity, until we close this present chapter. It is more easy to express ourselves, on the subject of doctrinal, than it is on the practice of the same. Our apostle having his own peculiar way of expressing himself, on these subjects, this makes it still the more difficult. It is the good pleasure of the Spirit of God, hereby to exercise and draw out our spiritual minds, so as they may be exercised in a variety of cases to explain, and expound that which requires much time and pains, in so doing. There is much profit obtained thereby: especially by such as are preachers; as hereby the scriptures become the more familiar. The mind is the more opened unto them: their connection more closely and particularly investigated; and several false interpretations of various passages cast aside, and wholly discarded. The scripture is hereby found to be its own best interpreter. And the

Holy Ghost, who inspired holy men to write it, should ever be looked up unto, for his light and blessing, in our reading and searching into every part of it. I am no enemy to Expositors, Commentators, and learned men, whilst I am not, nor ever shall be numbered with them; neither did I ever desire it; yet many of them, have, as I conceive, been of great use and service to the real church of God. My performances are all low and mean. May the Lord forgive every imperfection in them. May he out of weakness perfect strength, and thereby gain to himself a glorious name of praise. May the Lord the Holy Spirit enlighten your minds, and the minds of all his people, in their reading the scriptures of Truth, that they might read them to their own increasing profit, and be instructed and edified thereby. Grant it, O Lord Jesus Christ, for thy great Name's sake. Amen.

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## SERMON XLVIII.

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*For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.—1 JOHN III. 20, 21.*

THESE words are the continuation and conclusion of the former subject; therefore some reference must be had unto it: not for the sake of repetition, but because there is a necessity for the same: without it the coherency and connection must be lost: by that means the grand design of the whole ceases to be beneficial. The very end and design of all lectures on any of the books of Scripture, or comments of any one of the Epistles, being to unfold every particular verse in the same, it is therefore of necessity there must be a strict attention paid, to the dependance one verse hath upon the other. The subject the apostle hath been upon, which he began at the 11th verse, and which he pursues down to the present verses, which are now before us, concerns brotherly love. He sets forth love to the brethren, as a distinguishing mark of saintship. He then describes this love by its actings—It must be sincere—There must be no dissimulation in it—It must be operative, in offices and services of substantial friendship, according to our professions, situations, and circumstances in life. This is to ourselves, and also to others, a sure evidence of our regeneration: by which we are brought to know, believe, and live agreeable to the true doctrine of the everlasting gospel of God our Saviour. This emboldens us to appeal even to him for our integrity, whatever censures the world may pass upon us: yea, and such as may be cast upon us by professors also. Our minds, or consciences are the candle of the Lord: they are as God's vicegerent: they are true and faithful monitors. If therefore they witness against us, if they accuse and condemn us, of hypocrisy in our professions of love, to this and the other person, whom we call brothers and sisters in Christ;



surely God who is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things, he cannot be deceived. We must act such a part before him, as he cannot but condemn in us, and us for! If we are hypocritical in our profession of the truths of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, our consciences must be privy to our own self-deceiving; what can we then expect from God, but condemnation. He is infinitely greater, most perfectly just, and better acquainted with our whole conduct than we ourselves are: what is then, and therefore to be expected in the issue, but shame and confusion of face? As on the contrary, If our own consciences upon the strictest examination, under the light, and as in the sight and presence of the Holy Ghost, according to the truth of the gospel, acquit us from all charges of reigning sin, of allowed guile, of being hypocrites in any part of our religious professions, either to God, or the brethren, then have we confidence towards God. We can then appeal to him with holy boldness, courage, and liberty of soul, when we are censured and condemned by others; yea, supposing any unjust suspicions should arise in the minds of any of the saints, and they should thereby, bring any false charges against us. He then concludes this chapter, with the three next verses; in the which he says, believers having respect to all Christ's commandments, and doing that which is well-pleasing in his sight, is a blessed evidence for them, that they have interest in his favour. As such they have free access to him: and shall receive of Him whatsoever they ask, so far as agreeable to his most holy will. He informs them the great doctrine of the gospel, which may be styled the commandment of God our heavenly Father, is this which concerns our believing on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and loving one another. Such as are thus influenced, dwell in Christ, and He dwelleth in them: all which is most clearly evidenced by the indwelling and abiding of the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them. Thus I have given you a brief outline of our text, and also of the remainder of this chapter. I will now recite the present text, and then give you my plan which I shall aim to pursue, in opening the several particulars contained in it. May the Lord accompany the same with his Spirit, light, and blessing. Amen.

*For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.* In opening these words, I will

1. Set before you, what we are here to understand by our hearts condemning us: as also the danger we are in, if this is the case with us; *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

2. What our case is, if our hearts do not condemn us. *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

As the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and known only to God himself; and as he who trusteth in his own heart is a fool; who is there amongst all the sons of men, who is there amongst all the saints of the Most High God, who can stand before the Holy Lord God upon the footing of anything he is, or ever will be in himself? Why did you take these words? are you going to drive us in unto ourselves, to find anything, in the which we may have confidence that the Lord will accept us? Beloved; no: not so. I would observe, no one of all the human race can stand before God, out of Christ, but must perish everlastingly. No saint, let his saintship be what it may,

can be accepted on such footing: all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. God's love to the persons of the Elect, is fixed on them in Christ. It is in Him they are accepted. It is in Him they are saved. It is in his righteousness they are justified. It is in his blood they are everlastingly washed, cleansed, purified, sanctified, and brought nigh to God. Yea, it is only as the Holy Ghost reveals Christ to our minds, by taking of his things as recorded and set before us in the record and testimony of the Divine Father concerning Him, in the scriptures of Truth, that we can have a foundation to hope in God. We can only have peace with God in our consciences, and love to God in our hearts, and confidence in Him, as we are led by the word and Spirit, into a spiritual and supernatural knowledge and apprehension of the Person, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ: this I most freely acknowledge: and this is the very foundation of the whole of this Epistle. There could be no communion with God, and the elect, if the Lord Jesus Christ had not taken away their sin, by the sacrifice of Himself. There can be no grace in any heart, where Christ is unknown. Whatsoever semblance there may be of it, there can be no reality in it. No one can love the brethren of Christ who is not a partaker of Christ. There is no salvation in our text. Yet it most certainly contains an evidence of it—That such an one, having received Christ, as the free gift of God, for salvation, is influenced by the same Holy Spirit who gave him the true knowledge of Christ, to love for his sake all the holy brethren. But I want to open my text: not that I am going to preach Christ from it, but to explain the same agreeable to the end and design of the Holy Ghost, in causing it to be here recorded. I am therefore

1. To set before you, what we are to understand here, by our heart's condemning us, and also the danger we are in, if this is the case with us. *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

Whilst I have in the former Sermon, given light into this, and also in the introduction, as I conceive, given a general and clear outline of the whole contained and expressed in the same; yet as it is to be sermonized, I cannot but request you to attend to the former verse: or rather I would wish to begin with the 18th verse; *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure, or, persuade, our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.* By attending to the connection and order of these verses, they regularly open and clearly unfold themselves; so as to leave no ambiguity in them, and so as to convey their own genuine light to our minds. We are to love the brethren in reality and with the utmost sincerity: this is the doctrine laid down before us. It is to be in deed and in truth; which if it be, it proves we are of the Truth: we are the children of the Truth. This being the case, we shall assure, or persuade our hearts before the Lord, that we act towards our Lord's friends, in a manner, measure, and to a certain degree, so as to be fully assured of the reality and affection of our minds towards the holy brethren, in an agreement with his divine command that we should do: if on the contrary, our heart which we cannot but know more or less of, accuse us, of not loving the brethren for the Lord's

sake, notwithstanding all our profession thereof, we then are self-condemned. If our hearts do not accuse us, but we can appeal to God himself, for the truth of this, that we love them for his sake, and next unto himself, then in this very particular, we have confidence toward God. This seems to be the sum total of the words. Still I will more fully open them, according to the plan which hath been given: what we are here to understand by our hearts condemning us, must be opened, in connection with the subject in the preceding verses; which all belong unto, and are concerned with the subject of brotherly love. It is not an universal love to all men; it is not love to all mankind is the subject, or any part of the subject. I might here say, there is a natural and there is a spiritual love. I do not want to speak of either of them, but as they may serve to distinguish the subject. When true, genuine natural love and affection, in parents, children, relations, friends and neighbours is not carried too far, there is a real excellency, and blessing in the exercise of the same: and its greatest excellency consists in the reality and sincerity thereof. With respect to spiritual love and affection one towards another, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, this grows not in nature's garden: it is wholly from heaven: where it is, this is full proof of being new-born. It is natural to the new-born to love those who love Christ, and they cannot but love them; it is congenial to the new nature the Holy Ghost hath imparted, and implanted in them. When we hear any, let us know them, or be they unknown to us, who speak savourily of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are presently taken with them. If they have seen him whom our souls cannot but love, we cannot but love them; nor can there be, next to Christ himself, a greater tie of heart and affection, than there is between the persons who love each other in Christ—who love for his sake—who love in Him, whose love and affection, is the very fruit of Christ's love, warming their hearts, and which produces it. Now it is not impossible, but the vigour of this love may be abated: this cannot but be, whilst in the body we have many changes in our persons, frames, and circumstances: we all find, it is our sin and shame it should be so; yet so it is, our love to our most precious Lord Jesus Christ, is not always burning, flaming, vehement love. It does not always go forth into such expressions and desires, one time, as it doth another; yet the habit of love is strengthened and increased: so that I should judge old saints, love and prize our Lord Jesus Christ, more than younger saints do: but the latter express it with warmer affections and zeal, while the former exceed them in the fulness of their words and the weight and strength of their expressions. If it be admitted, that our very great heat of love and fervour of affection towards our Lord Jesus Christ, hath in us its ebbings and flowings, surely it must follow, the love of saints to each other, must have some alterations and changes also: yet there is nothing in all this, which need bring condemnation into our hearts. I cannot think the apostle glances at this, when he here says, *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* Nor can I doubt, there may be a real abundance of love for Christ's sake, and such a tie of heart and affection, as that two friends in Christ, may be for a season so greatly beloved by each other, as *Jonathan* loved *David*, who loved him as his own soul, but all this may be so far broken in upon, as for such to have no mutual intercourse about the things of God, for years together; yet I do not think there is any thing in this to bring con-

demnation into the heart. I observe in the course of God's most holy providence, such as may appear to us, most and best suited to live together, and be folded in one church and under the same pastor, are not. This is of the Lord. He places his beloved people, where, and as he would have them to be. The case, as I conceive, before us, hath to do with professors of Christ's gospel, who though it may be, they are full of love and affection to the brethren, yet it is only in word and tongue: they never prove by any act or deed, they have any real love for, or affection unto them: so far from this, they shut up their bowels of compassion from them. Now the positive part of the subject before us, consists in an exhortation, not to love in a negative, but in a positive manner: by the which we should give proof, that we belonged to Christ, and should hereby assure, or persuade our hearts before him, of our real love to his beloved ones, by relieving their wants; praying for them; praying with them; and doing any, and every kind office it lays in our power to do for them. This would bear up our minds under many evil and envious speeches, which the venomous tongues of others might be disposed to express and say of, and concerning us—To be able to approach the throne of the heavenly grace—To appeal to the Lord respecting the sincerity and uprightness of our conduct in such and such instances—To have the testimony of our own consciences, that we acted upon such views and principles—That our hearts by no means condemn us: this is what is here meant. If we know we have certain inveterate prejudices in our minds against such and such; that whilst we call them, or such and such of them, brethren in Christ, yet we love them not, neither are we willing to shew the least kindness, or good will to them: but we conceal all this: we dissemble and cloak it, and that under the mask of friendship: this is to condemn ourselves, our hearts cannot but reproach us for the same; How can we pray to the Lord for such, as we know in our own minds we hate. This is to be in a dangerous state; our hearts cannot but reprove us for the same, on account of the insincerity thereof. And if our hearts condemn us, for acting thus, it would be well for us to consider, *God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* Which consideration, is solemn, awful, and striking. Most assuredly as these words stand here, they should be made use of by us in the following way—we should consider, we are altogether open to the view of God. He searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the sons of men. He can neither deceive nor be deceived: what we are in his sight that we only are. It is not what we are in and by profession, is all, before the Lord. If we do not love the brethren; if we are not disposed to relieve the wants of the brethren; if we do not love them for their spirituality and heavenly mindedness; this is all before the Lord. He is greater than our heart. He is the judge of it. He knows the whole in it: every spring, motion, and act of the will. He knows where, and how we deceive ourselves: in how many ways we slight the brethren—How many times we please ourselves, in secretly distressing them. Yea, He knows how our own hearts, secretly, again and again reprove us, for being so and so, secretly disposed to act towards such, as we cannot but believe and acknowledge to be the children of God. Now, says the apostle, If God who is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things, knoweth all this by us, how shall he not more severely condemn us, than our own hearts do? Thus he argues from the minor to the major part of the subject. From the

less to the greater. *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* This therefore should put us upon laying aside all dissimulation: it should excite us to every act of spiritual and temporal kindness one towards each other: we should love as brethren: we should be pitiful and courteous. It appears to me to be the great misery of the present day, our love to saints is too much contracted. We generally confine and express it, to such as receive the doctrine of Christ, and the ordinances of Christ, irrespective of their receiving and being the real partakers of the grace of Christ. The doctrines of the everlasting gospel are the foundation and bulwarks of the church: yet many do not distinguish between them, and the grace part of them. Some there are in the school of Christ who cannot so apprehend them, as to give a clear account of them, who are the real subjects of the grace and good contained in them: and we are very safe in loving these as brethren in Christ, and for his sake. We in this our day, are too apt to be offended one with another—To conceive prejudices in our minds one against another; yea, this is sometimes the case, where we have not the least personal knowledge of the person, or persons whom we thus dislike: would it not be well, therefore, if we were to make use of our text, as a preventive to this? *If our heart condemn us, for this, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* He knoweth the ground of our ill will to such and such. What sort of spirit is it, to carry this with us, even to the Lord's Table? Surely it is not the Spirit of Christ! It is not. Would we wish to die in such a spirit? I think not. I was once in company, when one present spoke very warm about one absent, who was a professor of Christ, and was by one then also present thus reproved. "You never loved that person. You have now an opportunity of expressing your own bad spirit towards him. You are therefore giving vent to the same." I heard this, and have never forgotten it. I think it may be profitable for such as are of a censorious spirit, to hear, and remember it. So that here it well comes in, and light is cast on the whole text. For if our hearts condemn us, for want of love to the brethren, for the Lord's sake, *God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* Let it be remembered, the apostle is not speaking of our state in Christ, nor of what God knows of us in Him, or sees us to be in Him. He is speaking of what the state of our mind ought to be, towards a brother in Christ, and of what, it may be, it is not. This brings me to my next particular.

2. What our case is, if our hearts do not condemn us, of want of love to a brother in Christ, *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

Some saints are more particularly distinguished for one grace, and some for another. Our apostle seems to be beyond all his brethren, for love. Therefore he was well qualified to write on the subject, and excite thereby unto the practice of it. He did so. First, in removing all impediments. Secondly, in using proper motives and arguments to draw out the minds of real saints to the exercise of this. He uses the word *Beloved*, to this very purpose; they were *the beloved of God*; they had spiritual perceptions of the love of God, in his laying down his life for them. This was motive all-sufficient for their loving each other in Christ; even to such a degree as to lay down their lives for each other: he therefore says unto them, *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then*

*have we confidence toward God.* This confidence towards God here, hath no concern with our salvation : it is not a confidence in God, it is a confidence toward God ; which confidence is the effect of our hearts not condemning us ; and that of our not wanting the love and affection, to the brethren in Christ, and those we call brethren in him, agreeable to the state and relation in which they stand unto us, and we profess ourselves to stand in unto them. This gives us boldness in our accesses unto the Lord for them. We can freely pour out our hearts for them ; seeing we are fully persuaded in our own souls, of our sincere love and unfeigned respect unto them. This word, *Beloved*, therefore, comes in here most properly and altogether suited to the subject ; it being a very endearing word. These persons were beloved of God, of Christ, of the Spirit. They were on these accounts, beloved by the apostle : and they cannot but love one another, as they have proper views of their mutual interest in the love, grace, good will, and covenant love of the Holy Trinity unto them, and that they are heirs in Christ of eternal glory. Now as on the subject of our not loving the brethren, our hearts cannot but condemn us : and God who is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things, cannot but view our hypocrisy, and deal with us as such in this particular : because we pray him to bestow such and such blessings, on such and such whom we style brethren, whilst we in our own hearts love them not as such : so on the contrary, if our hearts condemn us not for the want of love to the brethren in Christ, then we have confidence towards God, that we love them for the Lord's sake, and pray and intreat his blessings to be bestowed on them, out of the real love we have, and feel, and bear unto them, from true love to Christ himself : we esteeming them as his beloved ones. Beloved, I conceive, I have given you the true and proper explanation of the words of the text now before us : if so, there is no legality in it ; neither anything to distress us. It is, with the context, cautionary. It concerns the love of the brethren. It is discriminating the case, and opening clearly to view, what our hearts cannot but condemn us for, if so be, we are not sincere in our love for the Lord's sake ; yet we at the very same time, dissemble before the Lord, whilst we profess to pray for such and such as the brethren, at the same time we know in our own minds, we hate them. On the other hand, if our own hearts bear us witness in the Holy Ghost, that we most truly, heartily, sincerely and affectionately love our brethren in Christ, then have we confidence towards God : that our hearts and our tongues go together : that we love in deed and in truth. It is an evidence unto us that we are of the Truth. We hereby persuade, or assure our hearts before the Lord, on these subjects. This is of great advantage unto us : for as it is to our disadvantage, if our hearts condemn us, seeing God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things ; so it is to our advantage if our heart condemn us not : seeing then we have confidence towards God. I think it will clearly be apprehended by you, I have not forced the text, but in agreement with the whole context, given you the simple and genuine meaning of the same. Let me now therefore observe, it is of great service to us, to know and rightly apprehend and receive, what is set before us in the Scriptures of Truth. With respect to our confidence in the Lord, and before Him, respecting our eternal state, our own personal interest in Christ, and our salvation. This must by no means be founded on any thing in us : or wrought by the Divine Spirit within us : it must

be founded alone on God's free grace, in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must look for the whole foundation of our faith and hope in Christ, to the word of grace, in which is contained the revelation, and testimony which God hath made, and given of his beloved Son, with his record concerning Him. This is the sole and only warrant we have given unto us, that we should believe in, rest upon, and centre alone in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for everlasting life. It is the Holy Ghost alone, who can reveal Christ unto us, and in us. It is he only who can testify of Christ to our minds, and form Christ in our hearts. It is He alone who can bear witness to our spirits, that we are the children of God. There is nothing in, and throughout this whole epistle contrary to this: so far from it, the whole grace part of this epistle is founded thereon. Therefore such are mistaken, who conceive, that the inward and outward evidences spoken of throughout it, are to lead off our minds from our Lord Jesus Christ, to look for any part, or evidence of our salvation in ourselves, or in anything wrought in us. The whole of our salvation is without us: it is wholly in the finished Righteousness and Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ: this is the fruit of an everlasting transaction between God and the Lamb from everlasting; which is revealed and set forth in the everlasting gospel of the blessed God: which we receive the knowledge of from the written word, and by the divine light, and effectual teaching of the Holy Ghost into our hearts. This is that by the means of which the knowledge of Christ is produced in our souls: and real communion with the Lord Jesus Christ hereby realized in our hearts, produces the true, genuine, and proper effects of the same, in us, in our minds, lives and conversations. It is hereby we believe in the heart unto righteousness, and the mouth is opened to make confession of the same unto salvation. To give outward proof to the satisfaction of others, that Christ is in us, that he possesseth our hearts, that he dwelleth in our minds, and that we are influenced by his grace and truth, we have expressed, and cannot but express, and exercise ourselves before God, and man: loving the brethren for the Lord Redeemer's sake; and this with all sincerity and godly simplicity, that hereby the Lord may be glorified in us, and by us. If you have understood, and properly understand the subject thus, we shall not be led off Christ, into ourselves, by reading, preaching, or hearing any part of this epistle. The peace of our consciences towards God, is founded on the most precious blood of Christ. The testimony of our consciences that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the word, and more abundantly towards the brethren and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the fruit, of the former. We manifest the truth of the former by the latter; and the manifestation is nothing more or less, than full proof of the power and efficacy of divine Truth, the true knowledge of the Father's love, and Christ's free grace salvation have upon our hearts. Our apostle manages what he hath to say upon this subject, in quite a different way and manner than the apostle *Paul* doth. The one treats it as the fruit of communion with Christ: the other as the fruits and effects of believing: the substance however, is one and the same. All wrought in us, and produced by the Holy Ghost in our walk and conversation, is the fruit of our personal union unto Christ: nor does internal grace and sanctification take us off looking unto Jesus, and living out of, and off ourselves, on the Lord Jesus Christ, if the same

be rightly stated, and clearly, scripturally, and properly understood. But it is high time for me, to think of drawing to a close; as very long sermons are not the best, and most useful, any more than long prayers are. It is best to be very comprehensive, whilst at the same time, we should aim to be very concise; yet this must be according to the gift the Lord hath given us. Many a saint is prolix, not so much out of a desire to be so, as for want of a faculty to speak a great deal in a little: as such as speak much in a few words, are not to be conceived as aiming to set forth what they may have to deliver, so as that they may be admired for the same. No; this would be proud self, and nature indeed. It is to be ascribed to a particular gift bestowed by the Lord on one, which is not on another. It is in various gifts and graces, the Lord is pleased to express his divine Sovereignty, in his bestowment of such ministerial abilities on his true ministers, and real saints as seemeth good in his sight. I sometimes conceive—take a view of the variety of gifts and graces, bestowed on the saints, both public and private, and we have the whole of Christ so set forth before us, as that viewing the church of Christ altogether individually, and collectively, and Christ's church is a paradise of delights, a field which the Lord hath blessed: into which the Lord descends: and which he most graciously delights to visit, so as to revive and refresh his beloved ones, with his life-giving presence. Beloved, none of us can live comfortably in our own minds, without the most gracious communications of Christ unto us; and it is as he is pleased to hold fellowship with us, he imparts the graces of his Holy Spirit to our hearts. Every saint hath his particular grace: one shines forth most chiefly in one, and another in one equally as excellent, yet it is distinct, and very distinguishable from another. Thus the Lord is glorified. Some in the higher, and in the highest classes of the school of Christ, may be styled, as some are by *Dr. Goodwin*, "Saints of all graces:" as the whole and fullest assemblage of graces shine out in them, and that in such act and exercise as to be in the church of Christ, in this our world, like stars of the first magnitude, reflecting thereby the glory of Christ upon others, in thus holding forth the word of life. Hereby the truth and glory, the power and influence of gospel doctrine, are reflected on, and manifested to others: and this is the desire of all who are born of the Spirit, so to act and exercise themselves, as that they may out of a good conscience, shew forth their works with meekness of wisdom. May the Lord quicken all his called people, to attend to the whole and every part of God's revealed will, in the written word. May they all call upon the Lord with one consent. And walk before the Lord, in all things as it is agreeable with his glorious gospel; which contains nothing in it, but free and sovereign grace. May they be careful to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things: as it respects giving inward and outward evidence to others, of the reality of our being born again, of our love to Christ, and one another for his sake, in every way, and by every act, the Lord hath commanded us. I think there can be no legality in this, unless walking in the fear of the Lord, and serving the Lord with our whole hearts, and with our whole souls can deserve such a term: which it cannot, for it is our highest honor and privilege in this our present state in which we are—That being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of



our lives. Sirs, it becomes us to value every part of God's most holy word, and to value it alike: it all being of real importance, and stamped with the Divine signature. We should give up our minds to the authority and guidance of it—Delight in yielding true, and implicit obedience to the same. We should consider the glory of Christ as connected herewith, and concerned herein. A true walking in the fellowship and order of the gospel, is to bring glory to Christ: so by a real orderly walk and conversation before men, in true and close agreement with gospel commands, precepts, and exhortation, this is to let our light so shine before men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven. And this is most truly agreeable with the doctrine of the holy apostles. *Peter* as one of them, says, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." 1 *Epis.* ii. 11, 12. I commit what hath been delivered to the Lord, to bless the same to the profit of your minds, as seemeth good in his sight. The wise man says, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." *Eccles.* xi. 6. Yet we know the word of God is immutable: and the Truth contained it, abideth for ever. The Lord be with your Spirit; may he guide and lead you into all necessary Truth; and make you, true experimental and practical christians, and help you to abound in love one toward another according to Christ Jesus. Amen.

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## SERMON XLIX.

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*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.—*

I JOHN III. 22.

It may be considered by us as an undoubted truth, that every subject in the word of God, is placed where it ought to be: so as that there is nothing out of its proper order. The words now before us, seem to have some connection and dependence on the former verses; so that I conceive there is a necessity of viewing the same, to the end we may give the true and genuine interpretation of them. I shall therefore attempt this, though it will be but an attempt: be it so; yet even that will be far better than the total omission. I will recite from the 18th verse to the present, as thereby you will see the order and harmony of the whole subject: *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart*

*condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* Thus you may easily perceive there is a connection. The word *And* proves it. We having confidence toward God, that we are of the truth in this very particular, that we love his brethren, and our brethren in him, in obedience to his commandment, and for his Name's sake; we having confidence towards God in this particular, it follows, whatsoever we ask in prayer, on their behalf, we receive from our heavenly Father—our hearts going with our prayers: *and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

I will give you the general outline of the contents of my text, and then divide and cast it into its proper heads and divisions. Whatsoever we ask, in faith, with submission to the will of God, to a good end, with an eye, and aim to the Lord's glory, in the Name of Christ, perseveringly, we shall most assuredly receive. So far as it will make for our good, and that of others, we may be as certain of this, as though we had it already. This is founded on the following scriptures: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John xiv. 13. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James v. 16. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Matt. vii. 7. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." Matt. xxi. 22. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." James i. 5—7. "Is any man sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." chap. v. 14, 15. "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Luke xviii. 1. "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." John xvi. 23. In these are contained 1. faith; then 2. a good end; 3. submission to the will of God; 4. perseveringly; 5. in the name of Christ; 6. for our good; 7. this will be bestowed in the Lord's time; 8. this we may be as confident of, as if we were in the possession already of the good things requested. All which can be contained in prayer, in all its parts, and throughout all its branches, is most certainly included and implied in these terms, which have been expressed in the words specified; so that I shall leave them; not to open the same, but for your most serious consideration: and proceed to open and explain the words of my text; and that in the following way and manner.

1. By entering on, and speaking of the blessing expressed in this sentence of it; contained in these words of the same; *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.*

2. The reason assigned for this: it is, *because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

3. Shew how acting thus, is acceptable before, and unto him, and give the reason for it.

4. How hereby we have an assurance before we pray of the acceptance of our prayers, and of their being heard, and answered. May the Lord so lead me through these particulars, as that you may see the truth and propriety of all this. I am in agreement therewith, to enter on my subject, by

1. Observing the blessing expressed, contained in these words, *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.*

The words are addressed to those who were believers on the Lord Jesus Christ: this is implied and included in the word *we*: which being plural, implies all of them are here comprehended: as they also are in the term *us*, so frequently made use of by our apostle in this his most Sacred Epistle: which contains a whole body of divinity, and a most true expressive delineation of a real Christian, and of what real Christianity consists in; which is a conformity to Christ: which the Holy Ghost produces in the minds, affections, life, temper, conduct and walk of such as are born again. The Lord the Spirit himself cannot produce it in such, as are not born again. It is such only as hate all sin: it is they only who do in truth and reality abstain from the commission of the same, from gospel motives, and out of zeal to the honour and glory of Christ: it is they only, who have right apprehensions of the pure and undefiled law of God. They know sin to be a filthy act; it is the work of the devil: it is therefore in every instance abominable: the course and practice of it, demonstrate such to be the children of the devil. Sin is that which Christ came into our world to destroy. Real saints delight in the good ways of the Lord: this our apostle has been exciting unto: it being an evidence of our love to God—of the truth of our conversion—of the blessedness of our state in Christ—of our being out of the state of sin, and the death in it, and of our being in the state of grace, life, and salvation: the knowledge of which worketh peace of conscience, and gives us evident assurance of our salvation. All these matters have been treated of, in the former Sermons; yet I could not but give a hint of these, because they all of them issue in the words before us, and bring us to our text: *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* It was before declared what we should be; viz. such as were without dissimulation: *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* Thus you have the full connection of these words; by the which we are the most likely to have the fullest and clearest apprehension of them. It cannot but appear this must in part be the meaning of the same—That we loving each other for Christ's sake, and loving the brethren in Christ, when we pray unto Him on their behalf, in his Name, and agreeable with his holy word of promise, and according to his holy covenant, set before us in the word of his grace, we are sure of it, and have the full confidence of hope and expectation, that we shall be heard and answered. This is very encouraging: the throne of grace is always accessible: Christ is upon it to hear and receive our petitions. He hath said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will

give it you." John xvi. 23. Yea, he adds, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." v. 24. So that our apostle spake after Christ himself, and no more than he had complete warrant from him for, when he says in my text, *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* It is God our heavenly Father is the Person spoken of. It is believers in Christ who are included in the *we.* It is whatsoever we ask, we receive: which must be confined, so as to be understood of that which is agreeable to the good pleasure of his will to bestow on us. How is the good pleasure of his will to be known by us? How are we to pray unto him? The reply to this is, The good pleasure of his will concerning us, in Christ Jesus, is made known to us, by the exceeding great and precious promises he hath given us: in these all our needs for body and soul are expressed; with an all-sufficiency of grace and mercy, suited to every wound and want, case and circumstance, sin, misery, and temptation we can at any time be the subjects of: our wants, sins, and miseries are inherent in us. We are led by the Holy Spirit, into a true knowledge and apprehension of the same. He opens to us, how expressive the promises are, of the all-sufficiency of grace, which is in the fulness of Christ, to supply all our need. This makes way for us, to apprehend the promises, as the ground-work of all our prayers—That we are to plead them with the Lord—To seek to him to fulfil them unto us. As we can never ask aright, but as we keep them in view, and pray in agreement with them: and as we cannot ask for any good beyond what is contained in the Lord's most holy word of promise, so whatsoever we ask, agreeable to the same, we are sure to receive. As the whole good pleasure of God's will in Christ Jesus, concerning us, is set before us, in the Scriptures of Truth, and what he will bestow on us, in our walking with him, and before him, unto all well-pleasing, as we live, act, and persevere in living a life of faith on the Son of God, so as we approach the Father in the Name and Person of the glorious Mediator, and pray agreeable with his holy promises, we are sure of receiving answers to our prayers: this is the confidence of faith, which all the saints of the Most High, may express, to the glory of the Lord. And let it be private prayer, or family prayer, or social prayer in the which they may express themselves before the Lord on their own behalf, or on the behalf of their brethren in Christ Jesus it shall not be in vain. Let it be for whom, or for what it may, if it be what they have encouragement for from God's promise, they may be confident of receiving the same. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* This is very blessed: it is a favour altogether of free grace: it is the prayer of faith, in the which all the holy brethren have their interest—The fathers, the young men, and the babes in Christ. It belongs to all the called of God in Christ Jesus—To those who have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Who walk in the light as he is in the light: those whom the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth from all sin. It belongs to such as love for Christ's sake the brethren, who have confidence in God, and before him, concerning their real love, and hearty attachment to the holy brotherhood, for the Lord's sake. And this brings me to my next particular; which is as follows.

2. To speak of the reason assigned for what the apostle has been declaring in these words, *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* The reason for this, as given by the apostle is this: *because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

This reason cannot be grounded upon works performed by the saints: it must be founded on the order established by the Lord, which must be agreeable to the holiness, purity and perfection of his Nature, and in perfect agreement with his most holy promises. The Lord God cannot will any thing contrary to his holiness, nor to the dishonour of his Son Jesus Christ: nor contrary to the order of his eternal purposes and decrees in Christ Jesus towards all flesh. His commands are no parts of our salvation, yet they are to be, and ought to be attended unto. To walk in the practice and observance of them, is to do those things which are pleasing in his sight; which here in a very special manner regards loving the brethren: not but the commandments of God, must be as extensive as the whole of his revealed will, in all its requirements of precepts and duty. In the exercise of our wills in submission and obedience to the same, we express our love to the Lord our God, and to the saints, and fellow men for his sake, who is kind even to the unthankful and to the evil. That in this place keeping the commandments, must have special regard to loving the brethren, may appear from the whole context: this hath been the very special subject which the apostle hath been upon, in the preliminary verses, which for a proof of its being so, I will here recite: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* As you have the whole context thus before you, it must be very clear I conceive to your minds, brotherly love, or loving the brethren for Christ's sake, must in a very special manner, be one of the commandments very specially here referred unto; the observance of which cannot but be very acceptable in the sight of God, it having been so often enjoined by our Lord Jesus Christ his well beloved Son. Who almost with his dying breath, said, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." John xv. 12. Now agreeable to the order and decrees of God; and as agreeable with the nature, end and design of Christ's death; and as agreeable to the holy gospel of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and as agreeable with the revealed will of God in the Scriptures of Truth, this is a reason, and a very substantial one, that *Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* To be what the Lord would have us to be, agreeable to his will of command, cannot but be pleasing to Him. He is well pleased with the persons of his people, and he loved them in Christ with an everlasting love, before the foundation of the world. He gave Christ to be their eternal Head. He has given Christ to be their complete and everlasting Saviour. He gave Christ for them, and he hath given Christ unto them. And by his Holy Spirit which he bestows upon them, he forms them as a people for his own praise and glory. This is begun in regeneration; which is manifested in

conversion; and further displayed and discovered in producing in the minds of these, individually, all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God: so that every good work and labour of love, is ever in the sight of God. He is pleased with it: He accepts of it: He expresses his satisfaction in it: this rightly understood and explained serves to open and explain the whole of the passage before us. True prayer is that which makes way for practice: hence that old saying, "that prayer will make a man leave sinning: or sinning will soon make a man give over praying." Whosoever belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, is one with Him, and is quickened with Him; and by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, shall not, he cannot call upon the Lord in vain. As the Father heareth Christ always, so he heareth the cry of all that call upon Him in his Son's Name. All stiled good works in the Scriptures, must be done in obedience to the will of God, from a principle of love to Him, they must be performed in the name of Christ, and to the glory of God by Him. And it is God that worketh in them to will, and to do of his good pleasure. To walk with God in Christ, in the free and full belief of His having accepted us in the Beloved, and of his being at perfect peace with us; of his seeing, beholding, and resting well pleased with us, in the Person, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, under the believing apprehension of the same, to act holily, and perform good works, to the praise and glory of the grace of Father, Son, and Spirit, this is acceptable to the Divine Majesty. The reason why so it is, that whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, is, because we keep his commandments. This is done under the free Spirit of adoption, and with a free Spirit: not that we may obtain any thing of God thereby, but that we may fully prove that we delight in Him, and all his appointments, and commandments. And as grace is glory in the bud, and that which the Lord will crown in the issue with glory everlasting, so the same God is most graciously pleased to bless his people, in their calling on his holy name, in his hearing and answering their prayers, and that so evidently, that they cannot but be fully persuaded of the same. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* It is also very expressive of the influence and effect, which true prayer, by the which I mean, real out-goings of the soul, have on such as worship God in spirit and in truth. As it brings down answers from the Lord, and those very particular blessings invocated, so it constrains us to attend to what the Lord hath commanded in his holy word: and the one is so connected with the other, that the one doth not, cannot consist, as here placed by the apostle, without the other. The reason assigned is founded on the order established by God, and on the holiness and purity of his Nature: He cannot approve of sin, neither can he of the omission of duty: which brings me

3. To shew how acting thus, that is, by doing his commandments, and doing those things that are pleasing in his sight, this is acceptable before him, and unto him: and I am to give the reason for it, why it is so: *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself saith, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John xv. 7, 8: which words serve to open and

explain what lies before us, in this part of our text. It is declarative of our love to Christ, and the Father in Him—Of our faith in Christ, this being the fruit of the same: of our doing that which is well pleasing to our heavenly Father: of our zeal to advance the honor and glory of God, and Christ in a manifestative way. It is if I may so say, the end of our faith. And this is the very reason why it is acceptable and well-pleasing in the sight of God, because hereby we seek to advance his glory, and increase his praise. A man in Christ, such as are real believers in the Son of God, are zealous of good works, that the glory of the Lord may be advanced. It is their meat and drink to do those things which are acceptable and well-pleasing in the sight of God our heavenly Father, who is the Person here most immediately expressed and designed: this may be confirmed by looking back to verse 20: *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* Nothing which the Lord hath commanded, but is agreeable with the holiness of his Nature, the immutability of his will, and must of necessity be acceptable and well-pleasing in his sight—Loving the brethren for the Lord's sake—Avoiding all sort of evil—Renouncing all evil in act and practice—Holding communion with the Father and the Son—Abiding in the truths of the everlasting gospel: all this is most truly pleasing and acceptable unto God. Let it be here observed, our being acceptable in the sight of God in the Person of Christ: and our acting in such a way and manner, as for us to be acceptable in so doing before the Lord, are different and distinct subjects. They should not be confounded nor swallowed up in one the other. It should be the real study of spiritual persons, to have right apprehensions of both these subjects, and keep them distinct. In the present day, we are not fond of so doing: hence to treat on such subjects as these now before us, is very commonly treated with contempt: it being too generally looked on, as having nothing in it but legality: yet there can be nothing which takes off the heart, from believing in the Person, Righteousness, and Sacrifice of the ever-blessed Immanuel, in our walking with his Father and our Father in Him, in the true knowledge and faith of what he hath done for us; and hereby to aim at his glory, and to please him by doing that which is acceptable in his sight. It cannot but be the sure way for our ready access unto him at all times: in its place, it must be a means of our expecting to have our prayers heard, and answered; the reason for which is because we keep his commandments, by walking continually in them. Hereby full proof is given that we have communion with God: so that this outward evidence for us, that we belong to him, is accompanied with this most kind and special proof of his most gracious notice and regard of us; that *whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* And this is given in the words before us, as the reason of God's granting us those things we ask of him in prayer. It must be observed, the apostle is here, as all throughout this Epistle, discriminating between professors and professors, shewing which of them are right, and which are not: therefore if this be taken into the account, we shall find, he is not driving them into themselves, for evidences to prove they are accept-

able in the Lord and before him. This is no part of the subject; he is speaking of what could not but come before them, and be the subject of spiritual sense and discernment, so as to be evident to others, by their outward life, conversation, walk, and conduct. It is of an equal nature to the apostle *Paul's* exhortation to the saints at *Thessalonica*, which runs thus; "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." 1. Epis. chap. iv. 1. Let but these things be properly considered, and we shall be well pleased with the apostle *John*, for what he is here delivering. We shall also see a perfect unity of spirit and sentiment in both these apostles: the one exhorts saints to this, the other shews the blessed fruits which follow upon the same. This therefore brings me to the last clause of my text; which I am now to enter upon, and is this.

4. To shew, how hereby we have an assurance before we pray, of the acceptance of our prayers, and of their being heard, and answered. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

As prayer is the act of the new creature, under the influence and breathing of the Holy Spirit, so our first and grand assurance our prayers will be heard, and answered, is founded on God's free promise, and the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ. And as we have communion with saints in our accesses with them, at the same throne of grace, in the Name of Christ, by one Spirit, unto the Father, so we have an assurance of the acceptance of our prayers, and of their being heard, and answered, *because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* Not because of this, but as this gives outward evidence that such are the Lord's, and is an external evidence to them, so far as it goes, that they are the Lord's; so it gives them confidence in the Lord, that he will not reject their prayers, which being many, and various, and containing in them, the very things promised to the whole household of faith, so it cannot but be, but the substance of what is contained in them, must, it cannot be otherwise, be heard and answered. I conceive this to be as right an interpretation of the words before us, as can either be given, or desired: and I conceive it to be a blessed one: what can be more desirable to a real saint, but to do that which is truly acceptable and well pleasing in the sight of God? How can he know what this consists in, but by attending to his revealed will? In the which, what is styled his commandments, are given: it is by an attention unto them, and in the practice of them, we shew our love and reverence of God, by our careful practice of the same. And we find the Lord in our walking with him, and before him, unto all well-pleasing, is pleased to give evident marks of his approbation thereof. This He sometimes does in a very remarkable manner, in the notice he takes of our spiritual breathings and desires: by the which we are again and again confirmed in this divine declaration, that the desire of the righteous shall be granted. Now the words of our text fall in with all this. Such of the Lord's people, who walk in faith before him, and in obedience to his revealed will, have this assurance in themselves, founded on the free grace of God, displayed towards, and upon them, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, before they approach the throne of the heavenly Majesty, that whatsoever they ask, they shall receive of him: and that, *because they keep his command-*



ments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. The which is very comprehensively expressed in these words. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.* To open these words will be the subject of the following Sermon: therefore I shall say nothing of it here; only as it is wholly evangelical, so there is nothing in keeping the commandments to take us off from Christ: but every thing in so doing calculated to keep our eye on him: like as under the Old Testament, the Lord was pleased to express his approbation of the prayers of his people, and of the walk of his people, sometimes by visible tokens and evidences of his favour: such as to send fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices: as also by answering the request of their lips, and granting their petitions; and sometimes by express and positive declarations of his acceptance of their walk and conduct; as in the instances amongst many, may be seen by us, in his declaration to his servants *Abraham and Moses*, in what he says of them: "And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Gen. xviii. 17—19. "And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house." Num. xii. 5—7. What is this, but a testimony of approbation of the acceptance of the outward acts, and behaviour of both these persons, for what they were in their walk before the Lord. This is not their acceptation in Christ, but the acceptation of their persons, and walk before the Lord, in their communion with him, in Christ, and through the gracious influences of his Spirit operating on their minds, and producing an outward conformity to Christ, which was evidenced to others, in their lives and conversations. The acceptation of our persons in the Person of Christ, is an eternal act in the mind and will of God, which was from everlasting, and will be the same to everlasting. Our being led by the Holy Spirit to Christ, and to the Father in Him, this is a blessing enjoyed by us whilst we are in a time-state. We in our requests to the Lord, have access through Christ, by one Spirit, unto the Father: this leads us to walk before the Lord unto all well-pleasing, and to study to apply ourselves to do and practice those things which are most truly acceptable in his sight. We do not do those things, which the Scriptures expressly declare are acceptable to the Lord, that we may be accepted of him; but we do so and so, because we are accepted of him. We do not walk with God that we may obtain his favour; but we walk with God that we may enjoy his favour. In the keeping his commandments there is great reward, though not for the keeping them. May the Lord shine on his most holy truths, and keep them up in our minds, by the teaching of his Holy Spirit: so as that at all seasons, in all places, cases, and circumstances, we may each of us walk as seeing him who is invisible. This will be so far from making us legal, that it will most certainly prove

us, outwardly, and to the demonstration of others, to be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. May these things sink down into our hearts. The Lord grant it for his Name's sake. Amen.

## SERMON L.

*And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.—1 JOHN III. 23.*

It would be well were we ever in our minds to preserve this idea of the sacred Scriptures, that there is no one subject in them, but is clearly stated, with all its effects and consequences. There is no darkness and obscurity, be it either truth, doctrine, experience or practice. We may not, we do not understand every part of the word equally and clearly alike; we are not infallible: it is well for us we are not; because we are thereby made sensible of the necessity of our continual dependence on the Holy Spirit for his sacred light and instruction. It is to Him we are constantly to repair for the knowledge of every part of holy writ. I am here disposed to express myself thus, for the following reason, viz. as in the former verse the apostle had said to saints, including himself with them, using the term *we*—*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*, and had not expressed what those commandments were; to clear up this, he therefore adds, *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.* This is the sum and substance of the whole doctrine of Christ. Some read the word here rendered *commandment*, *doctrine*. *This is the doctrine*: or, *this is his doctrine, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* I cannot but observe, though it be entirely my own, what deep impression the last sermon our apostle heard pronounced by our Lord Jesus Christ must have made on his mind. It was so deeply engraven on his heart, it seems to constitute the whole of this epistle: many parts of which are written and expressed, so exactly like it, that one can scarce conceive, how the children of God, should be capable of overlooking it. The sermon of our Lord's to which I refer, is what is contained in the 15th and 16th chapters of *John's* gospel, which is concluded at the 28th verse of the 16th chapter. I think this casts a dignity upon the whole Epistle. The words of Christ were not only full of grace and truth; but the majesty and glory, the truth and importance, the life and energy contained in the same, remain, and will do so down to the end of time, as the blessed effects produced by them in the minds of the elect, will last to all eternity. One scripture makes way for the explanation of another: this is the case here. The words now before

me, and which are now to be attended unto, I shall attempt to open and set before you, and that which is contained in them, in the following way.

1. What, and whose commandment this is, the apostle is here speaking of. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*

2. What is contained in this doctrine, or commandment, concerning believing.

3. That loving one another is the consequence of receiving, or believing this doctrine, or commandment.

4. Whose commandment this is, that we love one another. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

I conceive here are two Persons here designed—The Divine Father in the former part of the verse: and our Lord Jesus Christ in the latter. It being in a more particular sense, the command of the Father for believing on Christ: as it is more immediately our Lord's command to his disciples and followers, to love one another. Of these particulars in their order, and connection: only let it be observed I shall be very short on the subject of loving one another, there having been said already so much concerning it. As I have thus given you my plan, for discoursing on the present passage before me, so I begin it thus.

1. By considering what, and whose commandment this is, the apostle is here speaking of, when he says, *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*

It appears most clearly from the words themselves, it must be the commandment of the Divine Father. He standing in this relation of Father unto him; not only agreeable to the order of the Divine Subsistences of the Three in Jehovah, in their relation to each other, but also as it respects the covenant offices which subsist between them in the economy of grace. With respect to the word *commandment*, we have it made use of by Christ himself, when he is speaking of the great covenant acts and transactions between the Father and himself, and of his carrying the same into act and execution. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John x. 17, 18. Again, our Lord says, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." John xii. 49, 50. As all this hath reference to what passed between God, and the glorious Mediator before all worlds, so it leads us to observe, the will of God expressed to Christ in the everlasting covenant, is the original of salvation—That the incarnation of the Son of God, together with his Suretyship, life, sacrifice, and death, all which as commensurate with the will of the Divine Father, expressed here by Christ, under the idea of commandment, is the salvation itself: which as perfected is revealed in the everlasting gospel which is the transcript and record of it, which *Paul* says, "according to the commandment of the everlasting God, is made known

to all nations for the obedience of faith." This is the commandment, or doctrine of God; which he hath given unto his church as the doctrine of salvation: and this is both the commandment, or doctrine, of the Father, and of Christ. It is the commandment, or doctrine of God the Father, as he conceived the divine scheme of grace, and purposed in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will: and it is the doctrine of Christ, as he came from heaven in Person, to make it known, to accomplish it, and freely and fully to declare it. Thus he speaks—"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." John vi. 37—40. Thus our Lord Jesus Christ himself, opens the secret of the mystery of grace unto our view. He is the accomplisher of all the will of God, in this most surprizing grace. And he says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John vi. 29. This is the universal faith of the whole church of God, expressed by one, as the mouth of all the rest: "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John vi. 69. I think from what hath been delivered, it is evident, what, and *whose* commandment this is, in these words before us. The nature of it, or what is contained in it, is, salvation. This was, as it respects the original of it, from the Father. He it was who said, *I will send them a Saviour, a great one, and he shall deliver them.* It is his revealed will, we should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for everlasting life and salvation: this is the doctrine of the whole volume of revelation, both in the Old Testament and in the New. Christ is the Father's ordinance of life and salvation. He is revealed in the Old Testament, as the Messiah, who was to come into our world, by his open incarnation, to do the will of him that sent him, and in his own Person, and by his sole and alone mediation, accomplish all the Divine Father's purposes of grace: and save his people in himself with an everlasting salvation. And he it is who says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Isa. xlv. 22—25. This doctrine is carried into the New Testament, and runs throughout the whole of it: neither is there the least difference in it but this—The former contains the revelation and promise of all this; the latter declares it is all accomplished; it is to be seen; and that it shines forth in its meridian glory and splendour in the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That which is contained in the *commandment*, or doctrine, is, salvation by grace: salvation for sinners, by the blood and righteousness of Christ Jesus. It is the will, yea, it is the good pleasure of the divine Father, that we should receive, believe, and rest our everlasting all, upon the Person, and mediation of his co-equal and co-essential Son. This

the whole scriptures give full evidence of, and testimony unto. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* It is the will of the Father, Christ should be highly exalted, as the head of his church—As the Saviour of his church—As the righteousness of his church—As the Purifier of his church—As having loved her, and washed her from her sins in his own blood. It is the will of the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell. It is the will of the Father, the whole church both in earth and heaven should receive therefrom all its supplies. “Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” John i. 16. And the doctrine of the Person, work, Offices, fulness of Christ, is the bread of life to the church. It is the spring of everlasting life unto it: yea, it is this which is the water of life and salvation: therefore the church saith, “All my springs are in thee.” Psalm lxxxvii. 7. The apostle here saying, *And this is his commandment, or doctrine, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,* expresses the whole substance of the faith of God’s elect: as also how Christ, as the ordinance of life and salvation, is the one and sole foundation of faith: and also the immediate object of faith: and that he is also the subject of faith: as also that this makes a most evident distinction, that the *we* spoken of in these words, differ and are distinguished from all others, and that in and by their very believing: it is *we* to whom the apostle belongs; to whom this doctrine of salvation belongs: it is *we* who have God for our Father, who have fellowship with him, and his Son Jesus Christ, to whom it is given on the behalf of Christ to believe on him, and who have already believed on him, who are interested in what the apostle is here speaking of. He was as much concerned and interested in this commandment, or doctrine, at the time he wrote this, as we are now: for the subject is not about our first believing on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it concerns our going on, in every act of spiritual life, in the exercise of the same upon Christ, and the Father in Him. This deserves consideration: we should do well to apply our minds to this: as it would lead us to see the glory contained in the doctrine of Christ—Of the Father’s everlasting love, and how his grace shines forth in all its glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of grace is invariably one and the same: there will never be any alteration in it; for it is the everlasting gospel. We as hearers and professors of it, may give up the glorious truths of the same, and receive and embrace errors of various sorts and kinds: yet this by no means can corrupt the gospel of the blessed God. Our minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus; but the Word of the Lord, Christ the Essential Word endureth for ever. And the everlasting gospel, by the which he is preached is, in all its truths and doctrines, immutably one, and the same for ever. “The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” 1 Pet. i. 25. There may be a greater knowledge and valuation of Truth, by the which I mean, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, in one age than in another, yet it is the same glorious gospel in one age that it is in the other. It should therefore be remembered, that as the Lord shines forth in his sovereignty and wisdom, in bringing forth in such distinct and particular periods of time, such and such persons, some who are eminent for Truth, and some for their opposition to it, so he has at one time a more flourishing church, than at another: and that this is always in pro-

portion to the number of the elect, which are in a time state, during every succession of age, as the world goes on, and creatures, even we men, pass on with it. It is the Lord the Holy Ghost who alone can give us the knowledge of Christ. He only can make and keep us alive to Christ. It is by Him alone we can be kept in the knowledge of the Truth. He only can keep up the Truth in our minds. He only can keep our minds in the Truth. It is wholly beyond any power in ourselves. It must be by the power of the Holy Spirit: yet our knowledge of Truth, our high prizings of the Truth, our living the Truth, our enjoyments of the Truth, our dying in the Truth, our prospect of enjoying all contained in the Truth even in glory, can add nothing to the Truth: it exceeds and transcends in worth and excellency all we can possibly express and conceive. What *Job* says of *Wisdom* is as I conceive very applicable here; he puts the following questions: "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold." The question then is put: "Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the same thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof." chap. xxviii. 12—23. I conceive this may serve as suitable to the present subject, so far as we may have advanced esteem for Truth thereby. But lest I should darken counsel with words without knowledge, and depreciate Truth instead of exalting it, I will proceed to the next particular head of my present subject, and endeavour as the Lord may be pleased to enable me,

2. To shew what is contained in this doctrine and commandment, concerning believing: *And this is his commandment, or doctrine, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* I should prefer the word doctrine, to commandment; yet as it has been already opened, it comes, I conceive to one and the same.

The gospel is made up all of grace. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one great and grand subject of it. His salvation also is gloriously displayed therein: therefore this whole doctrine and commandment, is most undoubtedly contained in Christ—In his relation to God—In his relation to his church—In his completeness in the sight of God—In the church's completeness in Him—In the way in the which he is pleased to make himself known to his people, and how they are brought to the true and saving knowledge of Him: so as to live a life of faith on Him—a life of communion with Him, and are hereby enabled to cleave to Him—To esteem Him as their exceeding joy: and thus going on from faith to faith, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, they follow on to know the Lord, who makes their path as the path of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. This I appre-

hend, must be the substance of these words now before us; for it must not be conceived that faith is a natural act; or that it can at any time be exercised by us without Looking unto Jesus. It must be the Holy Ghost, who by his taking of the things of Christ and shewing them unto us, draws out our faith into act and exercise, agreeable to those views of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he hath created and formed in our minds of Christ and his salvation. It is I apprehend a general mistake; when we hear of faith, and think of faith, we are conceiving of the act of it; which we generally make to consist in believing that Christ died for us, and that we are interested in him: and this we build upon some impression, frame, feeling, and experience, we either have had, or have; and we value ourselves very much upon the same: yet all this hath nothing to do with the faith of God's elect, with believing in the name of the only begotten Son of God. We must first have the knowledge of Christ, before we can have the knowledge of our interest in Him. The knowledge of Him must of necessity go before our believing on Him; and this comes into our renewed minds, by the revelation the divine Father is pleased to make of his Son in us: this he does without any act of ours. The apostle says, "It pleased God, who called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me." Gal. i. 15, 16. When Christ is revealed in us, then we receive life from Him; which by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, produces in our renewed minds the true knowledge of Christ: this is the means whereby the Lord the Spirit, is pleased to produce faith in Christ: which he draws out into act and exercise upon Christ, as he is revealed in the word of grace. And as it pleaseth him to open our minds to apprehend Christ, in his Person, love, salvation and fulness, we receive all this into our minds. Thus what we are led to know of Him, and concerning Him, from the Scriptures of Truth, the Holy Spirit is pleased to exercise our faith upon: so that hereby we live on Christ, and he dwells in our hearts, and our faith is exercised on Him, just as the eye is upon the object: which whilst it views and takes it in, sees not the eye with which it beholds the same. So whilst we are actually taking into our minds, most precious views and discoveries of God's everlasting love, and the glories of Christ's Person, and complete salvation, yet we look not at faith, which is the eye of the mind, with which it actually perceives the same, any more than the eye sees itself, when it is looking at any object. Such an account of faith as this, must certainly give us to consider, the object of faith, superior to the act of faith: and that without the one, there could be no existence for the other. If these things are as thus stated, then the doctrine and commandment of faith, must most undoubtedly consist in the grace and salvation, revealed, expressed, and set before us in the everlasting gospel. Therefore the knowledge of the sublime truths of the everlasting gospel, is of the greatest importance: as without them we have no object, or subject to fix our thoughts upon, which can yield support, comfort, and relief. It cannot be in an enjoyment, supported without knowledge, which can by any means be sufficient, for an enlightened mind. There must be a clear, scriptural knowledge of Christ, and of the Father's love to us in Him, and of his acceptance of Him, and his finished obedience and sacrifice, or there can be no believing on Him for life eternal: this is the doctrine of God. This is his commandment concerning his Son Jesus Christ, that we should rest perfectly contented with the revelation and record, that he hath made and given in the

Sacred Scriptures. It is from them, by the enlightenings of the Holy Ghost, as hath been before expressed, we receive the knowledge of Christ into our minds: in this we are altogether passive; we are born of God before this; for it is to our spiritual mind the revelation of Christ is made. What we receive into our minds concerning Christ, is the foundation of all the spiritual acts of our minds, which are distinguished by various acts of faith on the Lord Jesus Christ: and the particular exercise of the spiritual acts of the mind is faith in its acts and exercise. Our living Christ is the effect of knowing Him. We live by faith as our minds are exercised on Him. We walk by faith, in the belief of what we are in Him, and that he hath brought us nigh to God by the blood of his cross, by which he hath made peace. We triumph in Christ, as we view his triumphs over the world, sin, satan, death, hell, and damnation. We rejoice in Him, as we see ourselves complete in Him. It is in our knowing him, we know our interest in Him. We are not first brought to know our interest in Christ, and then brought to know Christ. No; it is not so; but we are first brought to know Christ, then we are led by the Holy Spirit to believe in his blood and righteousness for our everlasting salvation—Then we are led by the Eternal Spirit into real communion with Christ: and in this holy fellowship Christ hath with us, and that we have with him, we have the true knowledge of our personal interest in Him, and his salvation, and in all the blessings, and benefits of the same, made known unto us, by the Divine Spirit; and from hence we can boldly say, *My beloved is mine, and I am his.* If these things are so, then receiving the knowledge of the Father's love into our renewed mind, and having true apprehensions of Christ, agreeable with the revelation made of his Person, Love, Salvation, and Mediation in the gospel, reflected on our minds from the same by the Holy Spirit, is of great importance: and it is hereby Christ is in us, and formed in our hearts, the hope of glory. So that all the exercise of faith on Christ, and on the Father's love in Him, is under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, who dwelleth in us; therefore our exercising our minds in belief of the Truth, cannot but be pleasing unto God, because, it is for the sum and substance of it, nothing more or less, than receiving Christ into our minds, and giving full credit to the Father's record and testimony of Him, in the written word. All which may most truly be attributed, as it here is, to the Divine Father: *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* So that the divine Father is here acknowledged as the Original of salvation, and as setting Christ most completely before us, in his gospel, doctrine, and commandment, as his Salvation to the church: which I conceive is the comprehensive meaning of the text, as it stands in connection and relation to what goes before, and follows it. And thus having given the best exposition I am capable of, concerning what the Father's commandment, or doctrine is, respecting what the Salvation is, and of what is contained in the doctrine, or commandment concerning believing, I proceed to my

3rd. particular. To shew, that loving one another, is the consequent of receiving, or believing this doctrine, or commandment: *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

I have before suggested, I should be very short on this present particular in my text: for this reason, because so much has already in some



former sermons been said of it; therefore it would be needless to enlarge. Indeed the apostle here only expresseth it, to shew, how receiving and abiding in the doctrine of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ, is the producing cause, and the very means of the continuation of this love in saints towards each other. As Jesus Christ, in his union and relation to his saints is one and the same to all his people, so they are one and the same, and equally alike interested in his complete salvation. The true knowledge of this cannot but promote love in the brethren, one towards another. It is agreeable to the Father, and Christ, that we should love one another. In the doing of the same, and in believing in his Son Jesus Christ, we do that which is pleasing in his sight: which whilst it doth not render our persons acceptable unto him, yet it renders our walking with Him, and our works, which are produced in us, and by us, as the effect of our receiving his doctrine of salvation by Christ alone, acceptable to Him: it being agreeable with his most holy will.

As I conceive this sufficient for this third head of my present discourse, so much having been delivered in former sermons concerning loving the brethren, I therefore go on to the last particular.

4. To shew whose commandment this is, expressed in these words, *that we love one another*. I will here recite afresh the whole text. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

It appears to me, the Person of God the Father is designed in the former part of the words: and the Person of Christ in the latter. My reasons are as follows. It is very clear from the context, and the first clause of the text, the divine Father is intended, and that as the Father of Christ, whom we call upon in prayer, and from whom we receive that which we request in the Name of the glorious Mediator. The evidence of which is from the words themselves. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* All that is here expressed and contained, most certainly belongs to the Father, and it is all spoken of him, and concerning him. He loved us in Christ. He gave us to Christ. He gave Christ for us. He bestowed salvation on us in Him. He gave us all things in Christ. He hath set forth Christ, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. It is by the revelation made of his Son Jesus Christ, we are brought to the knowledge of Christ, and his salvation, and hereby our faith and hope is in God: all which, agrees with the whole system of grace; which as we are gradually enlightened into, we more and more perceive all the communicable blessings of the Holy Trinity, are contained in the fulness of our Lord Jesus Christ—That he communicates them unto us. We cannot be more blessed than we are in Him; yet we do not actually enjoy in our own souls, all those blessings we have in Him: We enjoy them in a way of communication to our minds: this is done as the Holy Spirit is pleased to shine on these, and give fresh apprehensions of those spiritual blessings contained in the Father's everlasting love, which he hath expressed in what he hath bestowed on us, in his Beloved. I would here observe, these subjects are all of them suited to faith, even that faith which is wholly supernatural; therefore it should never be said by any of the saints, I cannot apprehend it; and conclude it cannot be, because, it may be, we may not at present,

either receive, believe, or apprehend and enjoy the same. Truth is immutable. It is not the more, or the less, for our knowing, or not knowing it; neither can we ever fully comprehend the truths revealed to us, in the sacred volume of inspiration. We can believe that which we cannot comprehend, because the same is founded on the immutable will of God, as recorded and set forth by him in his revealed and written word. We can enjoy that in God, which we shall never fully comprehend of him in heaven, to the ages of eternity. The knowledge of God is that which makes way for the spiritual apprehension of God. There is an infinity in the subject revealed; but the mind is finite, to whom the subject is made known: this is not sufficiently considered; hence we make more of our knowledge of the gospel, than of the gospel itself: it is in one point of view, strange it should be thus, with any of us; yet so it is, scarce any of us but fall into this error: whereas the grace of the Three in Jehovah, made known in the everlasting gospel, is so far beyond our salvation, and even glory everlasting, that we shall never be able to comprehend the same; no, not in heaven. All we are in Christ, our Head, our Lord, our Saviour, our All, our Portion, our Inheritance, our Glory, our Blessedness, is but the fruit and effect of God's everlasting love. If so, what must the fountain, God himself be! What must his love in Christ Jesus be to our persons, as considered in him! What must our salvation in Christ be! why such as exceed our uttermost conception: they transcend our utmost apprehension. Indeed it is truly well with us, when we rightly confess this; because we are hereby led to acknowledge we neither know, enjoy, nor at any time experience the everlasting love of the Father to us in Christ Jesus, but by the immediate light, teaching, and fresh illumination of the Holy Ghost. But all this is not immediately connected with the present head of discourse, any farther than it concerns the clearing up, that the former part of the text, concerns the Father: as the latter part contained in these words, *and love one another, as he gave us commandment*, belongs and is spoken of as referring to our Lord. My reasons for thus conceiving, are as follows. Most assuredly all which concerns the gospel, in which Christ is revealed, set forth, and made known, must most especially belong to the divine Father. If there be a command for believing on Christ, for life and salvation, this according to the economy of the covenant between the Father and the Son must be given from the Father, though it may be enforced by Christ as Mediator. The following words seem to me to confirm this: "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." John xii. 44—48. The faith of God's elect is produced in them, by the gospel. It is by it they are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is wrought in them by the secret and invincible operation of the Holy Ghost within them: not as the fruit and effect of any commandment given concerning it; but as a gracious effect of free sovereign grace. It is therefore to be considered not as a duty, but as a gift and privilege bestowed out of

the riches of free grace. In this light our apostle speaks of it in the following words; "But as many as received him, to them gave he power, right, or privilege to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 12, 13. Now as it is the commandment, or doctrine of the divine Father, that we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, so it is the will of Christ, and his commandment that we should love one another. I therefore think that here in this place, we are to conceive the Person of Christ to be understood, it being so expressly again and again commanded by our Lord to his disciples, as may be seen by looking into the 15th chapter of *John's* gospel. I therefore conceive the words of my text, as most expressly declaring what is most truly pleasing to God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Viz., to believe in the Father's well beloved Son: and to obey his Son's command, which consists in loving one another as he gave us commandment. This then is a very blessed outward evidence of our being believers in God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. We solemnly asserting and declaring, our assent and consent, to that which the Father hath revealed, and set before us, concerning his Son Jesus Christ; and we believing on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, we acknowledge ourselves to be wholly dependent on Him, for life and salvation; and give this full and outward proof of our acknowledging him to be our Lord and sovereign, by loving one another for his sake, and because he hath commanded us so to do. Thus having expressed myself, as fully as it was in my power; I will recite again the words of my text, and so draw to the close: *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he, that is, Jesus Christ, gave us commandment: for this is his, in a very particular sense: He having said, This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.* May the Lord bless what hath been delivered, if he please; so as that we may apprehend clearly the connection and dependence of these words, with the former. Or, in other words that we may rightly consider how causes produce their proper effects—That the one cannot be rightly known and understood, but the other must be improved and advanced thereby—That our reception of Truth, will be outwardly evidenced by the keeping the commandments of God: and in a very particular manner by believing on the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and loving one another for his sake, and because he hath commanded us so to do. The Lord command his blessing on what hath been delivered. Amen.

## SERMON LI.

*And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.  
And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he  
hath given us.—1 JOHN III. 24.*

THESE words which close this chapter are a continuation of the subject before us; and finish it. They prove the blessedness which follows on the former premises, and how Christ's indwelling in us, and our dwelling in Him, are most certainly evidenced hereby; that we hereby know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. In the whole of our reading these words, and all throughout this chapter, and the whole of this Epistle, it is very evident, one great design of it, is to separate the precious from the vile: and even to discriminate one professor from the other. All the three chapters, of which this is the last verse, fully evidence this; and therefore the true and right apprehension thereof, will serve to guide us to a right conception of the whole which is now before us. I conceive, if we read from the 21st verse to the close of our present verse, we shall see very clearly the true and express meaning of the whole: which I will therefore transcribe: *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* From the whole context, it appears, this whole Scripture concerns the whole church of God, as collectively considered; and as it respects their giving outward evidence, by their loving the brotherhood, and obtaining answers to their prayers; as also by their believing on the name of the Lord Jesus, that they were the Lord's; partakers of the faith of God's elect. Also the same expresseth and belongs to an individual member of Christ's mystic body, as truly as it doth to the whole community. In the words before us, it is *he*, not *we*: in many of the past verses, the apostle speaks in the plural; yet he alters it here for the singular. He in the former verse says, *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.* In the words before us, he speaks of the blessed fruits and effects of this: *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* In my attempt to open the words of my present text, I will propose the following particulars.

1. What is spoken of the person here particularized: he is one that keepeth the commandments of God. These were expressed in the former verse: and this being founded on it, points out one who is a real practical believer: *And he that keepeth his commandments*: this is the person spoken of.

2. The blessedness of such an one, and wherein his blessedness consists: he dwelleth in Jesus Christ, and Christ dwelleth in him: *he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.*

3. The knowledge such an one hath of the truth and reality of this: *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* Surely this must contain the essence and reality of all which may most justly be entitled true experimental blessedness. I begin with my

1st. particular. In the which I am to notice the person spoken of who is here particularized thus; he is one that keepeth the commandments of God. He is neither a mere professor, nor a false one, nor a neuter. He is a practical christian: what his practice consists in, and what those commandments are, which he most closely attends unto, are declared, as we connect the former verse with this. *And he that keepeth his commandments.* This is the description of the person the apostle is here speaking of.

The whole of what hath been set before us, in the former part of this Epistle, hath been, for the substance of it, to shew, that communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, is the source and fountain of all true and practical holiness—That such as are blessed with fellowship with the Divine Father, and his Son, are influenced hereby, through the grace and teaching of the Holy Ghost, to walk, live, and act according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God. The truth of this, and the contrariety to this, in the children of God, and the children of the devil, form almost the whole sum-total of this chapter, which we are now brought to this last verse of. Love to the brethren, and hatred to the brethren, have been treated of, as fully descriptive to whom such as are under a profession of the gospel belong. Such as are on the Lord's side, and love the brethren in word and deed, these have confidence in God. They have free access to the throne of his heavenly grace. They receive gracious supplies of grace, in answer to their prayers. These keep the commandments of God, in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and by walking in him by the same faith by the which they have received him. They love one another as Christ hath commanded them. These continue in the keeping the commandments of the Lord. And one of these, for all the rest, is here spoken of under the term *He.* *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* So as the apostle began with *he* he ends with *we*, including all saints therein, as he also doth in the word *us*: *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* Here then is the language of assurance, spoken out by the apostle in his own name, and likewise in the name of all the saints. Yet my subject at present, calls me to drop this here: it will be taken up in the close of this discourse; as I am in this part more, and most particularly to speak concerning the description of the person, whom the apostle is here speaking of. He is speaking and deciphering the individual thus, as *one who keepeth the commandments.* By the which we are here most certainly to understand, one who believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, and trusts alone in Him for everlasting life; who hath received Him into his mind; who believeth on Him in his heart; and centres in Him as the Father's ordinance for life and salvation. I ground all this on what is expressed in the two foregoing verses:

in the which keeping the commandments and doing those things which are pleasing in God's sight, are connected with the commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. So that He is in Christ, who is a believer on Christ, and lives by the faith of the Son of God: and as faith brings its own evidence of this, so living on Christ, and in communion with Christ confirms all this, and gives the fullest evidence to the spiritual mind of the truth and reality thereof: and to keep Christ, the object and subject of Salvation in mind, and to be looking simply and wholly to him, as the author and finisher of faith, is the great excitement to practical holiness and the outward acts and exercises of true godliness. Such as keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus, are those who abide in the Truth as it is in Him—who live in the Truth—who walk in the Truth, and are zealous for the same. The expression, *he that keepeth his commandments*, is most certainly very expressive of a continuance in well-doing. A believer hath Christ for his continual object—The word of Truth for his perpetual guide—The Holy Spirit as his Divine Instructor—The love of the Father as the fountain of his everlasting blessedness. So that as the same is realized in his mind, he runs with alacrity in the way of God's holy commandments, be they duties or precepts, ordinances or commands: one of old said, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." Psalm. cxix. 128. The one great stimulus to all which, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father's love in him: in proportion as this is kept up, and maintained in act and exercise in the mind, the more clearly and evidently, all the fruits and effects of it appear, in the outward life, conversation, walk and warfare of a christian: and this individually, in a believer as a believer; and this collectively in a community of believers really and truly such. Hence the same blessing which is the consequent of it in one, is the same in them all. Christ is a believer's life: and the manifestation of this consists in the believer's living on Christ, in the full exercise of all his spiritual faculties, senses, and affections on Him. A true believer may well be defined to be one, who is so swallowed up in Christ, and so possessed by Christ, that his whole end in living and dying, is to glorify him. This Epistle may be considered in some of its particulars, and specialities, to be the portrait of a true christian, as he is brought into conformity, and subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ, by the indwelling and effectual working of the Holy Ghost within him, and upon him. The believer hath an intuitive view, sight and apprehension of Christ as revealed in the gospel: by the which Christ dwelleth in him, and he in Christ. And in his believing on Him, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him: this constrains the believer to walk close with the Lord, and humbly before him: this cannot be without obedience; and his greatest act of obedience to the Divine Father's revealed will, is to be well pleased with Christ, who is the object of his ineffable delight. It is by honoring Christ, and submitting unto him in all things, the believer glorifies the Father, and the Spirit; in the which he honors, glorifies, and worships the Three in Jehovah. The Father beholds the believer with the utmost complacency in Christ. The Holy Spirit exalts Christ in the eye and heart of a believer: and the believer in those sights that he hath of Christ, as the Holy Spirit is pleased to take of His things, and shew, and reveal

the same unto the mind, is most divinely swallowed up, and Christ becomes his All—The chiefest and fairest of all the fairs. It is from such apprehensions as these, he rests fully and everlastingly satisfied with Christ; being thoroughly satisfied, He is all-sufficient to satisfy his mind on earth, and in heaven to all eternity. Whilst the eyes of the believer's mind are kept looking on Christ, he is swallowed up in him, and what he sees and beholds in him. When his eye is off Christ, he is just in such a condition as *Samson* was when his locks were shorn—weak as other men. A believer's only strength is in Christ; when he looks to him, he hath a proof and experience of it. If he looks to his faith for it, he will most assuredly find himself without it; for there it is not. It is not in the very actings of it. No; nor in the comforts of it; Where is it then? Why, beloved, it is wholly in the object and subject of his faith: it is in Christ crucified, and Christ exalted: and this Jesus saith, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Having shewed that the person spoken of in the words of my text, as he that keepeth the commandments, which consists in believing on the name of Jesus Christ, and loving the brethren because Christ hath commanded it, is a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation—is the *He* of whom the apostle is here speaking, I proceed to my next particular. Which is this.

2. To shew the blessedness of such an one: and also wherein his blessedness consists: he dwelleth in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ dwelleth in him. *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.*

This must be blessedness indeed: it is most truly and divinely so. I carry all this to Christ, he being the last Person mentioned: otherwise it might have been applied unto the Divine Father, who dwelleth in the saints, as doth also the Holy Ghost, as truly as the Son doth. But it being thus expressed in the foregoing words in the former verse, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment," therefore I carry it to Christ; and shall consider how He dwelleth in a believer, and how the believer dwelleth in Christ. The apostle puts the believer's dwelling in Christ first, and then he speaks of Christ's dwelling in the believer. *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* This is most exactly as his Lord, and our Lord, hath stated the same subject: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." John vi. 54—57. Our apostle was most divinely taken with the words of his most precious and divine Lord, and therefore he most gladly makes use of them on all occasions. I shall first speak of a believer's dwelling in Christ, and afterwards of Christ's dwelling in the believer. This is agreeable with the order of my text, therefore I shall thus pursue the same. And 1st as it respects the believer's dwelling in Christ. This is by faith: this is the medium of faculty, by the which Christ is received into the mind, and by it the believer dwells in Christ, which is to be understood of those spiritual outgoings

of the soul towards the Lord Jesus Christ, in the which the heart of the believer is overcome with a sense and spiritual apprehensions and perceptions of Christ; as it hath respect to the glorious revelation which is made of him in the word of his grace: in the which the full glories of his Mediation are displayed. He shines forth therein in his Personal, essential, mediatorial, and relative Glories; so that the believer enlightened by him, and favoured with an intuitive perception of Him, is most efficaciously drawn, attracted to and engaged on Him. And thus the believer dwells in him; He being the object and subject of the believer's thoughts. It is on him, the spiritual faculties are deeply and intensely fixed: so as to dwell in him; and, as I may say, to be wholly swallowed up in Him. If it be asked what is the medium, or by what means this is produced in the spiritual mind, and also how it is maintained in the spiritual understanding of the believer? I reply; it is by means of the word; in the which Christ is revealed; and by the which we receive into our mind increasing apprehensions of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit is pleased most graciously to open and explain the Scriptures to the mind, and he opens to the mind, his own views of Christ, as set before us in the Sacred page. And as the truths contained in the word and promises of Christ, dwell and have their residency in the believer's mind, so hereby the believer dwells in Christ: he is fixed in Him: he dwells in Him: He is his one object and subject: his foundation: his centre: his circumference: his whole heart is set upon Him: his whole soul delighteth in Him. Christ is the believer's food: physician: his All; yea, He is his everlasting All: he says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD." This then is one part of a believer's blessedness, he dwells in Christ. *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* He who is taught of God, and liveth a life of faith on the Son of God, and hath communion with him, in the graces and blessings of his great salvation, cannot but walk up and down in the name, and fear of the Lord. Such an one dwelleth in Christ. He walks as one united to Christ. He perseveres in his acknowledgment and dependence on Christ: and hereby gives outward evidence of his being one with Christ, and Christ hereby also gives outward evidence in such a believer's outward conformity to Him, that he is one with Him. I shall omit to speak of a believer's blessedness in this, until I have in the 2nd place, given an account of Christ's dwelling in the believer; which is expressed in the words before us thus. *And he in him.* It was before, *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him,* (i. e. the believer in Christ,) *and he in him.* (i. e. Christ dwelleth in the believer.) Now Christ dwelleth in the believer by possessing his mind with blessed and sensible apprehensions of his presence with the soul. And as he fills the mind with some glorious apprehensions of his most glorious Person—Of his incomprehensible love—Of his glorious work—Of his most excellent righteousness, and efficacious Sacrifice. As Christ is pleased to manifest himself to the believer, so He hereby dwells in, possesses, and inhabits him, so that He is in him, and unto him, what the soul is to the body. He is the life of the believer: all his spiritual life originates from Christ's living in Him. "Christ liveth in me:" so speaks the apostle. Gal. ii. 20. This indwelling of Christ in a believer, is the distinguishing of him



in this present state: he hereby is differenced from all other Professors whatsoever: indeed it is here made the good distinction, between the christian who enjoys Christ, who dwells in Christ, and Christ in him, and such as only profess him, and have no inward spiritual communion with him. As the believer dwells in Christ by way of spiritual meditation, and in the exercise of faith, and Christ dwells in the believer in the manifestations of his love, and most gracious presence to the spiritual apprehension of the believer; so herefrom results most blessed communion between the believer and Christ, and Christ and the believer. I thus express it, because it is according to the order the apostle here states it: he puts the believer first, and Christ next; as he here speaks of this great subject, as it falls under the observation of sanctified sense: otherwise it most certainly all begins in and with Christ, and is carried on by Him in the believer. And most undoubtedly the whole essence of the believer's blessedness must consist in his being in Christ, in his indwelling in Christ, and Christ's dwelling and abiding in him; which in this place, must most unquestionably have a very great and particular respect to an abiding in the doctrine of Christ, and his abiding in the believer, by the continuance of the doctrine in the mind; nor is there any other way by the which we can abide in Him, and He in us. I would now speak of the blessedness of such an one; and then express the blessedness; in what it consists. The blessedness of such an one who dwells in Christ, and hath Christ dwelling in him, must be transcendently great: in it all goodness must be contained: it must be the very essence of all manifestative grace: nothing can possibly go beyond it this side glory. There cannot but be communion with Christ on the believer's part, in proportion to his knowledge of the Lord Jesus: this must be chiefly in a mental way; which, where it is clearly and rightly apprehended, is the best and most profitable way, in the which the spiritual mind can be employed. It is the means of enlarging it—of engaging it—Of constantly exercising it: and the more it is thus exercised, the more it is spiritually improved. A life of actual communion with Christ, is, it cannot but be, a life of blessedness: and all that is here to be understood, is inwardly, not outwardly. It is what the faith of the believer perceives and enjoys of Christ inwardly, which I apprehend to be the subject here; so that the blessedness of such an one as dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in him, must consist in personal, particular, and actual fellowship with Christ, in his Person, love, salvation, fulness, and in being made a partaker of Christ in sensible communion and enjoyment: which is such blessedness as the world can neither give, nor take away; nor can it be exceeded but by a vision of Christ, and an uninterrupted enjoyment of him in heaven and eternal glory. Not that the real believer hath the blessedness of uninterrupted communion with Christ, in the present state of grace, neither has Christ with him; there is a suspension of this, as it respects the clear manifestations of it on both sides. This is most readily acknowledged. Or we should not do justice to the subject; for the Lord withdraws at times and seasons from his people, so as that thereby they may the more sensibly feel their entire dependence on him, and learn thereby to live wholly in an entire renunciation of all they are, both good and bad, and live wholly out of, and off all within themselves on the work and fulness of Christ. And it is as they are thus living, they are again and again

favoured with real communion with the Lord, and the Lord favours them with his communion visits. The blessedness of this mutual communion, the believer's dwelling in Christ, and Christ's dwelling in the believer, consists in a free open intercourse with each other; so that the believer opens his heart to Christ, and the precious Lord opens his heart to the believer, and thus there is free and intimate access to each other. Surely it must be blessedness which cannot be fully expressed, nor described, which is contained in this. It is hereby certified to the believer that he is interested in Christ, and Christ is interested in him: this, every act of holy intercourse, and communion with the Lord, serves to confirm: and it is in this indwelling of Christ, it is increased and strengthened. For Christ to dwell in the heart by faith, is an infinite display of grace! It is glory and life everlasting, in the bud; it is the very first-fruits of it; it is the which the believer hath his taste, relish, and enjoyment, of that harvest of everlasting blessings and blessedness, which must, and cannot but follow, in that perpetual communion which the believer and Christ, will have and enjoy in the state of eternal glory. Thus I have endeavoured to explain these words of my text, *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* I go on to my next particular, which is this.

3. The knowledge such an one hath, of the truth and reality of this. *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

Whilst in the former part of the verse, the apostle spoke of an individual person, yet as this blessedness here spoken of, was common to all the saints and children of the Most High God, he therefore includes himself, and all the household of faith, as partakers of the same ineffable grace: saying, *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* It may here be very convenient, to the intent the full glory of the text may shine forth, and we may see it in its fullest meaning, and lustre, to mention the whole of it in this place, for the end mentioned: this shall be done; may the Lord bless the design; *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* Christ's indwelling in us, and our indwelling in Him, we dwelling in Him, and his dwelling in the believer; this is certified to the people of the Most High God, by the Divine Spirit: hence the apostle brings this subject which is now here before him. As he here labours to confirm the saints, and give each of them, every direction suited to their various cases; and as he had been speaking of this great blessing, the believer's dwelling in Christ, and Christ's dwelling in the believer, so he gives this one grand, general, and universal evidence of our personal interest in Christ, and the Father's love in him: it is by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, we have the full and clear evidence of this. The revelation of Christ in us, the shedding abroad the love of God in the heart, are all from the gracious influences, and sacred operations of the Holy Ghost, within and upon us. It should not be overlooked, that the distinct offices of the Holy Trinity, are agreeable to their covenant dispensation of grace. So here, the indwelling and abiding of the Holy Spirit in the real professors, is the apostle's criterion of these, who have infallible evidence of their being the Lord's: this evidence they have in

themselves: it ariseth from their dwelling in Christ: from his dwelling in them, and from their continuation in the faith: and they have this knowledge in themselves: so that they are not at an uncertainty about it. And as all the saints have the same ground for assurance and confidence in the Lord, one as the other, hence it is the apostle speaks of it, as an universal blessing which was to be considered as that which the whole church of God was interested in. It does not follow from hence that all the saints fully enjoyed it. No; not even then, though they had apostles for their teachers and instructors; nor can we expect it should be found, that all the saints have the enjoyment, and confidence, which belong to them, are bestowed by free grace upon them, and that are set before them in the everlasting gospel, for their use and benefit, now in this present time and age. In some seasons, and states of the visible church, there is greater light and knowledge, let in upon the minds of saints, and that into some particular truth and doctrine, and again more in other times. All which depends on the good pleasure and sovereign will of God. Therefore we should not, either in preaching, discoursing, or writing, oppose any truth, or assertion agreeable with the same, because it may exceed the attainment, or the apprehension of some saints. Let it be fairly stated just as it is in the word, let it be wholly and altogether scriptural, then leave it, for the Holy Spirit to shine upon, and reflect the knowledge of the same upon the minds of the regenerate, just as seemeth good to his Divine Majesty. This is the way for Truth as Truth to be maintained, and preserved, and for the same in all things, to be magnified and glorified. As it respects our confidence in the Lord, it is wholly founded on Christ without us. His great and glorious Salvation is made known within us. The revelation of Christ, and of the Father's everlasting love to our persons in Him, is made known to us, by the Holy Ghost, which revelation is made known, and apprehended by us, in the light that is imparted to our new nature: our old nature hath no part, nor concern, nor is it a whit affected by all this. Therefore whilst we have a true, inward, spiritual knowledge of Christ in our souls, and have the inward sense, and evidence hereof, yet this is altogether supernatural. It consists in an intuitive perception of the Truths of Christ; by the which Christ is received into the mind, dwells in the heart; by which means, the influence of his love, life, and death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession is evidentially realized in the soul. This is most certainly the case in all the new-born sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, in whom the Holy Spirit has been pleased to take of the things of Christ, and shew the same unto them. As the Holy Spirit keeps up the glorious subject, Christ, and Salvation in our minds, and keeps us, and fixes our minds on this subject, and leads us to centre in the same, so that at all times we have it, the stay and foundation of all our faith and hope in God, we have an assurance in ourselves, respecting the ground of our confidence before him. That we are in any manner, and measure thus fixed, this is altogether from the Holy Spirit. It is by his inward discovering and increasing our knowledge of the Person, Salvation, grace and fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ to our minds, that we increase in our confidence in the Lord. Hereby we are strengthened, and confirmed in our confidence, that Christ dwelleth in us—That we dwell in Christ. From our own knowledge of him, and our communion

with him, we know that he abideth in us; and this is to us, and it may also be to others who converse with us, a full proof and evidence of the truth thereof, in the confession we make of this, according to our profession of our most holy faith. "We know that our Lord Jesus Christ abideth in us:" and this we are fully assured of, "by his Spirit which dwelleth in us." The Holy Spirit is given to the saints, according to the dispensation of the grace, by the Father, and Christ too: so that this great gift bestowed on the whole church of Christ, is the fruit of the Father's everlasting love, and the effect of our blessed Immanuel's intercession. We have the whole of this, most gloriously set forth in the following scripture, "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus iii. 5-7. The Holy Spirit is the one great Inspirer of the Church—The one Fountain and Principle of life to the whole Church—The one enlightener of the same. He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son: He is an Indweller: He is the Spirit of Christ: He leads into all Truth: He glorifies the Father and the Son: and hereby he leads his beloved ones, into clear and spiritual apprehensions of Christ's indwelling in them, and their indwelling in Him. This being the true state of this grand subject, and the inward and outward evidence the Lord's called people have of the same, therefore the apostle saith, *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* The Holy Spirit by his continuance with us, is an immutable evidence of Christ's being ours—Of his being in us—Of his abiding in us: it being by the Holy Ghost, that we have the actual knowledge of Christ; and communion with him in our own souls. And here it should be observed, that the Holy Ghost is the efficient of all grace within us—The Father is the fountain of everlasting love to us—The Son is the only Saviour; and our whole and complete salvation is in Him alone. We are now, and evermore saved in Him, with an everlasting Salvation; He being revealed in us, from the word, and by the Spirit, He is our object, and subject, We dwell in him, by spiritual contemplations of Him: He dwells in us by his giving us inward and spiritual apprehensions of him: and which is so fully apprehended by us, and realized in our hearts, that we know it to be a reality: and are able to say for ourselves, from the certainty we have of the same, *And hereby we know that he (i. e. Christ) abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* Thus here is an inward, and an outward evidence of personal union, and communion with Christ. We have the one in us, and have the full certainty thereof, so as to be able to say, *And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* The Holy Ghost gives us this evidence in our own souls; which we perceive the truth, and experience the reality of, by the real communion we have with the Lord Jesus Christ, in our own minds: this so influences our whole conversation, as that we give outward evidence to others, that we have been with Jesus. The Spirit given us, is immediately bestowed on us, from Christ: and we are anointed and sealed by him, unto the day of eternal redemption. All this concerns the *we*

and the *us*, spoken of throughout the whole of this, and the two former chapters, in the which *we* and *us*, the apostle includes himself. May the Holy Ghost be pleased, most graciously pleased to shine upon, and bless the subject delivered, so far as may be, for the real benefit of his beloved ones. Grant this Holy Father, for the honor of thy Son Christ Jesus, through the grace of thine Eternal Spirit. Amen.

END OF VOLUME THE FIRST.