

S E R M O N VIII.

ON THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION.

ROMANS, Chap. viii. Ver. 15.

For ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

THIS chapter affords strong consolation, and contains a great variety of cordials, for the strengthening and encouraging the people of God, in running the heavenly race which is marked out and set before them in the word of God. The apostle is here writing to such as had been brought, by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, to know and believe on the Lord Jesus; and who, through the fellowship and communion they had with him, were brought to set their affections on high and heavenly things. He observes to them the dreadful effects which proceed from being carnally minded, and the blessings which proceed from being spiritually minded. At the 8th verse he saith, *So then they that are in the flesh* (that is, in a natural, carnal, unregenerate state) *cannot please God:* and adds in the next verse, *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit;* they having passed in regeneration, from a

state of death to a state of spiritual life. This was their case, and it appeared to be so, inasmuch as, or because, the Spirit of God dwelt in them. The *if* immediately following is not to be considered as an *if* of doubting; for a man either has, or has not the Spirit of Christ. If he has not, he cannot be in any other state than that of unregeneracy; and dying in that state, he cannot see the kingdom of God. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be* (or, inasmuch as, or because) *that the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of Christ, dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Then the apostle proceeds to speak of the blessed effects of Christ's dwelling by his Spirit in his people. *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* Then he goes on to inform such, of the obligations they were under to walk becoming their high rank and dignity. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.* Believers, when they give way to their carnal frames, and indulge their carnal desires, they die to spiritual joys and comforts, a death being thereby brought upon their graces. *But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.*

There is a diversity of judgments amongst the people of God, respecting the meaning of the words which I have now read unto you for my text. Some very great and worthy persons have thought, that the Holy Spirit is spoken of in the words as the Spirit of bondage, as well as the Spirit of adoption; and because in his first work upon the soul, which consists of convincing of sin, shewing the nature of it, and setting before the convinced sinner the wrath of God due unto it; rattling the keys of hell and damnation about the ears of sinners, and shutting them up in unbelief, by shewing and proving to them, that they are in this state by nature, through their fall from God; that hence the Holy Spirit may be considered as, and styled, the Spirit of bondage; especially as this precedes his most blessed work of acting the part of a comforter, and performing the office of the Spirit of adoption. To which others reply, that though souls under the convincing and enlightening efficacy and energy of the Holy Spirit, are filled with terrors, dread, and consternation, and are brought thereby under a spirit of bondage: yet that these effects do not prove the Holy Spirit to be the author of their terrors; nor does the title of the Spirit of bondage belong to him, it being quite opposite and contrary to his blessed office, work, and title, who is the Comforter. And which they argue to be given him, as expressive of what he is to the people of God.

I thought it meet and right to take notice of this, seeing there is express mention made in my text of the Spirit of bondage, and the Spirit of adoption, and

that it is implied, that those persons who were now favoured with the Spirit of adoption, had prior to this received the Spirit of bondage, which inclined and subjected them to fear. My own thoughts are, that the genuine meaning of the words may be known by the following considerations. This church at Rome consisted, in a great measure, of believing Jews; who during the former dispensation were under a spirit of bondage, because their legal sacrifices could never take away sin; and the commands and precepts of the ceremonial law being so many, various, and burdensome, they were kept in perpetual bondage: under that dispensation they were more inclinable to a legal spirit, than believers are under the gospel; who are favoured with a clearer, fuller, and more glorious discovery and revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in all the ends and designs of his wonderful death.

In attempting to open and explain the passage before us, in a dependance upon our Lord Jesus Christ for his unction, blessing, and presence, I will endeavour to divide our text into the following heads:

First, there is express mention made, of a Spirit of bondage and of a Spirit of adoption.

Secondly, the effects of these are to be considered. The Spirit of bondage inclines to fear, the Spirit of adoption to liberty. By the one we are subjected to fear; by the other we are brought into liberty, being enabled to cry Abba, Father: and then,

Thirdly, it deserves notice, that both the Spirit of bondage, and the Spirit of adoption, are said to be received.

It must be worth our consideration in opening our first particular, to inquire what this Spirit of bondage is. I conclude that it is not, nor can be, the Spirit of God; because it stands opposed to the Spirit of adoption; and besides, it is contrary to the nature and design of his work and office in the soul. I grant, that when a soul is first awakened by the Spirit of God, it is subject to a variety of fears; but it will not follow from thence, that he works those fears, or is the author of them. Rather then, this seems to me to be the real state of the case: a soul having received light and life from the Spirit of the living God, seeing the infinite pollution and filthiness of sin, and experiencing the total corruption and ruin of every faculty of soul and body, that spirit of legality which is in all men by nature, is at once wrought upon and alarmed, possessing the mind with secret doubts and suspicions concerning the love, grace, and mercy of God our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to save; and hereby the soul, though truly awakened, is brought into a state of legal bondage. This is agreeable to the experience of all who are truly called of God; though the Holy Spirit opened their eyes on purpose to give them to see how much they needed Christ, and to receive his testimony concerning Jesus; and though, when he is pleased to convince of sin, and to give the conscience to feel the guilt of it, it is with a design to drive the soul to Christ, and to make way for preaching Christ and his unsearchable riches to the awakened soul; yet the person thus awakened,

is naturally inclined to distrust Christ, to neglect his salvation, and to seek to be, and to expect to find himself better, that he may be thereby fitted for the adorable Saviour. The Holy Spirit holds up to view the moral law as a glass, to discover to the soul its cursed and condemned state by the fall, and to make way for manifesting how Christ hath been made sin and a curse for us ; but yet such a person is more inclined to take in and receive what the law says and declares, than what the gospel holds forth concerning Christ and his righteousness. So that it appears to me that the Spirit of bondage spoken of in my text, is not the Spirit of God, nor his work upon the soul ; but the spirit of a man which is in him. It is a man's own spirit, and which inclines and subjects him to fear. This spirit in the unrenewed is in bondage to divers sinful lusts and pleasures ; and in the regenerated it is apt to rebel, and under the influence of legal principles, is inclined to bondage, and subjects the mind oftentimes to slavish fears. As for instance : his own spirit acting and working legally upon him, he is apt to cast away his confidence in the Lord, and from the consideration of sins dwelling in him, sometimes is led to conclude, that he hath no part in the Lord Christ. He, by reasoning, speaking, and praying in a legal manner, is often led into spiritual bondage : the mind is oppressed with fear, the exercise of faith is weakened, and the soul is terrified with frightful thoughts and apprehensions concerning its eternal state. At which times, Satan also will be sure to act his part, and put on the appearance of an

angel of light. He will even suggest scripture to the mind, but it shall be such only as will serve to distress the soul more than before: such passages as these, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*; and *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*: he will present them in his own light to the mind, will keep the thoughts upon them, and hold a long conversation with the person; and then suggest, how can he dare to believe: you who feel guilt, who find no comfort in yourself, who experience so much darkness and deadness in your soul, to conceive that Christ is your's, your beloved, and that his desire is towards you! Yea, so closely, secretly, and imperceptibly, will Satan work upon the mind, that at times the real child of God, will not be able to discern Satan's hand herein: but such thoughts and suggestions being quite suitable to the man's frame at that time, he will not only look upon all this as right, but even conceive that the Spirit of God is thus teaching and influencing him. Now all this must incline the mind to fear, and subject the person to doubts concerning his interest in Christ; and it proceeds from a Spirit of bondage.

I have already intimated, that Satan will act upon, and attack the child of God, under the form and appearance of an angel of light; that he will bring scripture to the mind, and fix, if possible, the thoughts upon it. This being the case, and one of his deepest designs, it being his very master-piece, it may not be amiss to ask, how shall I know when a scripture is applied to my mind, whether it comes from the

Holy Spirit, or from Satan? I answer, by the effects it hath upon you, and works in you. If the Holy Spirit operates on your minds, by bringing his word home, and applying it to your hearts, these will be the effects accompanying or following it; it will comfort your hearts, quiet your minds, and refresh your spirits, and will have a divine and heavenly influence upon you. But if it comes from Satan, it will always produce these effects; it will greatly puzzle and perplex your spirits, it will lead you from Christ into yourselves, and will always be so ordered, as to make you doubt of your interest in your heavenly Father's love. Besides, they will always be scriptures which are by no means suitable to your present state and case. Whereas, when the blessed Spirit applies a passage of scripture to the heart, he accompanies it with his own light and power, and gives the soul to experience spiritual liberty and freedom by means of it. Satan hath a greater power, and is more capable of working upon us by suggesting things to our minds, in order to weaken our faith, than we can conceive. And in his acting upon us, he will consider what bait will best take. Therefore, when we are under a carnal frame, exercising a self-righteous spirit, influenced by legal principles, then he cannot work more effectually upon us than by the word of God; which he brings to our remembrance, as condemning us, which he gets us to look at in his view of it; prevailing on us to receive it, in the light in which he proposes it. Our faith is weakened, our fears, guilt, and unbelief are strengthened,

and we are cast down with discouraging thoughts concerning our state before the Lord. We are too apt to expect all Satan's temptations to be to outward acts of sin; whereas they are not. He does not so commonly try to draw the children of God into outward acts of sin, as to weaken, as much as he possibly can, their fast hold of Christ Jesus. Many discouraging thoughts the children of God entertain, which Satan and their own unbelief are the sole cause of. It would be your mercy, O ye children of God Most High! if your understandings were enlightened, and your hearts established in this one truth; that all your discouragements, let them be what they may, arise not from, nor are they the fruits and effects of the Holy Spirit's teaching; but spring from, and arise out of your own unbelieving hearts, and are strengthened, increased, and encouraged by Satan, your sworn and avowed enemy. I repeat it: every fear, every unbelieving thought that believers entertain, arises from their own legal hearts, and is not the fruit and effect of the Spirit of God dwelling in them; it being his most blessed work and office in the soul, to comfort the broken hearted, to discover the infinite treasures of grace and mercy which are in Christ, and to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto his people; to shew them their personal interest in him; and to put them by believing into the actual possession of Christ, his grace and blessings. If these things be so, then you, whose cases and experiences I have been now opening and laying forth, may receive this instruction, to cast all your cares upon the Lord, to

believe away all your doubts and fears, and to triumph because of his word : for therein, *Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. Rejoice therefore in the Lord, O ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*

Thus I have endeavoured to lay before you, the Spirit of bondage, and shewn how it inclines to doubts and fears; and I might add, that no believer is entirely free from its attacks, but is in danger from it. There is a legal bias in all our hearts; and the Holy Ghost only can fetch it out of us: and it must be by revealing and bringing into the conscience, Christ and his blood, and making known therein the efficacy of that atonement, which the Son of God hath made, by the one-offering of himself. By the Spirit's sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon the conscience, and bringing the heart to believe its everlasting virtue and efficacy to cleanse from all sin before the Lord, and that for ever, guilt is removed, the peace of God is produced in the mind, and the love of God is brought into the heart; and then the soul is enabled to say, with comfort and gratitude, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* You, who are believers, ought to be upon your guard against all the self-righteous attacks, to which you may be exposed, and it will be your spiritual wisdom to fear and suspect every thing which inclines to legality. You should look entirely and eternally off from yourselves, to him, who was wounded for your transgressions, who was bruised for your iniquities, by whose stripes you are healed

whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and who hath loved you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood.

Having considered the first particular of my text, and shewn you that there is a Spirit of bondage—what it is—and how and by what means it is influenced and inclined to fear, I proceed, secondly, to what our text holds forth concerning the Spirit of adoption. *Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

The effects of the Spirit of adoption are, liberty, confidence, and holy delight. As those persons had received the Spirit of bondage, which inclined to fear; the receiving of the Spirit of adoption must fill their hearts with the greater and more grateful sense of the favour; liberty being the sweeter, for the former bondage in which those persons had been held. So that joy and holy gladness must now possess their minds, and cause them abundantly to rejoice. Were I to preach upon, and set forth unto you, the whole of the Holy Spirit's work upon the souls of God's elect, as spoken of in the sacred Scriptures, and describe his convincing, converting, and regenerating influences, it would require more time than the present discourse will admit of. Such a subject would demand and require of me in the first place, to treat of the distinct personality and eternal Deity of the Holy Spirit, and would lead in the second place, to the consideration of the most gracious and glorious part, work, and office, which he sustains in the economy of salvation. This would direct our minds to the con-

templation of his concern with, and the acts which he performed upon Christ our eternal Head, and all-glorious Mediator. It was the Holy and Eternal Spirit which framed the human nature, and tied the marriage knot of union between the Son of God and the Man Christ Jesus. He sanctified the human nature which the Son of God assumed into personal union, and made it the seat and fountain of all habitual grace and holiness. It was by the Holy Spirit's visible descent upon Christ, that he was made known to John the Baptist, to be the promised Messiah, the Son of God. And he had a concern in the whole of Christ's work, dwelt in the human nature, and raised it from the dead; so he likewise descended on the day of Pentecost, and still descends to crown Christ Lord and Saviour in the hearts of his chosen and believing people. As he descended and remained on Christ, so he does also with the church of Christ: for thus runs the promise: *This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, (i. e. with Zion's converts) My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever, Isa. lix. 21.* And agreeably hereunto our Lord promiseth, *That his Spirit shall abide with his Church for ever.*

But my text and subject do not lead me to speak of the Holy Spirit's powerful operations in regeneration, and in quickening and making the soul alive to God; in revealing Christ to the enlightened understanding, whereby the will is drawn to choose him, the heart to

receive him, and the conscience to rest satisfied with him: but I am concerned to treat of the Holy Spirit's work and office as the Spirit of adoption, *Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

And here, in the first place, I would observe the title given to the Holy Spirit, which is *the Spirit of adoption*. God has loved his people with an everlasting love, and *predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved*. This grace of adoption was bestowed upon the elect in divine predestination. It is not what Christ hath done for us, nor what the Holy Spirit doth in us, which makes us the children of God. Christ died for us under the consideration of our being the children of God. He, by his death, was to *gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad*, John xi. 52. As by God's act of eternal election, Christ and his people were eternally united by the bond of everlasting love; and in consequence of this union, which subsisted from eternity between them, he undertook their cause, became their substitute, and in time became the author of their salvation: so the Holy Spirit doth in his own time discover to those persons for whom Christ died, their union with the Lord Jesus; and having manifested it unto them, by revealing Christ by the word unto them, and then revealing him in them, *the hope of glory*, he sheds abroad in their hearts the love of God their heavenly

Father, and gives them to know the love wherewith he hath loved them. He warms their souls with a discovery of it, and proves to them, that God's love towards them in his dear Son is sovereign, rich, full, and free; that it contains all the blessings of time, and all the glories of eternity; that it was from eternity what it now is, and will remain the same to eternity: that it knows no change; and that as it is in the fountain, the heart of God, it is inconceivable and incomprehensible; that Christ with all the blessings of his eternal redemption, the Spirit, with all his grace and consolations, are only the gifts and fruits of God's great love, wherewith he hath loved us. To be a Son by eternal predestination and adoption, is of all God's acts of grace towards us, and upon us, the greatest. Though Adam might be called the Son of God by creation; and as some think, the angels are so called in the book of Job, who being created on the first day, rejoiced when they beheld the beautiful work of creation, when these *morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy*; yet are they never said to be the sons of God by adoption. Hence, a divine, a luminary of the first magnitude, since the apostolic age, I mean the renowned Zanchy, saith, "that to be a Son of God by adoption, is more and greater, than to be holy, or to be in heaven. Angels (saith he) are holy, and in heaven; yet are they not the children and sons of God by adoption." This is an eternal and immanent act in the mind of God, and regeneration is the evidence of it. The former makes us sons, the latter gives us the nature

of sons. And the Spirit of adoption is sent down from heaven, into our hearts of sin and wo, to witness to our spirits, that we are the children of God. *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father.* Let it then be observed, that God having predestinated his chosen ones to the adoption of children by Christ Jesus, and these persons falling into a state of sin and guilt through the first Adam's apostacy, JEHOVAH the Father gave his only begotten Son to save his people from their sins. They had their iniquities laid upon him; he made full and perfect atonement for them; by his stripes they are healed; and in his righteousness they are perfectly righteous in the sight of law and justice. God's law being magnified; and justice satisfied, by the blessed Immanuel; and the Father having freely forgiven his people all trespasses, he sheds abroad richly and abundantly the Holy Spirit, in his gifts and graces upon them; and by him they are born again, and made partakers of a spiritual birth, or divine nature. He dwells in them as the principle of all spiritual life in their souls, and consecrates their hearts for the enjoyment and fellowship of God the Father and the Son; and he begins and carries on that life of communion between them and believers here, which will be perfectly and uninterruptedly enjoyed by them in heaven to all eternity. The Spirit of adoption is the Spirit of God, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and who is sent by the Father and the Son to shed abroad the love of God in the heart, to give a real enjoyment

of it, and to fill the soul with joy and peace in believing. He comes to testify of Christ; and by taking of the things which are his, and shewing them to his people, he draws their hearts to him; and by opening and discovering unto them the freeness and fulness of divine grace, and the exceeding great and precious promises which God hath given unto his people, he leads them to know their interest in Christ; and helps them in his name, person, blood, and righteousness, to approach their heavenly Father with holy pleasure and delight. These are the blessed effects of the Spirit of adoption being received; hence we cry, *Abba, Father*, which expresses the vehemency of affection, and the freedom and liberty of children. *Abba, Father*. Father is the explanation of the word *Abba*. The words in the original, say the learned, are, the one a Syriac word, the other a Greek, and signify Father, Father, or *My Father*. And Dr. Gill observes, and it is quite easy for each of you to make the same observation, that the word *Abba*, reads backward the same as forward, and implies that God is the Father of his people, in adversity as well as prosperity; in times of spiritual desertion, as well as in times of spiritual prosperity. God has taken the style and title of *our Father*, to denote the relation which he stands in to his people; and has taken all the bowels of a Father's affection towards them, and will remember them with everlasting kindness. He sends his Spirit to make it known to them, and to make them perfectly happy in the enjoyment of it; the experience of which, sometimes, fills their hearts

with joy unspeakable, and causes them to cry out with admiration, *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* It is actually bestowed upon them, and enjoyed by them, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. O what marvellous grace is this! for believers under the blessed witnessing of the Lord the Spirit, to be enabled to call God, Father!—*My Father!* a name which encourages faith, increases and confirms hope, and draws forth the whole heart in love to him, who is love itself. It serves to comfort their hearts, to encourage their expectations, and to give them boldness at all times to approach the Lord. *My Father,* it implies a sense of interest in him as such, and what greater blessing can the Lord himself bestow upon us than this; to give us his Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of adoption, a spiritual perception and knowledge of the benefit, and to fill our heart with the comfort contained in it. This relation is always one and the same, and it can never be dissolved. Though an earthly parent may disinherit his, yet the Lord cannot, will not, disinherit his children. *If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;* and to such the promise is, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

What an amazing view of the bowels of our heavenly Father's mercy have we presented to us, in the parable of the prodigal son, which may be considered as descriptive of the Lord's dealing with his poor returning prodigals; who, after receiving innumerable

favours and blessings from him, wander far from God in the paths of sin and error: and yet their heavenly Father's eye is still upon them, his heart is toward them, and he waits to be gracious unto them. The poor prodigal went into a far country, left his father's house, and wasted his substance with riotous living; thinking nothing about his father's house, or love, until afflictions sanctified, brought him to the use and exercise of his spiritual senses. Then finding himself far from home, feeling his pinching wants and distress, he begins to think upon the love and care his Father had shewn unto him, and exercised towards him in times that were past. *When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* It was indeed the bowels of mercy in the father, which moved towards this poor out-cast, and brought him back again to the fold of God. *And he arose and came to his father.* But mark it! *When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.* Oh, the bowels of compassion which our heavenly Father discovers towards his children in every state and case into which they are brought! His eye is never withdrawn from them; and in their worst cases, his bowels of mercy melt towards them; and this melts their hearts and puts them upon returning unto him. The prodigal, though he had abused his father's goodness, was tired with his

father's house and company, and had reduced himself to a most abject state of penury and distress; yet his father's heart is still towards him. He finds his compassions fail not: and it is more than sufficient to melt his heart, to break and subdue his rebellious will. Under the expressions of his father's love, the returning prodigal cries out, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* A son he was, though an ungrateful, sinful, and unworthy one. As a son he was received, owned, and acknowledged. And it may serve to teach us, that God is not ashamed to own his children; nor the relation he bears to them as their Father in Christ Jesus, though they are often ashamed of him, and act altogether unworthy of the high honour and privilege of being *the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.* The prodigal may be to us an emblem of a poor backsliding sinner, when through the compassion his father had manifested to him, in looking upon him when he was yet a great way off, and falling upon his neck and saluting him with some heart-reviving thoughts, that, *with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption,* he falls down at the feet of sovereign grace, saying, *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;* but the father's grace superabounds, and mercy breaks forth in a superabundant manner! He raises the poor, guilty, polluted wanderer, from his knees, will hear no more of his doleful complaint: but to the revival of his heart, and for the comfort of this poor, penitent backslider, *he said to his servants, Bring*

forth the best robe, and put it on him. Let him have a sight of the immaculate obedience my coequal Son wrought out for him, and let his ears be charmed with your testimony out of the written word concerning the endless purity and duration of it. *And put a ring on his hand;* which being circular, is expressive of God's love, which is from everlasting to everlasting: and as a ring put on the finger in marriage, is a seal and confirmation of love, so here it is expressive of God's embracing the prodigal in the arms of his everlasting love, and his giving him some blessed experience and evidence of it. *And put shoes on his feet:* for the Lord must prepare and fit the soul for running the way of his commandments. *And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.* Which expresses the delight which the Father of mercies takes in manifesting his mercy, in receiving poor returning sinners graciously, and in discovering his love freely unto them. *For this my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found.* Sirs, what a blessed picture is here of the compassions of the Lord towards his people! And have you not been, are not some of you partakers of the same grace and compassion? You have reason then to sing with David, *Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.* To know God to be our Father in Christ Jesus; to enjoy his love shed abroad in our

hearts by the Holy Ghost ; and to approach the Lord with love and delight, this is truly blessed ! And leads me,

Thirdly, to observe, that both the spirit of bondage, and the Spirit of adoption, are said to be received. *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* The spirit of bondage, of which I have already spoken largely, may be said to be received from the knowledge of the law, which being admitted into the conscience, stirs up a sense of divine wrath. The spirit of man unrenewed, and un subdued by faith, is naturally inclined to take in what the law saith ; so that the more he attends unto it, the more legal he becomes. By this means a spirit of bondage is increased, and in this way may be said to be received.

I shall apply myself more particularly to the consideration of the Spirit of adoption, which believers are said to receive. *Ye have received the Spirit of adoption.* This is one of the greatest gifts which God bestows upon his people, and which is received by means of the gospel. He gave his Son for them : he gives his Spirit to them, to live, dwell, and abide with them for ever. The gift of the Holy Ghost is as great as the gift of Christ himself. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son* to be a covenant for the people ; and he hath been manifested in the flesh, and the ends of his living and dying have been answered. All covenant engagements between the Father and the Son are accomplished. All covenant blessings

are in the hand of the Holy Spirit, whose work and office it is to bring home the elect, by effectual calling, to Christ, and to make known and apply to their souls the salvation which Christ has finished and wrought out for them. He comes from heaven, in consequence of Christ's atonement and ascension, and proclaims salvation from the Lord for wretched sinners. He enters their hearts of sin and wo, and makes known the salvation of God. He puts them, by believing in the person and work of Christ, into possession of the things which accompany salvation; and then he becomes a Comforter unto them. They then receive him as the Spirit of adoption, who witnesseth to their spirits that they are the children of God. Believers are not praying for the Holy Spirit to regenerate them, for they have already received him as a life-giving, regenerating, and sanctifying Spirit. Every real believer is made alive to God, and is living by the faith of the Son of God. But it may be, that many believers have not so received the Spirit of God, as the Spirit of adoption, as to be enabled at all times to call God, *My Father*. The Spirit of adoption is the gift of the Father's love, and the fruit of Christ's ascension; and he is sent down from heaven on purpose to make the heart perfectly happy upon its return to God; to enable it to plead the everlasting efficacy of the life and death of Christ in the conscience; and to encourage the soul to draw near to God with holy freedom, liberty, and confidence. By him we are taught to love our heavenly Father, for the great love wherewith he hath loved us. He

removes our fears, resolves our doubts, satisfies our scruples, and answers that great question for us, How shall I know that I am in Christ? This he himself makes known. It would be well if real believers would consider this, that it is the prerogative-royal of God the Spirit, to make known Christ to the soul. Therefore instead of ransacking our hearts for marks and signs of grace, it would be much better to apply immediately to the Holy Spirit by prayer, for the resolution of all our doubts, and for satisfaction in this point, which is of eternal moment. We cannot live in communion with Christ, till we know our union to him; and the Holy Spirit discovers this, to the end that we may live upon, and go on to glorify him. As God out of his own free love and grace, chose the elect in Christ before all worlds; out of the same love he gave Christ for them; and from the same love he sends down his Spirit into their hearts, and he is received as the free gift of God's grace, who seals up believers unto the day of redemption. This should be observed, that as God looks at nothing in us as a cause or reason why he should love us; so the Holy Spirit does not come to comfort us, by giving us a sight and view of our own graces; but he comforts us with the discoveries of God's free love in Christ Jesus, which he fills believers with a sense of. Paul prays thus for the called and regenerated people of God: *Now the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.* I add no more. May the Lord command his blessing. *Amen.*