

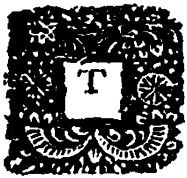


SERMON XVIII.

Of communicating christian experience.

PSALM lxvi. 16.

Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.



HIS psalm you will easily discern is made up of praise and thanksgiving, and what indeed should be the habitual employment of christians when the Lord hath *dealt* thus *bountifully* with them, as he had done with the inspired author. In the words, more particularly, we may observe,

FIRST, the person speaking. And I think it is generally agreed it is king *David*; one who, though he enjoyed the crown of *Israel*, was not ashamed of the cross of *Christ*, nor the experience he had of the grace of God; but calls upon all that feared the Lord to come, and attend to what he could declare of his
Fa-

Father's love to him. And in this he may well shame, alas! but too many christians in our day, who either are too rich or too poor, too great or too mean, for serious and friendly conversation about the things of God. *David* thought it not beneath him to invite not this or the other favourite only, but all them that feared the Lord, to this entertainment. You may also observe,

SECONDLY, the invitation itself; it is to a spiritual entertainment, a feast that to the world looks mean, but when the Lord owns it with his presence, it is in reality a *feast of fat things*. Observe he did not call them to hear an enumeration of the mighty feats of war in which he had been engaged, of the exploits he had performed, and the victories he had won; but, *come, says he, and bear what God hath done for my soul*. He invites them to attend to the account he had to give of his religious experience. From which we may learn, that we are not to hide the dealings of God with our souls from our fellow-christians, but, upon every proper occasion, to be ready to open our hearts, and with the utmost freedom declare the gracious experience we have had of his goodness to us. Again,

THIRDLY, we may take notice of the persons *David* addresses on this occasion. And it was not confined to the princes and lords of his court, or to the mighty men that fought under his banners; but directed to them *that*

fear the Lord; and to *all* of them, which may be understood as the general character of believers, who *rejoice with trembling*, or approach to the Lord in every duty with humble reverence, at the same time that it is with holy boldness; who fear the Lord with a filial awe, though they are strangers to a slavish bondage; these in general he calls to hear what God had done for him. Or else, it may be an intimation of his desire that the *fearful in Zion*, and more especially those believers who were ready to entertain dreadful imaginations, whose souls were oppressed with fear, should attend to the account he had to give of his religious experience. “*Come, says he, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul. Perhaps there may be something in my case that may suit your souls, or encourage you in the way of the Lord: however, you will certainly hear something that may tend to glorify the riches of his grace. Come therefore and hear, and leave the success to the Lord.*”

FROM the words thus opened and introduced, we have the following doctrinal observation:

THAT a child of God, under the influence of his Spirit, reflecting on the great things God hath done for him, cannot but be much affected himself, and exceedingly desirous that, for the glory of God, and the good of others, they should be acquainted with it.

Come,

Come, and bear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my Soul. And here,

- I. I SHALL consider the matter of this declaration, and some instances that the believer, on such an occasion as this, may be supposed to have his eye more immediately upon, when he expresses himself in this manner.
- II. THE several sorts of persons to whom a christian, when led by the same spirit with the psalmist, would declare these things.
- III. THE ends he should propose in this duty. And,
- IV. THE manner in which it should be performed. And then,

I. I SHALL consider the matter of this declaration, and some instances that the psalmist might be supposed to have his eye more immediately upon, when he expresses himself in this manner, which may very well be supposed to take in two heads.

1. WHAT God had done *for* his soul in his covenant, and by his Son. And,

2. WHAT he had wrought *in* his soul, as a consequence, and manifestation of his interest in those blessings.

I. WE may suppose the psalmist here had a special regard to what God had done *for* his

soul, in his covenant, and by his Son. And here doubtless he was not unmindful of his having loved him with an everlasting love, and chosen him to everlasting life. And accordingly every believer, under the like spiritual influence, is ready to address his fellow-christians in some such language as this :

“ See here a poor unworthy creature whom
 “ the Lord set his love upon even from ever-
 “ lasting. Notwithstanding he was thoroughly
 “ apprised, I should forfeit every thing by my
 “ rebellion against him ; yet this was no ob-
 “ struction to the kind designs of his grace. See
 “ one whom he has distinguished as the object
 “ of his special favour. He hath chosen me
 “ from before the foundation of the world, and,
 “ as a consequence of this, has provided a
 “ powerful and suitable Saviour for me, one
 “ who was able and willing to sustain the
 “ weight of my guilt, and to make sufficient
 “ atonement for it. He was at the expence
 “ of parting with his own Son out of his bo-
 “ som upon my account : and, when there
 “ could be no possible relief any where else,
 “ he laid help upon him, who was in himself
 “ mighty to save ; when he could not save
 “ me consistent with his own justice, without
 “ a sufficient satisfaction, he himself provided
 “ a lamb without spot to die for me. And
 “ when I had nothing to induce the Lord
 “ *Jesus* to take the burden of my iniquities upon
 “ him, being all polluted and in my blood,
 “ he freely offered himself, and said to the Fa-
 “ ther

“ ther, *Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is*
 “ *written of me, to do thy will O God^a!* The
 “ proposal was no sooner made in the cove-
 “ nant of peace, that was between them both,
 “ than it was agreed upon, and accordingly the
 “ Lord *laid on him my iniquities,* and so I
 “ was preserved in *Christ* safe from the hands
 “ of avenging justice, as interested in his me-
 “ diatorial undertaking. But that was not
 “ all. In the fulness of time, this same *Je-*
 “ *sus* came, and was content to take upon
 “ him the form of a servant, to submit to all
 “ the ignominies that sinful and abandoned
 “ men could inflict upon him. He *hid not his*
 “ *face from shame and spitting,* he endured
 “ the rage of devils, and drank the cup of his
 “ Father’s wrath, was *bruised for my iniqui-*
 “ *ties, and the chastisement of my peace was*
 “ *upon him, that so, by his stripes I might be*
 “ *healed^b.* He hath thus *by one offering for*
 “ *ever perfected* this great work^c. And as
 “ justice has discharged him, by raising him
 “ from the dead, and fixing him at the right
 “ hand of God; so now I am even risen with
 “ him, and set down with him, as he is my
 “ head, and I am a living member of his
 “ body. See, O my friends, the Lord hath done
 “ all this for me; and if you consider the vast
 “ disproportion between him and me, that he
 “ is *the high and lofty one who inhabiteth eter-*
 “ *nity,*

^a Heb. x. 9.^b Isai. liii. 5.^c Heb. x. 14.

“ nity, and I a poor despicable worm, not wor-
 “ thy of his notice ; what grace is here ! Nor
 “ is this all ; I am not only, *in my best estate, but*
 “ *vanity, yea less than nothing and vanity ;* but in
 “ my natural state I was an *enemy to God*, and
 “ he did all this for me while I was such. This
 “ is love indeed ! Herein he *commends his love*
 “ *to me, that when I was without strength*
 “ *Christ died for me*^d.” Thus the believer,
 upon proper occasions, runs over the wonders
 of redeeming grace, and considers the love of
 God in its origin, as arising merely of his own
 good pleasure, and in its consequences as reach-
 ing to the soul’s welfare in time, and to eternity.
 And while he is reflecting on these things, his
 heart burns within him, and from what he
 feels in himself, he cannot but be solicitous
 that others should join with him in his won-
 der and thankfulness : and accordingly *from*
the abundance of his heart his mouth speaketh,
Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell
you what he hath done for my soul. He hath *re-*
deemed me from destruction, and crowned me with
loving kindness and tender mercies^e ; set me
 above princes, in admitting me to a place in his
 favour ; and he can now smile upon me with due
 glory to his justice, and delight over me to do me
 good, consistent with the purity of his nature,
 and the righteousness of his law. But again,

2. WE may suppose the good man to have
 regard to what the Lord had wrought *in his*
 soul,

^d Rom. v. 8.

^e Psal. ciii. 4.

soul, as well as what he done *for* him; and so he may be looked upon as calling to his friends to attend to the account of his experience of the goodness of God to him. And then you may suppose him to bespeak them to this purpose.

“ I was once by nature a *a child of wrath* as well
“ as others, *an enemy to God thro’ wicked works*;
“ running into all excess of riot, sinning against
“ him without remorse, or any sense of my
“ danger, without God and without *Christ*,
“ and so without hope, in the world. Once
“ I was in worse than *Egyptian* darkness, ig-
“ norant of God, a stranger to myself, un-
“ acquainted with the way of God’s salvation,
“ a professed enemy to the divine law, and a
“ thorough adversary to every thing that is
“ good: but, through almighty grace, it is not
“ so with me now. The Lord came at such,
“ or such a time, and touched my soul with
“ his powerful hand, and I began to find the
“ terrors of the law stick fast in me. I could
“ not sin at so cheap a rate as before: no, as
“ I began to see the purity of God’s law I was
“ most severely lashed by it, and thought hell
“ and destruction must inevitably be my portion.
“ While it was thus with me I found no rest
“ for my soul, nothing but darkness and con-
“ fusion, horror and despair, till the Lord led
“ me to the city of refuge, and discovered him-
“ self in his Son to my soul: and then it was
“ that I emerged from darkness, and began
“ to find myself light in the Lord, beholding

“ a beauty in the method of my recovery re-
 “ vealed in the gospel: then it was that I wil-
 “ lingly cast down all the weapons of my
 “ opposition, and desired to be subject to
 “ none but *Jesus*. How much soever before
 “ I was for saving myself, now, it was the
 “ desire of my heart that *Christ* alone should
 “ be exalted; that he should have all the
 “ glory, as the work was all his. Thus the
 “ Lord has led me in his own way, and
 “ brought me to his Son, enabling me to see
 “ my need of him, and his meetness to assist
 “ and save me, as *made of God* to me *wisdom,*
 “ *righteousness, sanctification, and redemption* ^f;
 “ and, at the same time, I hope, revealed him
 “ in me as the hope of my glory, and shewed
 “ me, in the discoveries of his love, that he
 “ was mine. Then this, or the other promise
 “ was brought to my soul, and set home with
 “ peculiar warmth. He said unto me, *Be of*
 “ *good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee* ^g, *I have*
 “ *blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions,*
 “ *and as a cloud thy sins* ^h: *Be not dismayed, for*
 “ *I am thy God* ⁱ, *I have made an everlasting*
 “ *covenant with thee, even the sure mercies of*
 “ *David* ^k: *I have loved thee, with an ever-*
 “ *lasting love; therefore with loving kindness*
 “ *have I drawn thee* ^l. Thus with cords of
 “ love was I won to *Jesus Christ*, as with the
 “ bands of a man; and at this, and the other
 “ time,

^f 1 Cor. i. 30. ^g Mat. ix. 2. ^h Isai. xlv. 22. ⁱ Chap. xli. 10. ^k Chap. lv. 3. ^l Jer. xxxi. 3.

“ time, he told me, in the secret whispers of
 “ his Spirit, that *my beloved was mine, and I was*
 “ *his* ^m. And not only so, but, ever since, he
 “ hath guided me by his counsel, and com-
 “ forted me with his love: and though, alas!
 “ but too often, through the strength of cor-
 “ ruptions, I have sinned against him; yet he
 “ hath not been wanting in the discoveries of
 “ pardoning grace, hath shed abroad his love
 “ in my heart, and bid me return unto him
 “ for he had redeemed me.” Thus we may
 suppose the good man addressing his friends
 when he says “ *Come and bear what the Lord*
 “ *has done for my soul. He hath brought me*
 “ *out of darkness into his marvellous light* ⁿ; *he*
 “ *hath set my feet upon a rock, and established*
 “ *my goings* ^o. And now with pleasure I can
 “ look forward; and, from what I have for-
 “ merly felt of his goodness, with comfort
 “ conclude, that he will *never leave me, nor*
 “ *forsake me* ^p.” And in this we must suppose
 the psalmist was very far from being alone: for
 there never was a believer in the world but
 (tho’ he might not be able to be so very parti-
 cular, yet) could set to his seal that he had
 experienced somewhat of this nature. And I
 am sure, those that are thus led by the Spirit
 of *Christ* will be solicitous that others should
 hear, and know what the Lord hath done for
 them. And thus I have finished the first ge-
 neral

^m Cant. ii. 16. ⁿ 1 Pet. ii. 9. ^o Psal. xl. 2. ^p Heb.
 xiii. 5.

neral head, concerning the matter of this declaration, or what it was *Dauid* must be supposed to have his eye upon, when he says, *Come, and bear what God hath done for my soul.* I come now to consider,

II. THE several sorts of persons to whom a christian, when led by the same spirit with the psalmist, would *declare* these things. And,

I. THE saints would *declare* them to sinners, making no profession of religion, when they observe them concerned about their eternal welfare. And I am thoroughly persuaded the Lord hath owned this to many souls. If we hear sinners enquiring the way to *Zion*, with their faces ever so little inclined thitherward, methinks, we should gladly lay hold on any such opportunity to declare to them what God hath done for us, and the way he led us, when we were in the same case. It is true we may exhort, advise, and direct them; but as example generally influences more than precept, so, if we can say to them not only, we would have them do this or that, but at the same time, declare to them the remarkable dealings of God with our own souls, when we were in the same circumstances, it will be very likely to have a salutary effect. And if we relate the comforts with which we have been comforted, it may prevent them from sorrowing as those who are without hope, since the same Lord, who sup-

supported and delivered us, is able to do the same for them. It is true we are not to *cast our pearls before swine*; that is, we have no call to tell our experience to every profligate sinner, for, as such feel nothing of it, so they would rather turn it into banter and ridicule. But methinks, it should be no objection to us, when we see persons seriously inquiring after the way of salvation, that they are ignorant and weak. No, if we have but the least apprehension that any degree of the fear of God is before their eyes, we may safely follow the psalmist's example, and call upon them, to *come and bear what God hath done for our souls*. Thus, for instance, suppose we hear a poor soul crying out. "O
" I feel my sins as a burden too heavy for me
" to bear! I could be glad to know which way,
" if it were possible, I might be pardoned and
" accepted. But alas! I am ready to fear the
" Lord hath cast me off, that he will never
" have a gracious thought towards me." Upon such an occasion, what can be more natural than for us to begin, and declare, that when we were in this very case, the Lord led us this, or the other way, into the knowledge of the compleatness of *Christ's* satisfaction, and shewed us where we were to flee for refuge, so as to find peace? And thus we should seize such opportunities not only to preach *Christ* as the only way of salvation, but to declare that we have, in our own experience, found him to be so, and have obtained relief and safety in trust-
ing

ing in him. Thus we are to *declare what God hath done for our souls*, to assist and encourage poor awakened sinners; but more especially are we to do this,

2. To believers. And,

(1.) To those who are but babes in *Christ*, weak in faith, that are full of doubts and hesitations, who cannot venture to conclude they have an interest in the Lord *Jesus Christ*, and yet dare not cast away all their confidence. That it is the pleasure of the Lord that the church should abound with these, every day's experience confirms. For where you meet with one strong christian, perhaps you may find many weak and trembling ones. Well! we should never hear one of these complaining, but, as a proper relief, we should look back upon our own experience, and ask ourselves, "Was I never in such a case as this? And if so, then let me endeavour to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and say to them, *Come and hear what God hath done for my soul.*" And it hath been often observed that the Lord has owned this, to the comfort and establishment of his little ones. "What! saith the poor soul, was this or the other friend in the same case with myself? And hath the Lord delivered them? As I am sure he had no regard to any superior qualifications that might be as an argument to it; so I am resolved, in the strength of his grace, to put my trust in him.

" Why

“ Why should I be cast down, since he who
 “ hath delivered this, or the other believer,
 “ can, if he pleases, deliver me ? ” Thus we
 should declare what God hath done for our
 souls to the weak in *Christ's* flock. But again,

(2.) THIS is also a duty even to the strongest
 faint in the world, to those who are got into the
 highest class. You know this is the character
 of the children of God, that *they speak often one
 to another*^a; and that not only about the things
 of God in general, but about what they have
 felt in their own souls. They should, as often
 as they have opportunity, and especially in their
 best frames, recount what God has done for
 them in times past, and communicate also their
 present experiences to their fellow christians.
 Thus I have gone through the second general
 head, and have shewn you to whom the be-
 liever should declare his experience; to enquir-
 ing sinners, trembling saints, and growing chri-
 stians. I come now,

III. To consider the ends which a believer
 should propose in the discharge of this duty.
 And,

I. THE principal end he should have in
 view, when he declares his experience, is the
 glory of that God, who hath dealt so bounti-
 fully with him. He would surely have the
 Lord exalted for his faithfulness and goodness
 to him; he would have it published, that the
 name

^a Mal. iii. 16.

name of the Lord might be great ; that sinners might know that his God is faithful to his word ; that he hath not only engaged to be a *present help in time of need*, but that he hath found him in reality to be so. As he knows the enemies of God are ready enough to charge him with neglect of his people, because of the trials and afflictions they are exercised with ; so he would, in contradiction to them, declare what he hath found in his own experience, that in very faithfulness he afflicts those that are dearest to him. And with what lustre does the glory of God shine, when his children are ready to acknowledge, that he never called them out to any duty, but his grace was sufficient for them ; that he never laid his hand upon them in any afflictive exercise, but he at the same time, supplied them with all those supports which they stood in need of ? I say, for christians thus to stand up, on proper occasions, and bear their experimental testimony to the faithfulness and goodness of God, what a tendency hath it to make the name of the Lord, who hath been their strong tower, glorious in the midst of the earth ? This is what the christian chiefly aims at. But again,

2. ANOTHER end he hath in view is to humble his own soul, as well as the vanity of other men, by declaring how little he has deserved at the hand of the Lord, and yet how much he hath done for him. The believer knows too well the pride that is naturally in man. In order

order therefore to lower his sentiments of himself, he will be ready to acknowledge his own vileness, that he was worse by nature than the beasts that perish, and unless the Lord had been merciful to him, when he was in his blood, he could never have been partaker of such favour at his hands. And thus, while others boast of their own power and worthiness, he cannot forbear declaring, that, how much soever the Lord hath been pleased to favour him with his presence, yet, that he is obliged to discard all pretensions to merit, and says, *Not unto me, not unto me, O Lord, but unto thy name be all the glory.* And by this means he many times puts to silence the vanity of other men. But then again,

3. ANOTHER end is to promote the welfare of his fellow-christians. As he loves the head, so he also loves the members. In whomsoever he sees the image of *Christ* formed, he desires his heart may be knit in love to such an one. And as he would not have it inactive love; so, upon every proper occasion, he would open to his christian brother what he hath felt of the joy, that a stranger intermeddles not with, that he might be a sharer with him, and be comforted by his experience, when darkness comes upon him. And thus he is likewise glad to improve every opportunity of helping the joy, and assisting the comfort of his brethren in the Lord. There are so many difficulties that the christian is beset with, in the present

state, that he can never follow the Lord fully, and have the world to be his friend. So that, methinks, since there are so few who name the name of *Christ*, and yet much fewer that love him in sincerity, where this disposition is in truth, it should have the greatest tendency to enkindle the most engaging affection; an affection which should shew itself, in a readiness to do all that lies in our power, towards mutual growth in the knowledge and comforts of the holy Ghost. And as christian conversation about the dealings of God with our souls hath often been owned with this good effect, methinks we should not be such strangers to one another; but cultivate this heavenly commerce with all our interest and power. Thus you see what are the ends that believers should propose in their discharge of this duty. But then I come,

IV. To speak of the manner in which it should be performed; or how a christian is to *tell what God hath done for his soul*. And it may be reduced to two heads.

I. It should be with the greatest humility. There is too much spiritual, as well as carnal pride among the professors of religion: and it is well if too many of us may not have reason to lay our hands upon our mouths, and acknowledge ourselves more or less guilty in this respect. We had much better let such conversation alone, than

than declare our experience with a view to exalt ourselves by it. If we aim at raising ourselves in the esteem of our fellow-christians, or to gain reputation among men, if this is the end we propose, in declaring *what God has done for our souls*, it cannot but be nauseous in the sight of the Lord. No, when we say any thing of what the Lord has done either for us, or in us, let us remember *the rock from whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit from whence we were digged*; let us lay ourselves in the dust; and when we call to those who fear the Lord to hear *what he hath done for us*, let our souls be filled with the deepest sense of our unworthiness. Let us remember who did it, and give all the glory, where it is justly due. But again,

2. It should also be attended with the greatest thankfulness, wonder, and adoration at the riches of God's grace. I am sure, if we have felt any thing of it, we shall not be able to declare it, without some good degree of thankfulness. The impression will be too lively to be forgotten entirely, and the grace will be too illustrious to be recited without some measure of gratitude. And thus I have gone through what I designed in a doctrinal way, and shall close all with an inference or two. And,

1. LET us each of us ask ourselves, What hath the Lord done for my soul? And in order to determine this, let us ask, What hath he

A a 3

wrought

wrought in my soul? For though the work of God's grace in the heart is not causal of God's love to us, or to any act of grace towards us, yet it is declarative of it. And, I am sure, if we always remain in darkness, concerning these things, we shall have no reason to conclude that we are the Lord's. If we would hope that God hath loved us with an everlasting love, we should enquire whether he has declared it, by drawing us with the cords of his love. It is not indeed essential to our happiness, that we should be able to give an exact account of our experience, or every particular circumstance attending our conversion: but unless we know that whereas we were once blind, now we see, whereas *we were once darkness, we are now light in the Lord*^r, I know no ground we have of consolation, as having any lot, or share in the riches of pardoning grace. Again,

2. How may we blush and be ashamed, that we have so much conversation in the world, and so little about what God hath done for our souls? It is a very bad sign upon us, in our day, that the things of God are generally postponed, while either the affairs of state, or the circumstances of outward life, or something perhaps of a more trifling nature, are the general subjects of our conversation. What! are we ashamed of the noblest, the most interesting sub-

^r Eph. v. 8.

subject? It is but a poor sign that we have felt any thing of it, if we think it unnecessary to declare it to our fellow-christians. What think you? suppose any two of us were cast upon a barbarous shore, where we neither understood the language, nor the customs of the inhabitants, and were treated by them with reproach and cruelty, do you think we should not esteem it a happiness, that we could unburden ourselves to each other, and communicate our griefs, and troubles? And shall we think it less so, while we are in such a world as this; in a strange land, and at a distance from our father's house? shall we neglect conversing with each other? No, let our conversation not only be in heaven, but about spiritual and heavenly things. But,

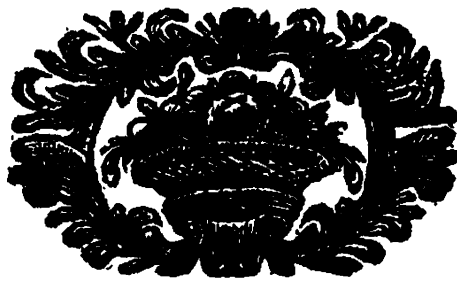
3. AND lastly, bless God for the Lord *Jesus Christ*. You would never have had any experience to declare, but a fearful looking for of God's righteous judgments, were it not for him. Well then, when you consider what God hath done for you, remember him thro' whom every blessing has been communicated to you; remember him whom the Father gave out of his bosom for your salvation, *whom he sanctified and sent into the world*^s; remember him, who *tho' he was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye thro' his poverty might be rich*^t. Remember all he did, and all he suffered, that

A a 4

you

^s John x. 36.^t 2 Cor. viii. 9.

you might be partakers of a rich experience of grace here, and that you might afterwards enter into the glory, which he is gone to prepare for you. And when you consider these things, I am sure, a crucified, risen, and exalted *Jesus* will be the principal subject of your conversation.



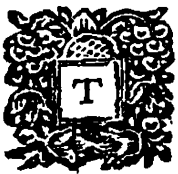


S E R M O N XIX.

The strong man conquered.

LUKE xi. 21, 22.

When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace : but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.



THE occasion of these words was this; our Lord, whose business it was to go about doing good, and whose miraculous power was continually exerted to support his mission, and confirm his doctrine, had dispossessed a man of a devil, to the great astonishment of the one part of the people, and the envy and confusion of the other; who, though they could not deny the matter of fact, that the devil was really cast out, this being done

in the fight of all the people ; yet they endeavoured to lessen the miracle and its author in their esteem, by malicious suggestions, that it was done by the power of *Satan*. *But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils*^a. On this our Lord, who was intimately acquainted with the thoughts of their hearts, shews the absurdity of their reasoning, by observing, that *Satan* was a wiser tyrant than to destroy his own kingdom, and that the true reason why he made no effectual resistance was, because he was attacked by a force superior to his own. This he illustrates by a very apt similitude, part of which I have now chosen as the subject of my discourse. In which we may observe,

- I. THE description given of *Satan*. He is, as a *strong man armed*.
- II. THE misery of every natural man, while such, set forth by *Satan*, this cruel tyrant's *keeping his palace*, in the soul. There he sits as lord and king,
- III. WE may observe the fatal security that attends the soul in this miserable condition. All the while, *his goods are in peace*.
- IV. WE have a glorious description of our blessed Saviour, as one that is *stronger than this strong man armed*. *When a stronger than he shall come upon him, &c.* And then,
- V.

^a Luke xi. 15.

V. AND lastly, we have an account of the method, in which the captain of our salvation conquers, and dethrones this *strong man armed*, and that is, he *comes upon him, and overcomes him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*

THUS I have given you the division of the text: each part of which might furnish us with sufficient matter for a discourse: but I shall chuse rather at this time to insist somewhat briefly upon them all, and to make some suitable application as I go along. But before I proceed, it may not be amiss to observe, that the immediate design of our Lord in these words, when compared with the context, seems to be to confute the unbelieving *Jews*; and so they carry in them a direct proof of the superior power of *Christ* to that of *Satan*; that at his pleasure he could dispossess him. But, as *all scripture is given by inspiration of God*, and is of *no private interpretation*, and as other miracles of our Saviour were not only real in themselves, and designed to confirm his mission and doctrine, but are frequently used to convey spiritual instruction in a figurative manner; so we may safely take the words in the sense I have already given of them, as presenting us with a very lively description of the miserable condition of a sinner, in his natural and unregenerate state, and of his deliverance by the power and grace of *Christ*.

Christ. This I thought necessary to premise, that none might charge me with fathering a sense of my own upon scripture, in contradistinction to that of the holy Ghost. But to begin,

I. WITH the account we have here of *Satan*: he is compared to a *strong man*, yea, to a *strong man armed*.

1. SATAN is compared to a *strong man*, and that because of his natural strength as an angel. It is true, he hath undoubtedly lost a great deal by his fall; but how far this hath had an influence upon that original strength which he had as an angel of the highest rank, is what neither I, nor any man can pretend peremptorily to determine. That he is still exceeding powerful will appear, if we consider the names which are given him in scripture, such as *the prince of the power of the air*^b, *the God of this world*^c, and *a roaring lion*^d, which you know is allowed to be one of the strongest of the brute creation. He is also called *the dragon*, *that old serpent*^e, and the like. All which plainly imply, that he still retains abundance of strength. So that he may justly be compared to a *strong man*. Again,

2. HE is said to be a *strong man armed*; and this may be upon many accounts.

(1.) As he is *armed* with power: this I have shewn you under the last head, as he is compared to a *strong man*.

(2.) HE

^b Eph. ii. 2. ^c 2 Cor. iv. 4. ^d 1 Pet. v. 8. ^e Rev. xx. 2.

(2.) HE is *armed* with malice ; he is an inveterate enemy to God, and all his creatures. Thus *as a roaring lion he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*^f. He would doubtless be glad, if we can suppose a spirit in the utmost torment, to be capable of any kind of joy, I say, if any thing could give him any pleasure, it would be, to see God dethroned, and the whole creation destroyed. Again,

(3.) HE is *armed* with policy. On this account the apostle says to the *Ephesians*, *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*^e. And so in the epistle to the *Corinthians*, he is represented as having *blinded the minds of them which believe not*^h. He is not only a powerful enemy, and so compared, as you have heard, to a *roaring lion*, but a subtle one too, and thus he is compared to a *serpent* which lies in wait to deceive. The apostle says, *we are not ignorant of his devices*ⁱ : by which he signifies that he is an artful adversary, and that he makes use of all possible stratagems to deceive poor souls. And he is the better fitted for this, as in the next place,

(4.) HE is armed with experience. He hath not been the grand deceiver of mankind, down from his first fatal attempt upon our first parents until now, without vast improvements in this wicked and destructive work. Every day increases his experience, and every sinner he tempts

^f 1 Pet. v. 8. ^e Eph. vi. 11. ^h 2 Cor. iv. 4. ⁱ Chap. ii. 11.

tempts furnishes him with more knowledge how to suit his baits to the various constitutions and circumstances of men. If one snare will not do, he will try another. And remember withal that he is an incessant enemy, who *continually* goes about endeavouring to do mischief. Thus this cruel adversary is justly said to be *armed*, as he is armed with strength, with malice, policy, and experience.

AND is he so? To apply it as we go along, then from hence we may learn, how unequal a match we are, in ourselves, for him. The strongest saint, as well as the most daring and self-sufficient sinner, is in himself as nothing before him. Know we not in ourselves how to think a good thought, how much less then, to encounter so crafty and potent an enemy? Is it not a piece of the highest presumption, for any of us to enter the lists with him in our own strength? This, let me tell you, is one of the strong holds of *Satan*: if he can persuade the soul that he is equal to the combat in his own strength, then it is that he is almost sure of victory. Let us then, as this is our duty, nay, and let me add, our privilege too, when we are tempted, look unto *Jesus* who only can secure us. But,

II. THE next thing observable in our text, is the miserable state of a sinner before conversion; *the strong man armed keepeth his palace*, or reigns in his soul: he takes up his residence there,

there, as a king ; doth his pleasure, all things go according to his will ; he rules as lord, and reigns without controul in the heart, till it is renewed by divine grace. It is observable, that it is not only said that he *dwells* there, as *in his palace*, but he *keeps* it, he keeps it to himself. God and *Christ* shall not have the least room there ; no, *Satan* will have it all ; he *keeps his palace*, or the soul of the sinner from every thing that is good, and, as far as he is permitted, fills it with every thing that hath a tendency to procure its ruin. Thus he *keeps his palace*. And I perswade myself, I need not go about to shew you, that, while this is the case, the soul must needs be miserable. For can a person be otherwise than miserable, who is a slave to the worst of tyrants ? Are we ready to say, and with the greatest reason, that the condition or state, even of a private person, that is in subjection to a cruel tyrant, is miserable ? How much more must that soul be so, who is under the bondage of sin and *Satan* ? An earthly tyrant, at the worst, can only kill the body ; but this enemy levels his greatest force against the soul. He is not content with bringing the sinner often into shame and poverty here ; but nothing less than everlasting destruction hereafter, will satisfy this cruel adversary. Death you know puts an end to all the malicious pursuits of other enemies ; and this to a good man, when under the most sensible ill usage he can meet with in this world,

is

is a very quieting consideration, that he shall meet with a secure retreat in the grave whither he is hastening; for *there*, as *Job* speaks, *the wicked cease from troubling: and there the weary are at rest*^k. But alas! when a man is a slave to *Satan*, unless grace prevent, the result will be such horror and misery as are beyond all description, and of which the heart of man can form no proper conception. Thus you see in how miserable a state and condition that man is, whose soul is *the palace* of the devil. It is without doubt abundantly more deplorable, than for a person to be bodily possessed by that mischievous and mighty adversary. The case that we have in our context, before our Lord administered help to the poor creature, was not by a thousandth part so sad, as is the condition of every unregenerate soul; for that was only an unhappiness, involving no crime or guilt in it; whereas guilt is inseparable, where *Satan* has the possession of the soul. Again, in the one, *Satan's* principal influence is on the members of the body; in the other, the faculties of the soul are under his direction, and abused at his pleasure. Thus miserable is the case of those who are willing slaves to sin and *Satan*, in whose souls he *keeps his palace*.

AND is it so then? how natural is it from hence to infer, the grand mistake of those, who from their being in easy circumstances, though utter strangers to the grace of God, conclude

^k Job iii. 17.

clude they are really happy? It is true, as to this world, perhaps, they may have more than heart could wish: though this rarely happens, for riches, as they are in themselves uncertain, so they are in their enjoyment unsatisfying. But, I say, admit they may look upon themselves as compleatly happy, or let this be the judgment of others concerning them, yet, if this is the true state of their case, that the *strong man armed keeps his palace in their souls*, they are of all persons the most miserable. Which leads us to the next thing I proposed to consider in the words, to wit,

III. THE aggravating circumstance that heightens, nay, may we not say, compleats their misery, namely, their fatal security: while in this sad condition, their *goods are in peace*, their souls are easy and calm, as if all were right and well. They have peace indeed, such an one as it is; not that *peace of conscience that passeth all understanding*, which is the result of an interest in pardoning love; no, their peace is merely external, ungrounded confidence, arising, either, from a want of thought, or else from wrong notions of God himself; as, that he is all mercy, and has little or no regard to justice, or that they stand upon very good terms with him, since they are such as are commonly called morally honest, and good natured men. Thus they hug themselves in a false peace, *sew pillows of deceit under their*

B b

own

own *elbows*¹, and say, as the fool in the gospel, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*^m. And observe it, while this is the case, *Satan* careth not how little he disturbs them. He is well enough contented, so he may but *keep the palace*, whatever the soul may think of it; because he knows what will be the fatal consequence of it in the end, unless grace prevent. And is not this a most melancholy condition indeed? What! *Satan* *keep the palace*, or reign lord supreme in my heart, and yet I as easy as if *Christ* had set up his throne there! Should we not say concerning a person intoxicated with liquor, or in a dead sleep in the midst of flames, alas! poor creature, he doth not know his own danger? Why, let me tell you, and it is enough to make every unregenerate soul tremble, this is but a faint resemblance of the real misery of poor sinners. Should we be easy in the paws of a furious wild beast? And shall we then be calm and unaffected while our souls are under the power of *Satan*, that savage and devouring lion? This is a most melancholy case indeed! I know no more how to set forth the danger and misery of such a condition, than I know how to paint all the glories of the heavenly state. The Lord grant that what I have said of it may not prove without its use, if there should be any here, of whom it may be said they

¹ Ezek. xiii. 18.^m Luke xii. 19.

they lie as it were fast asleep upon the very brink of hell. But to apply this to ourselves,

1. WAS this once the case of all of us? that is, did we, whilst in an unconverted state, hug our chains, rest easy and satisfied with our bondage, without either considering or regarding the consequences of it? what an humbling consideration should this be? how may this convince us of our natural blindness and stupidity? O let us frequently remember *the rock from whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit from whence we were digged*, in order to keep us low in our own eyes and esteem, and to raise our thoughts and apprehensions of rich and sovereign grace! But then,

2. SHOULD there be any here, who just begin to be blest with some glimmerings of light, so that they are convinced that their state as sinners, is the most deplorable in the world, why, what shall we say to such, but as it was said in another case, *Look to Christ for strength to enable you to escape for your livesⁿ, to flee from the slavery of sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of the children of God? That is, pray earnestly for the Spirit of God to lead you to Christ, and if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed^o. And give me leave to say, if you have peace spoken to you any other way, but as interested in Christ, or as justified through his righteousness, unless grace prevent, it will issue in no-*

B b 2

thing,

ⁿ Gen. xix. 17.

^o John viii. 36.

thing, but *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.* But,

IV. THE next thing remarkable in our text, is the account we have of our dear Redeemer, as one who is *stronger than this strong man armed.* As we are told there is a *roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour,* so likewise we are informed that there is *the lion of the tribe of Judah^p,* who is *stronger than he,* and who is *mighty to save.* And that,

1. As he is the *most high God.* In this view, the devils are as nothing before him. He holds the end of the chain with which they are bound, and can restrain or enlarge their power at his pleasure. As he was the creator of all things, so he not only made all the angels in heaven and devils in hell, but he hath them all under his absolute command, and can do with them what he pleases. Thus he is *stronger than this strong man armed.* Again,

2. HE is so, when we consider him as our Mediator and surety. As he is *King in Zion,* so he is *far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name, that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come^q.* It is true, he, for wise ends, permits *Satan* to set up his strong holds in the hearts even of his own children; yet he can at his pleasure dispossess him. As cunning,

as

^p Rev. v. 5.

^q Eph. t. 21.

as malicious, and as powerful as our great enemy is; yet, it is our comfort, that in all things our blessed *Jesus* is above him. And is he thus stronger than the strong man armed? Then,

(1.) WHAT high thoughts should we entertain of our dear Lord? Let us not only view him as our Surety, but as our Maker, our Lord and Governor, and so be filled with awful apprehensions of his Majesty. Again,

(2.) WHAT a comforting consideration should this be to those who are followed with temptations? To whom should they look, but to *Jesus* who is above this *strong man*, and can restrain his attempts on his people, when, and how he pleases? But then,

V. AND lastly, we have here an account of the method, in which this *lion of the tribe of Judah* subdues, and dethrones the old serpent the devil, and drives him out of the hearts of his people.

1. IT is said; *he will come upon him and overcome him.* And this he did, if we refer it to the atonement which he made to divine justice, upon the account of sinners, in order to redeem them from the curse of the law, and the wrath of God; for *there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus*. And, says the same apostle, *having blotted out the band-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, he took it out of the way.*

B b 3

nail-

nailing it to his cross: and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it^s. This he did, I say, as by one offering he paid their debt, and rescued them from impending vengeance. Thus, according to that antient promise, *the seed of the woman bruised the head of the serpent*. Satan perhaps thought all was sure, upon the fall of man, that he had fully accomplished his design: but he finds himself mistaken with respect to the elect. *Christ comes upon him and overcomes him*, by pouring out his own soul unto death, and making it an offering for their sins. And as the result of this,

3. HE despoils *Satan* of all his armour; *he takes from him all his armour wherein he trusted*. That is, having come upon him and overcome him, by working out a compleat salvation by his satisfaction for his people; when, in consequence of this, the appointed time comes, the day of their being brought home to God, he dethrones *Satan* as to his dominion in their souls: and this he doth, not only by restraining and preventing the effects of his malice and power, but by the continual communications of grace and strength, by which the believer is enabled to overcome him. Thus if you refer it to *Satan*, *Christ* takes away his armour. But if we should apply this, (as I do not see any reason why we may not) to sinners themselves, the meaning is this: He takes away their armour
in

^s Col. ii. 14, 15.

in which they trusted. That is, he shews them the vanity of their former confidence, and, instead of suffering them to lean on their own righteousness, as in time past, he leads them to himself, as the only object of their trust, and foundation of their comfort. Thus he *takes away their armour wherein they trusted.* That which before was gain to the souls of men, now they count as loss. They are brought to look upon themselves as destitute of every other refuge, save what they find in *Jesus Christ.* And then,

4. HE *divideth his spoils.* *Christ* justly takes the triumphs of the victory to himself, the spoils of principalities and powers, of which he makes an open shew; he divides them in a proper proportion among victorious believers. And, according to the other view also, with respect to gracious converts, having stripped them of all their former confidence, he bestows on them such graces as are the blessed fruits and effects of the victory. In one word, just as the general of an army, after the battle is over, and a conquest is gained, distributes the spoils among the victorious soldiers; so our Lord *Jesus* the great Captain of our salvation, having taken away all *Satan's* soul-destroying armour, gives to the soul some special tokens of its interest in this blessed victory. And having by his spirit dethroned *Satan*, he sets up his own kingdom in the hearts of his people. From the whole we may infer,

B b 4. (I.) THAT

(1.) THAT if it must be a *stronger than the strong man armed* that must come upon him, in order to his being overcome; then, how plain is it, that in the conversion of a sinner there must be a divine power exerted? It is a piece of the highest folly and presumption, for any of us to think, that we can change our own hearts, or dethrone *Satan* by our resolutions, our reasonings, the performance of duty, or the like. No, it is nothing but the power of him who is almighty that can effect it. It must be *one that is stronger than Satan* himself that can do this. And who is that, but the Lord of heaven and earth? Again,

(2.) HAVE any of us felt the power of God's grace in the removing *Satan* from the throne he had set up in our hearts? This is surely a comfortable evidence that *Christ* hath taken from him all his armour, so as that he shall never be able to do us any final damage. If this be our case, O how highly are we privileged! under what obligations are we to love and rejoice in our God! O how solicitous should we be to be the most thankful and fruitful of all persons in the world! Should we not look back to *Egypt*, and consider from whence we have been delivered? Believe me, the tyranny of this adversary is a thousand times worse than *Egyptian* bondage. And have we obtained a deliverance from it? is this the happy case of any of us? should not then the high praises of God dwell upon our hearts? And,

(3.) AND

(3.) AND lastly, is not this a sufficient encouragement for us to wait upon the Lord, and believe, that as he hath thus far delivered, so he will go on to deliver? It is surely our duty, and privilege, under the remains of indwelling corruption, and the temptations of *Satan*, to look unto *Jesus*, who will bruise him still more under our feet, and will do it shortly. He has engaged, in the end, to make his people *more than conquerors*. To whom then should we have recourse, on all occasions of danger, but to him who knows how to restrain the power of this outrageous and malicious enemy, or to administer proper support, when we are assaulted by him? Remember he is *stronger than the strong man armed*. And though, at times, *Satan* presses very hard upon us, and, God knows, too often gains the victory, yet, as our dear Redeemer can bring good out of the worst of evils, so remember he hath told us, that *all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose* †.

† Rom. viii. 28.



S E R M O N XX.

The nature and privileges of adoption.

The last sermon the author preached at his own meeting-place, in *Goodman's-fields*.

GALATIANS iv. 6.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.



HE great design of the holy Ghost in this epistle was, you know, to relieve the churches of *Galatia* from the burdensome yoke of the ceremonial law, which was imposed on them by some of the judaizing teachers of those times, as necessary, together with the gospel, to salvation. Christianity having spread itself, by the ministry of the apostle *Paul*, to this part of
the

the world, *Satan*, the great adversary of souls, threw in his tares with the seed of the word, exciting some, under a profession of religion, to invade the glorious liberty of the gospel; and, as a sanction to their impious conduct, to abuse the names of *Peter*, *James*, and other apostles, by whose authority and commission they pretended to act, when they endeavoured to engage the churches to continue the practice of circumcision, and other rites of the legal dispensation. And as persons corrupted in principle very rarely confine themselves to truth, or decency, they reproach the great apostle of the Gentiles, as a man of unreasonable singularity, and of a dying reputation in the church of *Christ*. Now to remove these false aspersions, and vindicate his character from so unjust a charge, the apostle, under the special direction of the infallible Guide, writes to them, expressing his wonder, that they, of all others, should be so soon turned aside, before *whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth, crucified among them*^a. Upon which, in the three first chapters of this epistle, he sets himself to undeceive them, by assuring them that *Christ* had abolished the whole legal dispensation, which was but *a shadow of good things to come*. And having observed, that *as many of them as had been baptized into Christ had put on Christ*^b: he then shews them that there was no difference, in God's account, *whether they were Jews*

OR

^a Gal. iii. 1.^b Ver. 27.

or *Greeks, bond or free, male or female*; for they were all members of the same body, and united to the same person, as their head, even *Jesus Christ*. Upon which he argues, that *if* they were *Christ's, then were they Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*^c. In the chapter before us he considers the state of the church, antecedent to the coming of *Christ*, as that of an heir or child under age; and observes, *that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though, in right, he be lord of all, being in his nonage, and under tutors and governours, until the time appointed of the Father*. Even so says he *we, Jews, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements, or in subjection to the ordinances and institutions, of the world. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, and of the seed of Abraham, according to the promise, made under the law; that by his obedience to it, he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*^d. We are all by nature desirous of being under the law as a covenant, but *Christ* having fulfilled it, we now *receive the adoption of children*; which invaluable privilege, together with our interest in it, is proved in that, *because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father*. In the consideration of which words I shall,

I. EN-

^c Gal. iii. 28, 29.^d Chap. iv. 1, — 5.

- I. ENQUIRE into the meaning of the term that is here applied to the people of God; they are called *sons*.
- II. I SHALL endeavour to shew you, that all such either have, or shall have, *the Spirit of Jesus Christ sent into their hearts*.
- III. TREAT this privilege, as a fruit of their adoption or sonship; — *because ye are sons; therefore, or being sons of God, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts*. And then,
- IV. CONSIDER the Spirit as an intercessor within them, *crying*, in the language of adoption; *Abba, Father*.

I. I BEGIN with the meaning of the term applied here to the saints; they are stiled *sons*; a word peculiarly significative of the distinguishing and inestimable privilege of God's chosen people. And this term very plainly implies,

I. LIBERTY, in opposition to bondage. They are called *sons*, and not *servants*.

As God is the great parent of the whole creation, and especially the Father of the spirits of all flesh, he hath a sovereign, indispensable right, at his pleasure, to command us as his servants: but then this service, in a state of innocency, would be perfect freedom. So that though *Adam* in paradise was a servant, yet

yet at the same time he *was the son of God*.^c And the angels themselves, in all the heights of happiness and glory they enjoy, are represented as ministring spirits, and the saints not only serve God in this world, but will do so, day and night, throughout the endless ages of eternity, in his temple above. But this service is so far from debasing them, that it exalts them to the highest dignity, as it is attended with a special interest in the favour of that God whom they serve; and every act of homage and obedience will be justly esteemed the glorious privilege of him that pays it, as well as the undoubted right of God who receives it. So that this service of ours, being founded in our relation to God as creatures, is confirmed, and by no means destroyed, by our relation to him as children. But as we have all forfeited our interest in God as a Father and Creator, by our apostacy; so we have enslaved ourselves, and are become servants of sin and *Satan*. Which thraldom we are only delivered from, as we are the sons of God. The great author of our liberty is the Lord *Jesus Christ*, the great Captain of our salvation, *the lion of the tribe of Judah*; and to this office he was anointed and commissioned by his Father, agreeable to that well known passage in the prophecy of *Isaiab*, *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind*
up

^c Luke iii. 38.

up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound^f. The way in which he procured it, was by a voluntary susception of our debt, whereby he became bound to divine justice, to answer for our offences; and thus, by his own death, destroying him that had the power of death, he is the author of a glorious liberty to every soul that flees for refuge to him^g. There being now no condemnation to the children of God^h, Satan can have no power to destroy them, though he may disturb their peace. The glorious instrument that conveys this liberty to the soul, is the Spirit of Christ, sent forth by the Father to all the heirs of salvation. Thus we are told, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is libertyⁱ. Before conversion, the man may be terrified by the threatenings of the law, and too often afterwards, may for a season, thro' the prevalence of unbelief, be led into bondage; but when the Spirit comes, and reveals Christ to him as the hope of his glory, he is introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God. To this purpose you find the apostle speaking, 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^k.

2. THIS term implies the nearness of their relation to God. They are not only regarded
by

^f Isai. lxi. 1. ^g Heb. ii. 14. ^h Rom. viii. 1. ⁱ 2 Cor. iii. 17. ^k Rom. viii. 15.

by him as if they were his children, but he is indeed their Father. This you know is a title frequently given to God in scripture. And I think our Lord gives us the sum of it, where he says to *Mary, Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God*¹. A passage that has been full of comfort to his people in all generations. This relation, as it is near, and intimate, so being founded in the sovereign grace of God, it is indissoluble; for whom the Lord loves once as a child, he will love, and delight in to the end: And *the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent*^m. This supposes him to be reconciled to us in his Son, for otherwise he is our enemy, and not our Father. Again,

3. THIS implies an intimacy of communion, or familiar converse. It is not thought proper indeed by prudent earthly parents, to indulge their children with too great an intimacy with their secrets, while they are in their non-age, or to let them know how much they love them: and so our heavenly Father doth not always see it good, that we should dwell in his smiles, and enjoy the unclouded view of what he has provided for us. But as we grow up in *Christ* our head, we shall find nearer access unto God as our Father. Of this our Lord gives us an intimation, in that condescending speech

¹ John xx. 17.

^m 1 Sam. xv. 29.

speech of his to his disciples, *Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth, but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you*ⁿ. Compare this with that passage in one of *John's* epistles, *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ*^o. And upon this account the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews* speaks of *having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*^p. Should it be enquired what this converse or communion with God is, we must answer in general, that it is better felt than expressed. And I think the best way of conceiving of it is, to consider the soul as led forth by the spirit of *Christ*, in the exercise of faith and prayer, to God as its Father, and meeting with a gracious answer, whereby it is filled with *joy unspeakable and full of glory*. It is, in a word, God's filling the spiritual desires that he puts into the hearts of his people, with himself. Thus he lets them know the greatness of his love to them, and the designs of his grace, which are to be accomplished when they come to glory. But then,

4. THIS farther implies a right to an inheritance. Now the inheritance that God bestows on his people, is himself. Thus you know he revealed himself to *Abraham*; *Fear not,*

ⁿ John xv. 15.

^o 1 John i. 3.

^p Heb. x. 19.

not, Abram: *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*⁹: and in the verse following my text the apostle adds, *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God, through Christ*. By this we are not to understand an enjoyment of his perfections, but a possession of all that good in, and from the fountain of goodness, that we are capable of enjoying. Now our right to this, is antecedent to the enjoyment of it. We are heirs when under age. Thus the apostle speaks,—*The spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together*⁵. That is, *Christ*, as our head and fore-runner, hath taken possession of the inheritance for us, and the very same inheritance that he enjoys we shall, in our measure, be admitted to, since we are to be glorified together. And he will confer the same kind of glory upon his chosen, that he hath received from his Father himself. This he declares expressly in his address to the Father, *And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them*⁵. The beginning of this, or the first fruits, we have now, we have joy and peace in believing: but the full possession is in reversion for us. Thus then I have considered the general meaning of the term *sons*, as supposing a perfect freedom, in opposition
to

⁹ Gen. xv. 1. ⁵ Rom. viii. 16, 17. * John xvii. 22.

to bondage, a near and indissoluble relation, intimate communion, and a right to the inheritance of our God and Father.

II. WE are now to shew you that all those who are *sons*, in this sense, either have, or shall have *Christ's* Spirit sent into their hearts. As to those of God's chosen, who are not yet called, the great ground of their security lies in this, that *the Lord knoweth them that are his* ^t: and he can send his Spirit into their hearts, at his pleasure. But as to those who call themselves his children, the great criterion of sonship, is the inhabitation of the Spirit: agreeable to these passages in the epistle to the *Romans*; *for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God* ^u. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his* ^w. It is observable that the Spirit is said to be sent forth into their hearts; by which, I apprehend, we are to understand not only, that the understanding is enlightened, but the will subdued, and the whole soul brought into subjection to *Christ*. For he is sent as the Spirit of *Christ*, to take of his, and shew it to the poor necessitous soul. After he hath convinced a man of sin, his great office is to reveal a righteousness for his refuge and comfort. This you know was all along promised as a blessing of

C c 2

the

^t 2 Tim. ii. 19.^u Rom. viii. 14.^w Ver. 9.

the covenant of grace, in the old testament: and we are told by our Lord expressly in the new, that *except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter in the kingdom of God*^x.

THE necessity of which, is not to justify us in the sight of God, or to give a right to his favour, but to destroy the enmity of the carnal mind against God, and to root out our pride and self-confidence; to lead us to *Christ*, and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. And then we may observe, that he is sent as a gift of grace from God as our Father; by which we are not to understand, that before he is sent, he is not present with the soul, for as he is one with the Father and Son, he fills all places with his presence. But it is to understand of his efficacious operations, whereby the soul receives a new principle, becomes alive unto God, and full of love to the Redeemer. Which leads us,

III. To consider that the Spirit, as sent forth by the Lord into the hearts of his children, is the consequence or result of their adoption, *because ye are sons, &c.* For the better understanding of which it will be necessary to premise two things.

I. ALL the gifts of God, and the blessings of the covenant of grace, and so, as one of the principal of them, the influences of the Spirit,
are

^x John iii. 5.

are free and sovereign on his part, and undeserved on ours. This truth hath been received, and humbly acknowledged by the people of God in every age; and the man that disputes it, declares but too evidently his ignorance of himself, and the desert of his iniquities. If we look into ourselves, view the plague of our hearts, and reflect on our conduct, as perverse and rebellious, which is the case of the best of us, one would think it would even force an acknowledgment of our unworthiness, and oblige us to own that we are indebted to divine grace, for every blessing, whether of the upper or the nether springs. But as an additional confirmation of this, to leave those that deny it without excuse, we find it so often inculcated in the word of God, that he that runs may read it. Thus as to our election in *Christ* from before the foundation of the world, our Lord says, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*^y. And therefore *we love him; because he first loved us*^z. As to our redemption, or salvation the apostle says, *By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*^a. And as faith in *Christ* is the gift of God, so we are told of our Lord, that *him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince^v a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*^b, As to our acceptance and adoption, we are said to be *justified*

C c 3

freely

^y John xv. 16. ^z 1 John iv. 19. ^a Eph. ii. 8. ^b Acts v. 31.

freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ^c: And, to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name^d. And again, as to our spiritual knowledge, to us it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God^e. And to add no more, as to eternal life, we are assured that though, the wages of sin is death, yet, the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord^f: And our Lord says of his sheep, I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand^g. Thus you see all these spiritual blessings which we have in hand, and all that glorious reward that we have in hope, are derived to us in a way of undeserved favour. And it can be no otherwise, as we are fallen from our state of integrity, and are under the curse of the law that we have broken. But,

2. You are further to take notice, that all these gifts of God are bestowed on us, as we stand in the relation of children, or as he is reconciled to us in *Christ*. He is his God and Father, and so our God and Father. This naturally arises from comparing what we observed under the former head, that we are guilty before him, and the discovery God hath made of himself to us in his word, as being of purer eyes than to behold evil^h, and
that

^c Rom. iii. 24.

^d John i. 12.

^e Mark iv. 11.

^f Rom. vi. 23.

^g John x. 28.

^h Hab. i. 13.

*that will by no means clear the guilty*ⁱ, is founded in his very nature: and he must deny himself, before he can cease to will to punish sin. Nay his people, being in themselves sinners, are, under that view, subject to his wrath, and and can inherit no blessing from him. For it must be a direct contradiction, to suppose, that, in the same sense, God wills to punish, or which is the same thing, to curse, and to bless the same person, under the same consideration. As sinners, therefore, we have forfeited his favour, lost our title to the common mercies of life. And we are entitled to his favourable regard, only as washed in the blood of *Jesus*, or as accepted in him.

THE most material objection against this is founded in such passages as that, wherein it is said, *God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ, died for us*^k. But I think it is very easy to reply to this, that the children of God were in this state before their conversion; and moreover, that the same persons may be very justly viewed under a twofold character, or in a twofold relation. None I believe will dispute, that have tasted of the grace of God, whether the same persons may not be related to *Adam* as their first head, and to *Christ* as their second head, as the apostle expressly asserts, that *as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*^l.

C c 4

Now

ⁱ Exod. xxxiv. 7.^k Rom. v. 8.^l 1 Cor. xv. 49.

Now in *Adam*, or considered in our relation to him, the very elect themselves, *the chosen of God and precious*, are ungodly; and God commendeth his love towards us in sending his son to save such lost creatures. But then again, consider the same persons in their relation to *Christ* the second *Adam*, and they are compleat in him, comely with his comeliness put upon them, and therefore accepted of God, and in that relation made heirs of the blessings of the covenant of grace. For out of *Christ* God is a consuming fire to every sinner. These things being premised, let us now consider the Spirit of *Christ*, being sent into our hearts, as the fruit of adoption. *Because ye are sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, &c.* By which you are not to understand,

(1.) THAT because you have the tempers and dispositions, and are enabled in some measure to pay to God the obedience of children, therefore he hath sent his Spirit into your hearts. Were this the case, this part of our salvation would be of works, and not of grace, and would oppose what we have established, that all the blessings of the covenant of grace are sovereign, undeserved gifts. For then, these might be expected as of debt, and not of favour. Besides, were we brought into subjection to *Christ*, by our own might, or power, or resolution, and could renew and sanctify ourselves, what need would there be for this blessing? But to let you see how contrary this notion is to the mind

mind of the holy Spirit, I shall turn you to several passages, from which I hope to make it evident, that our obedience to God, as children, is not the spring, but the consequence of our receiving the Spirit of adoption. See to this purpose that passage in the prophecy of *Ezekiel*, where it is said, *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean*^m. Well, lest the people should assume the honour of this privilege unto themselves, or attribute it to any worthiness or righteousness of their own, God says to them, *I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake*ⁿ. And this is repeated again, *Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you : be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel*^o. And therefore you find that the Spirit is first to be poured forth, before we shall *look on him whom we have pierced* by our iniquities, and *mourn*. And this is confirmed by our Lord, when speaking of the holy Spirit, the Comforter, he first promises his disciples, *I will send him unto you*, and then he adds, *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*^p. And to let us know that we cannot deserve this favour from the Lord, the Spirit is said to be *given unto us*^q, and it is said also, that *the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness*

^m Ezek. xxxvi. 25. ⁿ Ver. 22. ^o Ver. 32. ^p John xvi. 7, 8. ^q Rom. v. 5.

ness, and righteousness, and truth^r. From all which it is very evident, that the Spirit of God is given us to excite gospel-obedience in us, and not because of any worthiness in us: for before he comes, we are disobedient children. Nor,

(2.) ARE we hereby to understand that our relation to God, is the meritorious, deserving cause of the gift of the Spirit. For though there is a great deal of honour and glory attending this relation, yet we are indebted to *Christ*, our elder brother, for the whole that we enjoy. It is he that deserved it, by dying; and so, as the reward of his sufferings, he *received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them*^s. And it is in him only that God is reconciled unto us, and thro' whom we regain our title to his favour, and to all the blessings we receive from him. But,

(3) HEREBY, as I apprehend, the holy Ghost intends, that in our relation to God as children, as an additional blessing, consequent upon our adoption, we have the Spirit sent down into our hearts. God having fixed an inviolable connection, between our adoption and our sanctification. As he hath given it to us to be heirs of himself, and joint heirs with his Son, so the same spirit that eminently dwe't in him as Mediator, is sent into the hearts of all the members of his mystical body. And thus we are to understand the apostle here,
Be-

^r Eph. v. 9.

^s Psal. lxxviii. 18.

Because ye are children, or in being children, that ye might have the disposition of children, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts. And that our enjoyment of the Spirit of *Christ* is thus a consequent blessing upon our adoption, is very evident from scripture. This I think may be very fairly collected from some passages in one of *John's* epistles. *But, says that apostle, ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things. But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you*^t: the persons who are here said to have an unction from the holy one, he had before spoken of, as having *their sins forgiven* them, and to *have known the Father*^u: which is more fully asserted in the same epistle, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*^w. Here, the great evidence of our dwelling in God as children, and his dwelling in us as a Father, is put upon this, his having given us his Spirit. And thus I have endeavoured to explain to you our third general head, *viz.* that *because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.*—That the same grace that was the origin of our relation to God as children, gives us as a consequent blessing, the Spirit, as a Spirit of adoption, which leads us to the last thing which I proposed, and that is,

IV. THAT wherever this Spirit is given as a Spirit of grace, he resides or dwells in that soul,

^t 1 John ii. 20 —27. ^u Ver. 12, 13. ^w Chap. iv. 13.

foul, as a Spirit of prayer, and supplication, *crying*, in the language of adoption, *Abba, Father*. And here we have two things more especially.

1. HE is in us as a Spirit of prayer: this is intimated by the term *crying* and,

(1.) THIS supposes a person to be necessitous, and dependent. No wise man will ask, much less cry earnestly for a blessing that he sees no want of. Now that it is the Spirit of God that acquaints us with our necessities, is evident from what the apostle *Paul* expressly asserts. *Likewise*, says he, *the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*^x. Again,

(2.) As it supposes a person to be in want, and to be convinced of it; so it includes in it a view of the ability of him that is applied to, to give relief: and that none but the Spirit can convince us of this, is evident to me, from that passage in the epistle to the *Corinthians*; *The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God*^y. Again,

(3.) As the Spirit shews us what is the mind of God, and *the things that are freely given to us of God*^z; so he excites spiritual desires after this good. Thus we find it in the experience of the apostle *Paul*. Before conversion, he was full, and stood in need of nothing. *I was alive* says he, *without the law once: but when the commandment came, with*
power

^x Rom. viii. 26.

^y 1 Cor. ii. 11.

^z Ver. 12.

power, *sin revived, and I died*^a. He was stript of his false confidence; and the same Spirit directed him to the proper fountain for relief; and in the apprehension of *Christ's* fulness, he makes his prayer unto him. Thus it is said by the Lord himself of him, as an extraordinary thing, *behold he prayeth*^b.

2. As the holy Spirit is in us a Spirit of prayer, so of adoption too, he not only *crieth*, but *crieth Abba, Father*. And this supposes,

(1.) A DISCOVERY of God to the soul as a Father, or the love that is included in that relation. For he must first be convinced that God is a Father to his people, before he can call upon him as such. And,

(2.) IT supposes a discovery of the way in which he comes to be a Father unto sinners, that it is only in, and thro' *Christ*, that he is our God, and our Father. For to call him Father as the God of nature, is rather to affront him than to glorify him: since we have forfeited our right to his care as children, and have sinned away that relation, by our disobedience. *Christ* must therefore be revealed in us, as *the hope of glory*^c, before we can call God *Father*.

(3.) THIS includes in it a particular discovery to the soul, that God is *his* Father; and under this character the Spirit is spoken of as *the earnest of our inheritance*^d by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption^e. And of him it is said, that *the Spirit itself beareth witness*

^a Rom. vii. 9. ^b Acts ix. 11. ^c Col. i. 27. ^d Eph. i. 14.
^e Chap. iv. 30.

ness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God^f. Which privilege, when he whispers it in the souls of God's chosen, all their unbelief will not be able to destroy the evidence.

SHOULD it be objected here, that the Spirit being said to *cry in us*, takes away the liberty of the creature, and makes us act necessarily, and not voluntarily: To this I answer, that as the consequence of the Spirit's abiding in us, it is he that, not only gives eyes to see, and understanding to know the things of God, but he excites holy breathings in the soul after him, and leading it to its proper object, God in *Christ*, as its Father, testifies to the soul its privilege. It is the christian indeed himself that prays, but it is *the Spirit* that helpeth his *infirmities*, otherwise he would not be able so much as to utter an acceptable or prevalent sigh or groan before the Lord^g. And therefore we are said, by the same apostle, to pray in the Spirit: *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit*^h. And thus I have finished what I designed in a doctrinal way from this subject, and shall close all with a few reflections. And,

1. FROM hence we may learn the distinct personality of Father, Son, and Spirit. They are all three mentioned in our text, and there are three distinct acts assigned them. The Father is said to send the Spirit, and the Spirit is said to be the Spirit of the Son, and as such takes possession of the hearts of his children. The manner indeed in which they sub-

sist,

^f Rom. viii. 16.

^g Ver. 26.

^h Eph. vi. 18.

sist, is allowed to be a mystery, concealed from us: but the reality of it, is very evident; not only from the several works, which are here ascribed to each of the sacred Three, and which imply a possession of divine perfections; but, in many other places of scripture we may observe, that God hath particularly and clearly revealed himself to us in this way, of which our text is no inconsiderable proof; where you have, God the Father sending the Spirit of God the Son, and this Spirit resting upon, and dwelling in the hearts of his people. Now if from this and other passages of scripture, we can prove, that each of these possess all possible perfections, and at the same time we allow that there is but one God, it necessarily follows, that this one God subsists in three persons, intimately related to each other, but distinct, and without confusion.

2. FROM hence we may learn the great reason why we meet with so many that deny, and some that deride the influences of the Spirit of God. They must surely be strangers to any experience of his divine impressions. And let their reason be never so much refined, while this is the case, their hearts are in a state of enmity with spiritual thingsⁱ; and this accounts for every kind of opposition they make to them. For *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*^k. And thus you see, as he under-

ⁱ Rom. viii. 7.^k 1 Cor. ii. 14.

understands them not ; so neither will he ever truly esteem them.

3. FROM hence we may also gather, that to be a son of God, is a privilege of the highest nature, much more than to be heir to the greatest prince upon earth. All the pleasures of time are suited only, or principally to our carnal part : but, as the inheritance of the saints is spiritual, so it is of a most sublime and exalted nature. And though a believer, in his own apprehension, is unworthy the name of a son ; yet, in the language of adoption, he may without presumption, when led by the Spirit, call God Father, and, as a joint-heir with *Christ Jesus*, entertain his mind with the firmest hope of an inheritance with the saints in light. To conclude,

4. FROM hence we have a very good evidence, by which we may judge whether we are interested in this privilege, or not. Have we the knowledge of *Christ* in our heads only ? or the Spirit of *Christ* also in our hearts ? Do we idolize our attainments, and forget *Christ* and his righteousness and strength ? or do we lie in the dust, and give all the glory where it is justly due ? If we have the Spirit of Christ, he will empty us of ourselves. And, in proportion to his gracious and powerful operations on our hearts, so shall we be more and more filled with the glory of *Christ*.