

AN EXPOSITION
OF THE
FIRST
EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN,

COMPRISED IN NINETY-THREE SERMONS.

FORMING A SERIES ON EACH OF THE CHAPTERS; AND ON EACH OF THE
VERSES OF THE SAME: SOME OF THE VERSES UNITED; AND THAT IN
PERFECT CONFORMITY WITH THEIR PROPER CONNECTION.

BY
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"THY WORD IS VERY PURE: THEREFORE THY SERVANT LOVETH IT."—PS. CXLV. 140.

VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTION.

It having fallen to my lot, in the Lord's holy providence, to become the honored instrument of introducing to the christian world, which I now do, the present highly valuable Work; I embrace with truest spiritual pleasure, the opportunity of bearing, although a humble, yet decided and firm testimony (while its real and great intrinsic worth is its own and best recommendation) to the inestimable treasure it contains—a treasure inestimable; seeing in it is stored a rich sum of scripture-matter, doctrinal and practical: because also, that in this work is manifest much of the sacred anointing of the Holy Ghost in the gift and diffusion of that light, accompanied by deep insight into divine Truth, with which this distinguished servant of the Lord (the Author) was favored—strikingly evident in the spiritual, judicious and instructive manner (to the God of all grace be glory!) in which he has been enabled, ministerially, to open the contents of the important subjects discussed—alike, in faithfulness to divine revealed Truth; and, to the Church and people of God:—so especially necessary in the present “cloudy and dark day,” when alas! the glory of the simplicity and truth of the Gospel is so greatly obscured, its effectual power so little prevalent; yea, and when in many instances “the foundations” (Ps. xi. 3) are attempted, if it were possible, to be destroyed.

The present Work from the pen of this eminent minister of the Gospel, (now in Glory*) I feel confident, cannot but prove most acceptable to the friends and lovers of that beautiful harmony in doctrinal, experimental, and practical Subject, manifest throughout the different parts, and forming the grand aggregate of Scripture-Truth.

Very distinguishedly, through the grace of God, has this servant of Christ been assisted, in his writings already extant—agreeably to apostolic exhortation, to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;” nor less truly, firmly, and warmly, for that vital godliness proceeding from the power and influence of the doctrines of Grace, spiritually received. Yet will the present ample addition to the Author’s former works, be found (I conceive) a sort of completion of system in the ministration of divine and gospel Truth, accordant with scripture method and rule—that while true faith, which enables the soul to lay hold of and close with Christ, exhibits the first grand lines of new-birth feature in the child of God, and identifies in a time state, the object of electing and everlasting love; it is a series of holy communion and fellowship with God the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which conduces to and demonstrates the spiritual growth, strength and *maturity* of the believer—his practical godliness and love in the Spirit, both to God and to the saints, (so copiously enforced in this Epistle, and so evangelically treated of in this Work) affording additional and continued proof of his vital union to Christ:—conformity to whose Image, being the great design of predestinating grace and love. Rom. viii. 29.

These and other important subjects will be found opened and scripturally maintained in the present Work: the perusal of which, will, I trust, through the Divine blessing, prove a sweet and substantial spiritual repast; as well as lastingly instructive and edifying. With a view to which, I beg to recommend to those who may peruse this *Exposition*, particularly to notice, and well digest,

* See “A MEMORIAL, OR TRIBUTE OF PRAISE,” &c., by our Author; published by the writer of this Introduction, in 1829; in which a more particular reference is had to the event of the revered Author’s decease.

the weighty observations contained in the "Prefatory Address" by the Author, to the Reader; in which will be found, a plain, yet luminous introductory description and statement of the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul, in enlightening to know, and believe on Christ; with the fruits thereof in all that pertains to establishing grace and vital manifest godliness—subjects forming so essential a part of this Work.

That the whole may redound to the Glory of the Triune Jehovah; and the benefit of the Church of God, is the prayer of

their's to serve, in all love,

in the Gospel of Christ,

WILLIAM HORE.

Islington, January, 1835.

NOTE.

[It is a duty which the son of the sainted writer of the above "Introduction" considers as devolving on him to perform, with a view to the glory of the God of all grace, as also in reference to the courteous reader, and the memory of his beloved and respected parent, to state the remarkable circumstance as viewed in relation to this Work, of his dear Father's decease.

With much labour, but with much strength from the Lord, he had read twice, in the original manuscript, the whole of the Sermons contained in this EXPOSITION, and superintended the Work in its progress through the press; the whole of it was in type—the above "Introduction" very recently written, and the printer's last proof-sheet lying for typographical correction (of which this "Introduction" formed a part)—when it pleased the Lord to remove His servant from this state of sorrow to His bosom on high: leaving his family to joy in the midst of the deepest affliction in Him who caused their dear relative to exult in his dying moments in the faithfulness of his Covenant-keeping God—departing as though falling asleep, with an inexpressible smile of glory beaming on his countenance. His greatest delight on earth was the service of his Lord, and now above, divested of mortality, he serves Him without ceasing, day and night.]

PREFATORY ADDRESS.

Clarendon Place, Edgware Road.

READER,

I am this day, *June 23*, 1817, entered on the seventy-second year of my age; and am as disposed to preach, and write concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, his Person, Love, Incarnation, Righteousness, Sacrifice, and Salvation, as ever I was in the days of my spiritual youth. In the month of *November* last, being at the house of a friend, and joining with him in family prayer, a thought occurred to me, whilst he was in worship, that I would attempt to renew a lectureship at *Shoe Lane*, and go through in the course of it, *The First Epistle of John*. Accordingly, I soon after set forward; and have, through the good hand of my God upon me, continued, so as to have delivered Thirty Sermons on the first and second chapters. I have conceived in my mind, a design to write these out. And under the apprehension, I may, if industrious, live to complete the whole Epistle, I have this morning begun the work, hoping it may be for the Lord's glory, and his Church's benefit. May the Lord be with me, and guide my mind, heart, and affections, so that all may contribute to his praise: even so be it, O Lord.

It may not be amiss to give an outline of the whole Epistle; and the division of it: the casting the same into method and order, may make it the more easy and agreeable to the reader.

The true knowledge of Christ, is the one only key, whereby all the treasures contained in this Epistle can be opened: for this contains a spiritual treatise on communion with Christ, and with the Father in Him; through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. We can have no communion with the Three in Jehovah, but as we have a distinct, scriptural knowledge of the revelation given concerning them in the Sacred record. No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. This Epistle written by *John*, in which he asserts the Eternity of Christ's Person, His distinct Personality from the Father, and by consequence from the Spirit: also, sets forth the real fellowship which the apostles, and saints in that age had with the Holy Trinity, and what all saints in all succeeding ages are to expect and enjoy, in their measure and degree, until the same is consummated with the Eternal Three, in the state of eternal glory. As this Epistle begins with this most sublime subject, so it is pursued throughout the whole of it: in shewing the fruits and effects, which the true knowledge of, and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, produce in the minds, lives, and conversations of such as know Him, and have free and frequent accesses unto Him. Also, how such as were but professors of the same glorious gospel, fell off from the very Truth itself: even into antichristian doctrine, and worship. If the Reader attend to this in his reading the Epistle, it will preserve him from many mistakes: and he will by that means, read the whole, with more real advantage to himself.

I conceive, the whole Epistle may be divided in the following manner. The parts of it may be considered *Three*; and the chapters containing these three distinct parts are, as follows: the first, and second chapters contain the *First* part: the *Second* distinctive part, begins with the third chapter: the *Third* part, begins with the fourth chapter, and includes and closes with the fifth.

The *First* part contains, in the first and second chapters, the following most transcendently glorious, and important subjects—An account is given of the Person of Christ—Of his manifestation in the flesh—Of the true knowledge of his Person—Of communion truly and personally with Him, and the Father in Him: and every thing is delivered to promote this. Our infirmities, be they what they may, are not to be considered as hindrances to our communion with the Lord; because the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. The apostle then

enters on the subject of indwelling sin in *us*, who have communion with the Father and the Son; and he administers the only antidote to them; which he knew to be all-sufficient. This is the subject-matter of the first chapter. In the beginning of the second chapter, he goes on pursuing his former discourse, giving a most precious and blessed account of the advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, on the behalf of his sinning ones. After which he most freely sets forth the true, outward evidence of such and such knowing Christ, and giving proof thereof, in their loving the brethren. And of such and such, though under the same outward profession, as not loving Christ, and giving proof thereof, in not loving the brethren. He then writes to saints, under these different denominations—as *little children*; *fathers*; *young men*; and *babes*: and he expresseth what is most suited to these, and what the perfection of each of these states consists in. He then speaks of the antichrists which were then prevalent in the last hour of the apostolic age. He shews that the preservation of saints from these, was a full proof they had received the true Unction from the Holy One. He exhorts them to abide in Christ, according to the truths and doctrines which they had received and professed concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God: to the end, that at the appearing of Christ, the apostles, and others who were engaged with them in setting forth Christ unto them, might not be ashamed; but have confidence before Him, that these saints, thus written unto, were what they ought to be, in the knowledge of Christ, and in life and conversation, agreeable to the same: as it would ever be found an undeniable truth, that as surely and truly as they knew Christ was righteous, it would be known that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him. Here, I think, ends the First part of this most excellent Epistle.

The *Second* distinctive part of this Epistle, begins with the third chapter, and ends with it. In which saints are called upon to behold the love of the Father, as expressed in bestowing the title of Adoption on them. He calls them *sons of God*. The apostle would have them consider, what will, and must in the issue, arise out of this title, and the grace from whence it originated. They were now the sons of God. They would one day see Christ as He is. He then shews, what the true knowledge of this produces. He expressly declares, such who are under a profession of Christ, and commit sin, are not to be considered as

having any part or portion in Him. Christ became incarnate to take away sin. Such as are in Him do not sin. Such as contradict this, have neither seen Christ, nor known Him. Sin is the devil's work. He sinneth from the beginning: he never from that instant ceaseth; no, not for one single moment. The Son of God was manifested to destroy his works. Such therefore as are born of God, can never commit the devil's sin. None of them can ever commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness, either in this world, or in the world to come. The apostle declares the difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil. He refers to the message, which he and those he writes unto, had heard and received from Christ, concerning loving one another. He shews, *Cain* was not a lover of his brother. He gives the reason for it—he declares he was of the wicked one. The apostle enters very freely and fully, into the subject of brotherly love. He says, such as do not love for Christ's sake, their brethren in Him, are murderers—That they have not eternal life abiding in them. He expresseth the great love of Christ. He draws his inference from it, to what an extent the love of one another for Christ's sake, should be manifested. He asks a question of professors of the Lord Jesus, who having this world's good, and seeing their brother in Christ in need, could refrain from helping them: How it could be possible the love of God should dwell in them, if they were so unfeeling to the poor and necessitous members of Christ. He exhorts saints to express their love to each other; this would preserve their hearts from condemnation on this point: it would give them confidence towards God, when they prayed before Him, for his favours to be bestowed on such and such: they would hereby have ground for the certain expectation that He would hear, and answer their prayers offered before Him, for His, and their beloved ones: he concludes the chapter, with saying, that the whole of christianity consisted, in believing on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and loving one another: and that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in such, was the fullest evidence of their being in Christ, and of His being in them. And here, I conceive, ends the Second part of this Epistle.

The *Third* part begins with the fourth chapter; and includes the fifth also. The apostle begins this last part, with warning the brethren against false teachers, and antichrists; who were very

prevalent at the time he wrote this Epistle. He points out who they were, and also how they might be known. He asserts of himself, and true believers, that they are of God—That such also as were of God, would be distinguished, by their hearing and receiving the true apostolic doctrine: and such as were not, by receiving the preachers of those heresies as abounded in that day of profession. He exhorts to brotherly love. He sets forth the love of God. He shews how it was manifested in the Person, gift, mission, and propitiation of Jesus Christ. He draws inferences from it for brotherly love. He declares the indwelling of the Father in the saints: who expressed his love, in sending his Son into the world to be the Saviour, and that we might live through Him. He expresses, that God and saints have a mutual indwelling in each other: this is manifest in mutual acts of love expressed towards each other. We, says he, have known, and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. This is carrying the subject to its very summit and uttermost perfection. He then proceeds to make a very glorious, and most blessed improvement of this. He therefore adds, Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. He proceeds to exhort again to the exercise of spiritual brotherly love, and concludes that this is the sum-total of all which God hath commanded us. He pursues this subject in the following (fifth) chapter: and shews who the true believer is, and by what means he overcomes the world, or antichrist, viz., by believing that Jesus is the Son of God. He brings the Three Witnesses in Heaven, and the three witnesses on earth, to prove this very essential truth—that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that we have eternal life in Him. He gives the reason why he wrote his Epistle. He shews that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to save us; to hear our prayers put up on our own behalf, and for others also, and to answer them to our real satisfaction—That there is a sin unto death, and that such as are guilty of the same, no prayer is to be offered for them. He tells us, those who are born of God cannot commit it. He says of himself, and includes all saints in what he utters, we know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in the arms of the wicked one. He, and they, knew the Son of God was come, and were possessed of such a knowledge of the same, as to know Him, and to know they were in

Him, and that the true knowledge of Him was eternal life. He concludes with bidding them to keep themselves from idols. This is the outline of the Third part of this Epistle.

As these outlines of each chapter are sermonized, and the particulars of each of the verses in their true and proper connection are entered on, and properly explained; we shall have most undoubtedly an immense treasury of gospel grace set before us: a great part of which will consist in opening and unfolding Christ in his own glory, as He possessed it, with the Father before the world was. Also the glory in which the apostles had seen Him, during his continuance in his incarnate state. This will most certainly take off our minds from our own natural thoughts of Him, and give us clearly to perceive that all true knowledge of Him, is beyond the utmost conception of the human, natural mind—That we must be possessed with supernatural minds, or we can never receive the true and supernatural knowledge of Christ into them, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It will also be hereby evidenced, that we cannot have communion with the Son of God, but as we are enlightened into the true knowledge of his Person: and it will also stand most clearly connected with this, that as we have really and truly eternal life in our souls, in the knowledge of the Son of God; so communion with Him, and the Father in Him, is the very essence of all christian perfection and blessedness. It will also most clearly appear, that communion with the Lord, is incompatible with living in sin—That such only as are in a state of grace, and live as such, are the persons who have communion with God. And whilst they are in themselves the subjects of sin, and liable to the assaults of Satan, and have manifold infirmities—this is declared for our comfort, that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, is our present and everlasting purification from all sin. It follows in the course and body of this Epistle, what most blessed fruits and effects, the Holy Ghost is pleased to produce in the minds of such as are one with Christ, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

It may be remarked, this Epistle is not so much a doctrinal one: it does not contain a system of gospel truths: while in fact the whole of Truth is contained in it, yet this is delivered in a very direct and immediate manner. We should learn from hence to acknowledge the manifold gifts and graces which the Holy Ghost is pleased to bestow on his ministering servants. There are many

blessed expressions, and declarations of the love of God, which are most truly precious and heart-warming. It differs from all other of the apostolic writings, in treating very particularly here and there, of the distinct fellowship which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are pleased to hold in the souls of believers, and how they possess the minds of real saints with the true sense of the same.

I conceive it will be found very profitable to understand the whole of this Epistle, it being one grand design of the writer of it to promote in the spiritual mind, a full and blessed persuasion, of our personal interest in the Lord Jesus. And surely this is a most blessed excitement to our having and holding communion with Him: and this follows upon our real knowledge of Him. Nor can a real believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be content without a spiritual persuasion of this: neither can this be without the Holy Ghost. He it is, whose office alone hath this as His sole prerogative, to take of the things of Christ, and shew the same unto us: nor do all the evidences of grace, and the genuine fruits of faith, in the lives and conversations of the godly, set aside this. They are so many proofs of the same: for no spiritual affection, and holy frame, can be produced in the spiritual mind, but by the Spirit: which is all the fruit of His most divine and most gracious indwelling in us. Neither can the whole of His work, as to what we see, and feel of it, ever produce a foundation for our faith and hope in Christ. If this were the case, it would take us off from the written word; which the Holy Ghost is pleased to make the alone foundation for our faith and confidence in the Lord Jesus. It is a most undoubted truth, that a spiritual perception of Christ, as He is revealed in the word of grace, is the faith of the operation of God—That we receive Christ into our minds, from the revelation made of Him in the written word. It is by it Christ is formed in us. It is in receiving the record which God hath given us of his Son in it, that we believe on Him for life everlasting. All which is by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. So that His Divine Agency is of the utmost importance to us: as we can receive nothing from Christ but by Him. Hence it becomes very detrimental to our real communion with the most precious Lord Jesus, to be looking at the fruits and effects of grace, produced in us, and manifested by us, even though we ascribe the same to the Spirit of God, and overlook this far greater act of His—the glorifying Christ in us, so as

to carry us out thereby, from ourselves, and off ourselves; and exalting the Person of Christ, the love of Christ, the blood and righteousness of the ever glorious, and blessed Immanuel in our view. It is from hence, Christ becomes precious to us. It is hereby we have an inward knowledge, sense, and experience of His blood and righteousness in our minds. It is hereby we actually receive the Atonement. It is from hence we enjoy the peace of God, and the love of God. It is hereby we have real outgoings after the Lord; and it is by the same, we enjoy the outgoings of Christ's love, in the influences and manifestations of these to our own souls. All which is the sole work of the Holy Ghost within us, and upon us; and it is the fruit of his revealing Christ to our renewed minds, and shedding abroad the Love of God in our hearts; which He doth without leading us to view his own work in our own souls. It is this, therefore, I would guard against: as I absolutely conceive, the present age is in an error in these very important particulars—They laying the whole emphasis of what they call the work of the Spirit, on internal grace, and the fruits and effects of the same; and they seem to lay the whole stress of our knowing our interest in Christ, on these: whereas, we must know Christ, abstracted from our personal interest in Him: which latter is the fruit which follows on our true knowledge of Him. And we cannot act faith towards Him, and upon Him, nor believe in Him for life everlasting, but in proportion to our knowledge of Him, and his most truly complete, finished, and everlastingly efficacious Righteousness and Sacrifice; and the Father's acceptance of Him, and his glorious work, contained in his obedience and sufferings. When the Holy Ghost is pleased to give the regenerate mind a true apprehension of this, he draws out the same, into act and exercise thereon: and hereby we receive Christ, believe on Christ, rest on Jesus, and centre in Him: hereby we are led to see that we are in Christ, and that He is in us. This leads us to say, as the Spouse in the Canticles doth, My Beloved is mine, and I am His. This statement of the subject, makes it an act of faith, which being realized by the Holy Ghost in our mind, makes it an act of knowledge and certainty, drawn from the Divine word, in which Christ is revealed, and the Father's record of His Son, is testified. Our Lord himself says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the will of him that sent me, that

every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life:" John vi. 38, 40. Such persons as are thus taught and led by the Spirit unto Christ, will always be looking out of themselves unto Him. And such who are looking at inherent grace, and deriving all their confidence in the Lord, and comfort therefrom, will be continually poring on the same. I would have such know, that they are, in this, altogether wrong. They cannot live Christ so long as it is thus with them; and to live Christ, is the only life worth living; it is the very life which is only worth living out of heaven; it is the very best preparation for the state of eternal blessedness and glory.

I submit, Reader, to thy own consideration, what hath been dropped. May the good Lord bless the same unto thee! Thou wilt find the work of God within thee, very greatly strengthened, excited, and drawn out into open act and exercise, as the Lord the Spirit is pleased to teach thee how to live on Christ without thee, and without all consideration of what thou art in thyself. May the Holy Ghost bless the following Sermons, to the praise of the glory of his grace, and the real and spiritual advantage of his saints,

is the desire and prayer of

the least of all the servants of his Lord,

SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE.

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AN EXPOSITION
OF THE
FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN,
IN A SERIES OF SERMONS.

SERMON I.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life."—1 JOHN i. 1.

THIS Epistle, written by the Apostle *John*, concerns the subject of communion with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, through the grace and influence of the Holy Spirit, which is the very essence and uttermost perfection of grace, either on earth, or in glory. This apostle was in the New Testament church; what the prophet *Daniel* was in the Old. He was addressed by the angel, "O man greatly beloved," Dan. x. 19, and our apostle was known by the title of *that disciple whom Jesus loved*. He was a high favourite with our Lord Jesus Christ. He was admitted to lay in his bosom; and like as Christ lay in the bosom of his Father before all time, and drew out all the love of his Father's heart into his own, and shines in the full splendour of it, and reflects the glorious shine of it on his church; so this apostle, being admitted to such free and intimate converse with our Lord, drew out the very heart of Christ into his own. And he was thereby most eminently qualified to write concerning one of the greatest of all subjects—communion with the divine Persons, in the incomprehensible essence as they stand related to us, and are personally interested in us, according to their own sovereign will and grace.

John was a witness for Christ. He saw him in the flesh; he beheld him on the mount of transfiguration, when he shone forth in majesty and glory, such as carried its own evidence with it, that he was the only begotten of the Father.—He saw him transfixed on the cross.—He saw him in his agony and blood-sweat.—He saw him as he hung a breathless corpse on the tree.—He saw him pierced in his side by a soldier, when blood and water flowed out, in consequence of the bag which surrounded the heart being touched by the spear which entered it.—He saw and conversed with our Lord after he was risen from the dead, and during his continuance in his resurrection state.—He saw him when he left our world, and ascended up on high, and sat down at the right hand of God.—He saw him after his entrance and coronation in heaven, in a vision in the Isle of Patmos, at which time he was so struck with the glory, majesty, dignity, and shine of his visionary appearance, that he says, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon

me, saying, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Rev. i. 17, 18. When we consider all this, we cannot but see, that this apostle must have been in an especial manner qualified to write on the subject contained in this epistle now before us, which he begins with speaking of the Person of Christ; the eternity of Christ; the reality of Christ's incarnation: the ocular proofs and demonstrations he, and the other apostles and disciples, had of this greatest of all truths, *God manifested in the flesh*. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." Thus he begins the first chapter of this epistle. The word *beginning* is the same with *Moses' beginning*—the same with which this apostle begins his gospel—the same of which the God-Man speaks, when he says, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." The gospel of John begins thus, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." The professed design of John in writing his gospel, is expressed by him thus: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John xx. 31. His end and design in writing this epistle is thus declared by him, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." 1 John v. 13. This sacred memorial of the apostle, is to show how all saints may come to undeniable certainty, and have clear and undubitable evidence of their own personal interest and salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ; and thus going on in renewed and reiterated acts of faith on him, might also have increasing communion with him. As his gospel was to confirm saints in the knowledge and belief of the distinctive Personality of Christ, of his being co-equal and co-essential with the Divine Father; of his being the true Messiah; of his having performed the whole work and office for which he became incarnate; so this was written by the same apostle, to show the whole church, it was their high calling and privilege, to have, and hold communion with this most adorable Person, and with the Father in him; and to express to them, the blessed fruits and effects produced in their minds herefrom, through the in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost, some of which were openly expressed in life and conversation. This is an outline of the whole of this sacred apostolic letter, which is entitled, *The First Epistle General of John*. It is not directed to any particular person, nor to any particular church. No. It is a Catholic epistle. It belongs to all saints, and that from the time it was written, down to us, and throughout all generations. It may not be amiss, as it may assist the memory, to divide these words before me, into the following particulars.

1. To consider Him of whom *John* is speaking. *That which was from the beginning.*
2. What he says of Him. *He had been heard, he had been seen, he had been handled.*
3. The persons who had thus seen Him.

4. The title he gives this most wonderful one. *The Word of life.* "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life."

I am 1st. to consider Him of whom *John* is here speaking, *That which was from the beginning.*

Beloved, the subject is deep. It is altogether divine. The Lord keep me from saying anything hereon, but what the clear scripture will justify me in. Of all mysteries contained in the revelation the Lord God hath given us in the word of his grace, that which concerns his own nature, and existence, must be confessed to be the deepest and most sublime. In this revelation, Jehovah hath made known himself, as existing as Father, Son, and Spirit, distinctly and Personally in one and the same ineffable Essence, so that the one is not before, nor after the other, neither greater nor less than the other; but they are co-equal and co-eternal in the one self-existing Essence; which is the fountain of the persons. That which distinguishes the Persons is as essential as the Godhead itself. What God is in his nature, persons, life, blessedness, glory, immortality, and eternity, is, and ever will be, incomprehensible. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Job xi. 7, 8, 9. The whole scripture openly expresses the self-existence, life, being, blessedness, eternity, and glory of God; and the same scriptures express the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as co-existing by essential union in the Essence, as being the one only true and living God. The first term by which the Divine Majesty is expressed in the Bible is an evidence of this. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It is acknowledged by the learned, both Jews and Christians, the word *God* is plural: and it fully appears to be so, as in Gen. i. 26, we read, *And God said, let us make man.* As the nature of God is an infinite fountain of blessedness to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, so the Three in Jehovah needed not go forth into any acts to complete their blessedness. Yet out of the immensity of goodness which is contained in the incomprehensible Essence, it pleased the Eternal Three to manifest and make known their nature, persons, perfections, and blessedness, openly and visibly, the foundation of which in the divine mind was by the joint will of the essential Three, to set up one of the Persons in the essence to be God-Man, in one Person, in whom the essence, persons, and glory of the Godhead should shine forth to the uttermost manifestation and display thereof. The Son of God, of the same essence with the Father and the Spirit, was fixed on to be predestinated to be God-Man, in whom all the glory of the Godhead should be manifested, so far as they possibly could, consistent with God's incomprehensibility, to the uttermost. It should be carefully attended unto, that the foundation of all this, was laid in the Son of God. He, as a Person in the Godhead, was the Person who was chosen to be the image of the invisible God. He was predestinated to take into Personal union an individual humanity, consisting of body and soul, by which he gave Personality to it. Thus, he became God-Man from before all time. This great and glorious mystery, contained in the inspired volume, the

first hint given of it, is in these words, And God said, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.* This image of God was Christ, God-Man. It was after the pattern-likeness of him, Adam, the first man, was formed : and Christ himself is expressly styled *the image of God*, and this as God-Man. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature : for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him, and for him : and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Colos. i. 15, 16, 17. The God-Man was chosen for God himself to delight in ; therefore the Divine Father speaks of him thus ; *Behold mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.* He is revealed as the first and the last, in all the will, thoughts, purposes, decrees, as the one object of God's infinite complacency. In the 8th chapter of Proverbs, he there says, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." He concludes this subject at the 30th verse, saying, "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Prov. viii. 22, 23, 30. As Christ, God-Man, was set up from everlasting, as the image of the invisible God, in whom the whole glory of the divine Essence, and the Persons in the same, were manifested to the uttermost, so far as God willed, and to the uttermost of the capacities of intellectual creatures, so God chose the church in him, and created the heavens and the earth, in the intuitive knowledge he had of him. He engaged him to be the Saviour of the elect ; revealed him immediately upon the fall as such ; promised to give him, and send him into the world, clothed with our nature, to save his people in himself with an everlasting salvation. The greatest promise which was ever given, concerned the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into our world. He was to be incarnate. Before which he appeared in Person, in such glory and majesty, as to be testimonials of his eternity and divinity. He was seen by Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was seen by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. He was seen by Joshua, Solomon, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, and that as wearing the insignia of God-Man. And his saints embraced the promise of his open incarnation with unspeakable joy and delight. When the period was full up, *God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.* This was one of the greatest events which ever took place, or ever can. Our apostle, and others with him, saw this great sight ; God incarnate. God in our nature. God manifest in the flesh. Immanuel God with us. And of this he is here speaking. *That which was from the beginning.* The humanity of Christ was not a Person, but a thing ; it is so called by the angel *Gabriel*, who speaking to Mary, the mother of it, says, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke i. 35. The Person of Christ was from the beginning. He was as God-Man before the world, and had a glory with the Father before the world was. He says to the Jews, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." John viii. 58. This most glorious one, who was God-Man before the world was ; who became incarnate in the fulness

of time ; who took hold of our nature, and became true and very man, God and man united in one Christ. He was seen by our apostle, who says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." John i. 14. John lived in the days of Christ's incarnation ; he had the honour to see Christ, the Messiah, and was favoured with his company and communion with him. This was grace and glory inexpressible. Such as we can have no tolerable conceptions and ideas of. Were we but to carry this thought with us, in our reading his writings, that he was one of those persons who actually saw Christ in the flesh, I conceive it would stamp what we read in him, with eternal importance and weight on our minds. I proceed to consider what he says of him.

2. *He had heard, he had seen, he had handled him.* So had others also. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." These various terms of hearing, seeing, looking, handling, are designed to express the reality of our Lord's incarnation. That he had a real body. It was a palpable one. It was seen. It was touched. It was heard. Our Lord spake ; his voice was heard. He was looked upon and seen with the bodily eyes of those who conversed with him ; he was felt and handled, and found to be as really and truly man, as he was really and truly God. The truth of this was denied by some heretics in the apostolic age. To refute which the apostle expresseth himself as he here doth. There was satisfaction given, and such demonstration given to every sense of body and mind, that Christ had a body like our own, that no greater proof could be given. He was made in all things like unto his brethren. It was in our nature he obeyed. Bore the sins of many, in his own body on the tree. It was in his human soul, he felt and sustained the whole curse and righteous displeasure of his Father's wrath, due to the sins of the whole election of grace.—It was in his body he died the death due to sin.—It was in his body he was crucified.—It was in his body he rose from death to life immortal. He appeared to his disciples in the very same body in which he had been crucified. In the same body he ascended. In it he is glorified at the right hand of the Majesty on high, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. In the same body he will appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation. The apostle *Paul* says, "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Acts xvii. 31. The apostle says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." To realize to those to whom he then wrote, and to the Church of Christ, down to the end of time, the certainty, reality and importance of our Lord's incarnation. All that Christ was from everlasting, he hath manifested it in time. When he became one with his people, by his open incarnation, all the everlasting love of God, in him, to them, shone forth in all its radiancy and glory ; in all its majesty and splendour. Christ in laying aside the glory which he had with the Father, before the world was, and taking on himself the form of a servant, fully proved his delights were with the elect sons of men. He hereby became what he was not before.

He was in the form of God. He now laid it aside. He was found in fashion as a man. He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. All which *John* saw, in the views he had, of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in his incarnate state. It is one of the greatest mysteries in the word, next to that of the doctrine of the ever blessed and glorious Trinity, the person of Christ. Which, for the substance of it is this, a Person in the Godhead dwelling personally in the human nature which he took into personal union. Our nature was not, is not taken up into union with the Godhead, but into personal union with a Person in the Godhead. To declare the grace of this, and set forth the full glories of God-Man, of God the Son, dwelling personally in the Man Christ Jesus, and his personal incommunicable glory, which is the very result and consequence of this, is impossible. Neither can his grace expressed in his incarnation, be ever fully explored. The mystery of the incarnation is the wonder of elect angels, as it is and ever will be the wonder of elect men. That the God-Man, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead personally, should come forth from the Father, and come into our world, and take a body prepared for him by the Father, which was accordingly formed, articulated, and framed by the Holy Ghost, is one of the greatest displays of grace, which the mind of God was ever engaged in. Hereby the Son of God, the heir of all things, the brightness of glory, the Lord of glory, the King of glory, was in our world in his open incarnate state. Thus heaven was opened; God was seen; and this great promise made good to the elect church of human race upon earth. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah ix. 6. The incarnation of God-Man, was symbolically set forth by the Tabernacle and the Temple. To live therefore when all this, and the glory contained in these figures, was realized by the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, must have reflected a glorious blaze of supernatural light, upon the enlightened minds of saints, to whom the glory of the Lord was revealed, as he was to the Apostles. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." The Person of Christ is a most transcendently excellent subject. The incarnation of Christ, a deep and most momentous subject. It may be, in no human writings, these are so fully opened, as in the second volume of Dr. Goodwin's folio works, with one or two other authors. For him, who had been in the form of God, and shone forth to the delight of the Holy Three, as the object of their infinite delight, to veil his glories, to suspend the shine of them, to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh, to become a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and for the riches of everlasting love and grace to be manifested and displayed to the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven hereby, is grace worthy of God. We can only cry out, when we have the real apprehension of it, *O the depth!* I proceed to consider,

3. The persons who had thus seen him, "Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." They were the apostles themselves. He speaks in their and his own name here. Not but other

saints beside them saw the Lord in his incarnate state; yet they were not called and appointed to be witnesses of this, as the apostles were. So that here we are to conceive the apostle, by the words he here uses, to include his fellow-apostles, when he says, "Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." Not that they all saw so much of Christ as he did. There were but two beside himself, who were present when our Lord raised the daughter of *Jairus* from death to life. There were but the same two, with himself, who saw Christ shine forth on the holy mount, and "were eyewitnesses of his majesty when he received from God the Father honour and glory," when "there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." His brother *James*, and *Peter*, were they, who with himself, were witnesses of our Lord's agony and bloody-sweat. When he says in the 14th verse of the first chapter of his Gospel, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," he refers to our Lord's transfiguration; a sight reserved for him, and his brother *James*, and *Peter*. These, with all the rest of the apostles, heard Christ's voice, they saw his Person, they beheld his miracles, they heard his sermons, they looked stedfastly on him, they touched his sacred Person, they handled him: so as that they had the utmost satisfaction their minds and senses, both mentally and by sight, hearing, feeling, and handling, could give them, that our Lord had really and truly a palpable body. This the apostle therefore bears his, and their, testimony unto. This was then, and is to the present, and ever will remain to be a matter of the utmost importance. The evidence the apostles had of his Person, and incarnation, was different from ours. We receive ours from them: and that in a way of believing; whereby we receive into our minds, from their holy and sacred writings, which they have given us, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the true spiritual and supernatural knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ into our minds, and are thereby led to believe on him to the salvation of our souls. They had the evidence of sense as truly as we have the evidence of faith. They saw with their corporeal eyes the Lord Messiah. It was by faith they believed in their minds, from the scriptures of truth, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, they received, believed, and acknowledged him to be the Son of God, who was to come into the world. Yet the sight they had of Christ, and which *John* is here speaking of, is quite distinct and different from that which we shall ever be favoured with. They saw him with their bodily eyes; they heard him with their bodily ears; they looked on him in the days of his flesh; and they bore their testimony to the truth of this. True believers hear the voice of Christ in his word, and in hearing it their souls live. They see Christ in the light of the gospel, and behold salvation and everlasting life in him; but this is with the eyes of their mind. They touch, they taste, and handle Christ mystically and representatively, at his holy table, in their fellowship with him in his holy supper, yet this is quite distinct and different from what the apostle is here speaking. Yet it is as effectual to us for our souls' benefit, as theirs was. Yet notwithstanding this, the different ends answered by the same are so essential, that they ought to be distinguished. The period of our Lord's incarnation was the centre of the close of the Old Testament, and the beginning of the New. Persons were chosen by the Lord, and called to be witnesses of Christ's ap-

pearing in the flesh. They were to record His life. His words. His miracles. His threatenings. His promises. His prophecies. His holiness. His righteousness. His passion. His death. His burial. His resurrection. His ascension into heaven. His session at the right hand of the Majesty on high. His coronation in glory. And his sending down the Holy Ghost from heaven, to prove him to be the Lord's Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Now the apostles who were to be witnesses of all this unto the people, and who actually did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead, could say, as one of them does for all the rest, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." For they saw God incarnate, and conversed with him, and were his companions in his incarnate state. He who shone forth between the cherubim of glory, in the Holy of Holies; whom Isaiah saw in a vision, and of whom he said, *Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* This most adorable Person the apostles saw with their bodily eyes, in his incarnate state. A sight we shall never behold. It is everlastingly impossible we should. That state being past. We shall see God incarnate, God-Man, in heaven—we shall see him face to face, in the resurrection state—we shall see him as he is—we shall see him in the state of ultimate glory, as he will there shine forth in his personal glory. We see him now, in the glass of the everlasting gospel, as truly and efficaciously as the apostles did, in our measure and degree, though not as they did with their bodily eyes. We see him with the eye of faith, as certainly as those persons did with the eyes of their body, and as truly, yet not so clearly and fully, as saints in heaven do by sense and vision. I would observe, like as all the apostles were not alike favoured with a view of their Lord's glory, when his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white and glistening, so all saints in their present militant state, are not equally favoured, and shone upon by our Lord Jesus Christ, with his manifestative, and influential presence. There is a holy variety the Lord Jesus is pleased to exercise here. I conceive some saints so far surpass other saints, in the communications Christ imparts to them, and the communion he is pleased to hold with them; that there is herein a vast difference in the experiences of the one, and the other.

4. I come to the title *John* gives this most wonderful One. He styles him, *The Word of life*; "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." Our Lord bears in various parts of the inspired volume, the title of *the Word*. In the Old Testament it is recorded of him, that God said, *Let there be light: and there was light.* Which is thus explained, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Psalm xxxiii. 6. We read *the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.* Gen. xv. 1. David says, "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them." 2 Samuel vii. 21. In all these passages our Lord bears the title of *the Word*. I mention it, because some conceive it is our apostle alone who styles him so. It is a truth he begins his gospel, with calling Christ, *the Word*. The reason of the title is generally explained thus. The word is the index

of the mind. By it what is contained in the mind is expressed. So Christ as one in the self-existing Essence, speaks out the mind of the eternal Father. It was by his Almighty fiat, the heavens and the earth were created, and all the host of them. It was by him, all the secrets of the Most High were spoken out and proclaimed, and the invisible God brought out of his invisibility. So says our evangelist in the first chapter of his Gospel, "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." 18. It is in him the full revelation of Godhead is made known. It is by the personal union of the Son of God, with the man Christ Jesus, there is the clearest evidence given us, of the Trinity in Unity, which we can possibly receive. It is in *the essential word* all the mind of God is opened, all the love of God expressed, the whole of God declared. It is as this essential word, and only begotten Son of God, shines forth as God-Man, in his most glorious person, mediation, work, grace, and salvation, in the everlasting gospel, and enlightens his Church therewith, that they in his light see light. The following scripture seems to be very properly produced; and which I conceive may be looked on as a confirmation of this vast, deep, and most glorious subject. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6. It is in the person of Christ, God-Man, all of God shines forth.—It is in his person the fullest display of Godhead is made manifest; so that he is *the light; the true light; the light of everlasting life*; and as he is styled by the apostle Paul, *the word of God's grace*, he being the gift of the Father's love to the Church; and all the grace of God being revealed in him, and the whole fulness of it treasured up in him, that out of his fulness we might receive grace for grace; so our apostle gives him this title here, *the Word of life*. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." The words of Paul which I have referred unto, are his surrender of the elders of Ephesus to the Lord. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Acts xx. 32. It is not the written word he here speaks of, but the same of whom he says, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. iv. 12, 13. *The Word of life*, the title John gives here to Christ, as God-incarnate, is very emphatical; he is life essentially; he is life manifestatively; he is life communicatively; he is the very fountain of life, as the head of his body, the Church, from whence the very apostles themselves received all their spiritual life, and who would be to them life eternal in the kingdom of glory. Christ might well be styled by the apostle *the Word of life*, he being the life of the whole creation, whether visible or invisible; the life of all creatures is in him, as it is also from him.—He is the life of all the elect angels of his presence in glory.—He

is the life of glory to all his saints, who are in the state of glory.—He is their everlasting Light, and their everlasting glory.—He is the life of this whole church upon earth. He lives in all his called and regenerated members; he continues and maintains life spiritual, and life eternal in their minds; and all the life they will ever enjoy is alone in him. *When Christ our life shall appear, then* (says the apostle to the saints at Colosse) *shall ye also appear with him in glory.* The title, *the Word of life*, is glorious. It is worthy of Christ. He is called *the Prince of life*. Acts iii. 15. It is Peter who there gives our Lord that title; and here John entitles him, *the Word of life*: and says, he and his brethren had found and proved him to be such. *Our hands have handled of the Word of life.* It would be well for us to consider this title; according to it, we can have no true spiritual life in our souls; we receive it all from him; we live it all to him; graces and comforts are but the effects of it; our communion with God, either on earth or in heaven, is not this life, it is only the effect of it. These words of Christ are great; we can take in but a very small apprehension of the same; He says, "*For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.*" John v. 26; which I conceive to concern Christ, as God-Man, who lives a life of independent blessedness as such; who is over all, in all, and through all, *God blessed for ever.* Rom. ix. 5. *He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God; the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.* As the whole fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in the humanity, which is one person with the Son of the living God, so the fulness of that glory must be everlastingly too great, fully to shine forth on saints, even in glory; so that none can ever fully conceive of it, nor be admitted to the full blaze thereof. I hope I have made no mistake in what I have been delivering on this subject. I do not mean concerning the subject itself. It is fully revealed in the word of revelation; yet the mystery is so transcendently great, it requires very great supernatural light and teaching, rightly to apprehend it. If, therefore, I have not been so clear on these momentous truths, may the Lord pardon me; and by the light and teaching of his holy Spirit, bless what in it is acceptable in his sight. Amen.

SERMON II.

(*For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*).—1 JOHN i. 2.

WE have a continuation of the former subject in the foregoing verse, in which the Person, Eternity, and Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and knowledge given of the same, were by the apostle declared. This most divine Person sustains the title, *The Word of Life*. The apostle had in his gospel entitled Him, *The Word. The Light. The True Light*. In the words of our present text, he speaks of Him, by the titles of, *The Life. Eternal Life*. He is in the former, and in this verse also, speaking of Christ, as the Christ of God. Of what He is in himself—in his Person, abstracted from all consideration of what He is to his church, as their Head, their Lord, their Bridegroom, their Mediator, their Saviour, their Wisdom, their Righteousness, their Sanctification, their Redemption. The whole of my text is included in a parenthesis; the reason for which I cannot say, unless it be to distinguish the peculiar sight and knowledge the apostles had of our Lord Jesus Christ, in those particulars mentioned in both the verses, beyond the rest of saints. Like as in the 14th verse of the first chapter of *John's* gospel, he includes the following words in a parenthesis. "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." As this sight was peculiar to *Peter, James, and John*, it referring to our Lord's transfiguration; so it may be, the same may be here made use of, thus to distinguish the apostles, and their sight, and witness concerning the Dignity, Majesty, Glory, Honour, Incarnation, Life, and Death, from all others. In the words before us, the apostle speaks of Christ's manifestation in the flesh—of his being *the Life*—of his being *The Eternal Life*. He declares Him to have been with the Father before his open incarnation—that himself, and the other apostles, saw Him in his incarnate state: they bear witness of Him; they shewed this truth concerning Him to the people. Yea, they declared most freely this, as the very essence of truth, that he was manifested unto them, which is almost the same with the former verse, which for the sake of its connection, and to preserve the same, I will recite. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (*For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*)." As we read these verses together, the one seems to explain the other. *He who was in the beginning, was the Word of Life. This Word of Life was manifested. He was that Eternal Life which was with the Father. He was manifested unto us, says the apostle. This is what He was. The Word of Life. The Life manifested. He was that Eternal Life which was with the Father. What He was, He is the same now, and will remain the same to all eternity. He says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come,*

the Almighty." Rev. i. 8. And *Paul* says of Him, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Heb. xiii. 8.

In considering the words of my text, I will cast them into this division.

1. I will consider the Person spoken of; the titles given Him; and what is here said of, and concerning Him. *For the life was manifested, that Eternal Life which was with the Father.*

2. That the apostles had seen this great sight, *God-Incarnate*. *We have seen it*, or rather, we have seen *Him*, as manifested in the flesh. We have seen, and bear witness, and shew the truth of this unto you; in our ministry.

3. What they declared of Him, was from the divine knowledge which they had of Him. They knew He was *that Eternal Life, which was with the Father.*

4. This was a very particular part of the witness which they bare of Him—that *He was manifested unto them*. Whilst in reading any text in this Epistle, I shall not leave out the supplementary words, yet I shall not always use them; neither shall I altogether reject them: in the text before us, I shall, however, omit the word *it*, as being improper, as what is said concerns the Person of Christ. Let this be remembered. I mention this here, as once for all, and now proceed to enter on my discourse, by attending to the divisions already given. And I am

1st. To consider the Person spoken of—the titles given Him, and what is here said of, and concerning Him. It is Christ, God-Man, is the Person spoken of. The titles here in this verse given Him, are, *The Life: that Eternal Life*. What is here said of Him, is, that *He was with the Father*. That *He was manifested in the flesh*. I hope to speak to each of these distinctly, yet I shall begin with giving one general account of this most wonderful and adorable Person, once for all, and afterwards proceed to His titles; of His being with the Father, and of His manifestation by His open Incarnation. *For the life was manifested, and we have seen Him, and bear witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*. The Person spoken of is Christ, who is *God over all blessed for ever*. Amen. In Him all the essential glory of the Godhead shines forth, in the uttermost display, and open discovery of the same; and the uttermost of Divine blessedness, so far as it can be made evident, and be apprehended by the supernatural faculties of elect angels, and elect saints of the human race. We must not go higher than this. Whilst the Glory of the Son of God is essential to Him, as one in the divine Essence, yet the Personal Glory of Christ is distinct therefrom; this being wholly of gift. We have the glory of this subject reflected on the church, and it shines forth in, and throughout every part of the word of Truth which the Lord hath given us, yet it is not the Glory of the divine Nature which is the subject; but it is the Glory of Him, who is in the Godhead, One with the Father and the Spirit, who shines forth in the full Glories of the Godhead, in that individual humanity to which he was predestinated; and which, by his Personal union, he is one Person with; and in which He dwells with all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, is the subject here. Which glory is a given glory. Our Lord speaks of it thus in the intercessory prayer recorded in the 17th chap. of John. I will select from it what I think should be brought

forward on such an important occasion, as when the Personal Glories of Christ are set forth. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." John xvii. 4, 5, 22, 24. In which it is evident, Christ had a glory with the Father before the world was. This glory he prays for. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." It could not be the essential Glory of his Godhead. This was as essential to the Son of God, as to the Father, and the Spirit. This was not given to Him. It was his as God the Son, who though distinct in Personality from the Father and the Spirit, yet He, as one in the incomprehensible Essence, was as truly God, as the Father and the Spirit, being one in the same self-existing Essence. He says, *The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.* Which could not be the glory of the divine nature, it being wholly impossible Christ, as God-Man, should receive this, or impart it. He further says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The glory, therefore, which our Lord here speaks of, is not his essential glory, nor his acquired glory. It is a given glory, which he had with the Father before the world was. In which he had shone forth, and been glorified with the Father, in an unspeakable way, and to an inexpressible degree, before the world was. It may be a mean of opening this vast subject for the improvement of our minds, if some questions are asked, and answers returned to the same, to reflect light on so sublime a point as that which is before us. As 1. What are we to understand by the Person of God-Man? 2. What are we to conceive by the expression, his Personal glory? 3. What by the gift of this to Him? This will most assuredly make way for my laying before you my own inward thoughts of this high mystery, concerning the Person of Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh. And 1. What are we to understand by the Person of *God-Man*? To which I reply. The Essential word, or co-equal, co-essential Son of God, united to an individual human nature, consisting of body and soul, which the Son of God was personally united unto, and set up in from everlasting. The Son of God was personally united to the humanity taken into Personal union, Christ is therefore, and thereby, denominated God-Man, because in Him, our nature is united to a Person in the Godhead. Not to the Godhead, but to a Person in it. The 2nd. question is, what are we to conceive by the expression, his Personal Glory? The reply is this. The glory which is due to that individual Nature which is exalted into Personal union, so as to be one Person with the only begotten Son of God. The 3rd. question is, what is to be conceived by the gift of this glory on Christ? To this the reply is, there was nothing but grace in the whole of this, to confer this high honour and dignity on this individual thus exalted. And the God-Man, being the fellow of the Lord of hosts, his glory must be a Personal Glory, which was wholly bestowed out of free grace, and everlasting favour: so

that the whole is of gift. This is the statement which the apostle gives of it, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" Now as to my own views of this most profound subject, I conceive from Christ's words, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," that He must have been with the Father from everlasting, as God-Man: that He must have been glorified with the Father as such: that He must have lived the life of God-Man, the man of God's right hand from everlasting. I do not mean his human soul existed from everlasting. I believe his whole Person existed from everlasting. I would convey my ideas on this deep subject thus—The Second Person in the Essence, was with his own will, and the will of the Father and the Spirit, predestinated into creature being and existence. In conjunction with this, He was conceived and brought forth, in the vast, and eternal designs, councils, purposes, and will of all the Persons in God-head, before the foundation of the world was laid. The Second Person was set up to be God-Man, in his whole Person. I conceive He was as truly God-Man, then, as He is now. He wore the glory due to Him; who was one Person with the only begotten Son of God. He says himself, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." John iii. 13. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." John vi. 38. "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." John xvi. 28. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John xvii. 5. From all these passages, I think there can be nothing more clear than this, as the conclusion of them—that Christ was God-Man in heaven, before the world was—that He was glorified as such, and had the Glory due to his Person bestowed on Him—that He shone forth in the full splendour of it, as the man Jehovah's fellow—that He laid aside this glory, when He became incarnate, and was made in all things like unto his brethren. The glory of Christ's Person is essential to Him. It may, therefore, be well entitled his Personal Glory. It wholly resides in Him. It is incommunicable. It is impossible He should be divested of it. He could and did suspend it. He could and did empty himself of it, so as to humble himself, and take on himself the form of a servant; yet his Person was ever one and the same, though not in one and the same state. He was in his non-incarnate state in heaven, in the bosom of the Father. He had a glory with Him. He was in his Incarnate state in this our world the subject of all sinless infirmities. The apostle says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. viii. 9.

I will next glance at the Titles given Him in the words before us. He is entitled, *The Life*. He is so most emphatically. He is *the Life*. He being the Son of the living God. "Thou art Christ, the Son of the

living God." This was *Peter's* confession of him, and unto him. Matt. xvi. 16. He is expressly called *the living God*, by the apostle. Heb. iii. 12. He is life essentially.—He is life communicatively.—He is life spiritually.—He is life eternally. This is what Christ is. There is no life out of Him. All life is in Him. He is the life of the whole creation. The life of grace.—The life of glory. And He is all this as God-Man, the Lord, the Creator, the Proprietor of every creature. He is *eternal Life*. His life never decays. He lives in all generations, and his Name and memorial are from everlasting to everlasting. "Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands." Ps. cii. "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, or change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." v. 24—27. When our apostle here says, *For the life was manifested, and we have seen Him, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*, he means to set forth Christ as He really is, *The Christ of God*, abstractedly from what He is to his Church, under any consideration whatsoever. It is a real blessing to understand it so—what Christ is in his own Person,—what He is in his essential and original Titles,—what He is in his relation to the divine Father,—what He is in *His* view and esteem, these are subjects of eternal moment: of infinite importance. These are the deep things of God. The knowledge of the same will be our food in heaven: our feast throughout the ages of eternity. I could wish this to be attended unto, and thought deeply on. Christ as the Son of the living God, is *the Life*, and "that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested in the flesh in the fulness of time." This is the wisdom of God in a mystery. Our spiritual and eternal life, cometh from Christ only. He is the fountain of it. He is the Head in whom it wholly resides. The knowledge of Him is our eternal life. Communion with him is the mean whereby the blessedness contained in the knowledge of Him, is imparted to us, and enjoyed by us. It is so, even with the angels, and saints in glory. Christ *the Life*, Christ, "that eternal life which was with the Father," came down from heaven, by his most mysterious and wonderful incarnation. I proceed

2. To the apostles' having seen this great sight, *God-Incarnate*. *We have seen it*, or rather *Him*. We have seen Him as manifested in the flesh. *We have seen, and bear witness*, and shew the truth of this in our ministry of the gospel unto you.

As in the former verse he had said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;" he here says, concerning the same most adorable Person, as follows in the words of my present text, (*For the life was manifested, and we have seen him, and bear witness, and shew unto you, that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*.) The manifestation of Christ in the flesh, included the substance of all the Scripture promises, and prophecies contained in the Old Testament, and may be styled the accomplishment of them. The manifestation of Christ in the flesh was the greatest event which ever took place in our world. Yet we are not

so deeply sensible of this in our minds, as we most certainly ought to be. The sufferings, agony, and bloody-sweat of Christ, with his bearing our sins in his own body on the Tree, and his sustaining the very curse due to our transgressions, seem to fix a deeper impression of his love upon our minds, than his Incarnation doth. Yet there is more love expressed in his taking our nature, and being made like unto his brethren in all things, than we can ever possibly conceive. Out of it the whole execution of our salvation proceeded. He could love us in Heaven with as great a degree of love, as he will to the ages of eternity. But he could not be made sin, and a curse for us in heaven. He undertook on the behalf of his church, before all time. He therefore came into our world in the fulness of time. His coming into it was by his open incarnation. The whole mystery of which, is, I conceive thus expressed by the apostle. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: *God was manifest,*" or as it is in the margin, "*manifested in the flesh.*" The *Son of God, the Life, that eternal life which was with the Father*, was personally united to that body which the Father had prepared for him, and which the Holy Ghost framed and articulated in the womb of the Virgin. The Son of God was hereby manifested in our nature, and born into our world. At which time, we generally refer the following words of the apostle, "And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. i. 6. There are those, who, from the marginal reading, which is this, "When he bringeth again, the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him," conceive the words concern the second advent of our Lord. It seems to me, both senses may well belong to each part of the subject. The Incarnation of Christ, was a most astonishing proof of his love. He was pleased to manifest himself to his disciples. They saw his glory, and believed on him, as the glorious Messiah, the Anointed of God. Hence one of them said, to his friend, in the name of several of the rest, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," this is the very identical Person. John i. 45. Another said, "We have found the Messiah, the Anointed one." John i. 41. John here speaks for himself, and joins the rest of the holy apostles, saying, we have seen God-Incarnate, *For the Life was manifested. And we have seen Him. And we bear witness of Him*, that He hath been in our world—that He was found in fashion as a man—that He was nailed to a cross. He was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem. He is risen from the dead. He is gone into heaven. He is at the right hand of God, crowned with honour and majesty. *We shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.* The truth, reality, and importance of all this, was the subject of their ministry: and they were most peculiarly fitted and qualified for the same. They had seen the Lord.—They had heard what he had declared concerning Himself.—They had received their commission from Him. He said unto them, when he opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures, and shewed them how it was written in them, that Messiah was to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, "And ye are witnesses of these things." Luke xxiv. 48. Ye have seen all written in the scriptures concerning the Messiah realized in me. These, and none but these, except the seventy disciples, and other holy brethren, who lived whilst

Christ was in his Incarnate state, could be outward witnesses of his Incarnation, and what he said, and did in his Incarnate state. The apostles were most eminently qualified for this. When they declared that Christ the life was manifested, that they had seen him, when and where they bare witness to the truth of his Incarnation, to the reality of his Person, to the truth of his word, and miraculous acts, "God also bearing them witness, (and, by them of the same) both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own will." See Heb. ii. 4. To have seen Christ, *God manifest in the flesh*, must have been a great sight. To retain the true sense and apprehension of what they saw in Him, and heard and received from Him, must have been to them life everlasting. Their whole ministry was filled up, with giving a simple narrative of the Person, Incarnation, Life and Actions, Crucifixion, Death, Burial, Resurrection, Ascension and Exaltation of the Lord Jesus. This they were called to bear their immediate testimony unto. This forms the foundation of the four gospels. And whilst it is by the spiritual apprehension of Christ, as set forth therein, we live, and in which is the life of our souls, yet what hath been expressed concerning the ministry of the apostles, contains *the Truth as it is in Jesus*. Nor must the history, nor the mystery of Christ be rejected, nor neglected by us. The one being the foundation of the other. Therefore the one must be of as great importance as the other. *We have seen him, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.* Which sight of Him, had influenced their whole minds; swallowed up their whole hearts; fixed their whole affections; engrossed the whole of their intellectual faculties; and fitted them most truly and completely to bear their witness for Him.—To shew Him forth in their ministry and writings.—To declare Him to be *that Eternal Life, which was with the Father*, a distinct Person from Him, yet co-equal and co-eternal with Him, "the Son of the Father, in Truth and Love." This brings me to my next particular head,

3. What they, i. e. the apostles, declared of Him, which was what they knew, from the divine knowledge which they had of Him, that He was *that Eternal Life, which was with the Father*.

This must be the fruit of divine revelation and inspiration: by which, their minds being renewed by the Holy Ghost, they were, under his further illumination, enabled to receive true and proper apprehensions of the Person, Incarnation, Mission and Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ into their minds. To know Christ as a Person in the incomprehensible Essence, as one in it with the Father and the Spirit, this is beyond all that nature, or natural religion can ever attain unto. This is altogether supernatural and divine. The apostles were under the immediate influences of the Holy Ghost. Their conceptions of divine Truth were immediately from Him. Especially after his descent upon them on the day of Pentecost. They were, as taught by Him, infallible in the Doctrines of the everlasting gospel. It was clearly apprehended by them, the distinction of Persons in the Essence, Subsisting, and Self-Existing. They knew the Personal Existence of Christ in the Godhead was the foundation of his having been set up, as God-Man, from everlasting. They therefore declared Him to be *the True God and Eternal Life*. That He was *the Life*, and *that Eternal Life*,

which was co-existent with God from everlasting, That in Him, and by Him, God had shone forth on his church and people in Him. That by the incarnation of this most adorable Person, and in Him, the Father had expressed his love and grace to the very uttermost. Now all they knew of the love of the divine Persons, in Christ, they declared: with all the acts, and outgoings of the eternal Three towards them in Him. Yea, our apostle goes beyond this here. For he declares what Christ is, in Himself. This is necessary for us to know. Or how can we depend on Him for everlasting life? We must most assuredly know Him to be *life*, and *life eternal*; or how can we trust in Him for the blessings of the same? But whilst the true knowledge of this is everlasting life to us, yet the aim of the apostles extended beyond this: even to what Christ was, inherently, and of Himself, and that in his own Person, as God-Man, the beginning of all the ways and works of God. As *that Eternal Life which was with the Father before the world was*. This was what the apostles declared concerning Him, who is here styled *the Life*, and *that Eternal Life, which was with the Father*, that the man Christ existed in Personal union with the Son of God, from the beginning, before all worlds. That He lived as *the Life*, and as *that Eternal Life*, which was to be manifested in the fulness of time, by his open visible Incarnation. That He and the Father had fellowship in, and with each other, in that society which none but the God-Man, will ever be admitted unto. That the apostles knew Jesus of Nazareth, was *the Life*, and *that Eternal Life which was with the Father*. They had seen Him, as Incarnate, in the days of his flesh, when he had a body like their own, some of them once, and but once, shine forth, as none could bear the sight of, or could possibly bear up under, but such as were supernaturally sustained by the Holy Ghost, as the apostles were at that time. Yea, from that shine they were fully convinced, he could only be seen as He was, by saints in glory. *His glory being as the only begotten of the Father*. When I say, the apostles declared of Him, what they knew concerning Him, from the divine knowledge which they had of Him. That they knew He was *that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto them*, what proof shall I give you of this? Beloved, I can only refer you to their writings, in which you will find very satisfactory evidence of all this, so far as the Holy Ghost shall be pleased to shine upon the same, and reflect the knowledge of what is revealed, and contained in the same upon your minds. They found real blessedness in the subject. In declaring the same.—In bearing their witness and testimony to the truth thereof.—In shewing forth the eternity, the dignity, the Personal Glories of their, and our Lord Jesus Christ.—In shewing and proving Him to be *that Eternal Life which was with the Father*, before the incarnation of the Word of life took place. Who in the days of his flesh was manifested unto them. So as that they had been eyewitnesses of his Majesty. All which was a peculiar honour put upon them. This leads me to my last Head of this discourse.

4. To shew that this was a very particular part of the witness which they bare of Him—that *He was manifested unto them*.

A very singular favour. Such as I conceive we can form no adequate ideas of. How should we? That age is past. It will never return. All the Lord's ministers and people, and that to the end of

time, will be witnesses for Him, and shew forth the Truths of his gospel, some in a greater, some in a less measure and degree, yet not in the same way, nor to answer the same end, for which the apostles were appointed. Our Lord prayed the divine Father, that from his ascension down to his coming in his kingdom and glory, all the election of grace, might believe on Him, through their word. John xvii. 20. The church is said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." Eph. ii. 20. And in the account given by the prophet *John*, he says, "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Rev. xxi. 14. I only mention this here, to shew they were singular men. Such as were chosen witnesses. Appointed by God. Nor will their places, nor offices ever be supplied. No. Nor are they needed. Their peculiar blessing was to see Christ in the flesh. To know him Personally, and so to converse with Him, as to be fully persuaded that "He was the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." These lived when Christ made good his promise of sending down the Holy Spirit, and they were hereby endued with power from on high. So that they knew Christ more fully than the whole church without them. They received no part of their knowledge of Christ from the church, but the church received the whole from them. And it may be so said of us, upon whom the ends of the world are come. For the apostolic writings are the foundation of our faith. Every article of which is contained in the same. And by them it is we are led, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, into that knowledge of Christ, which is life eternal. To the apostles our Lord said, speaking of the Holy Ghost, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath, are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John xvi. 13—15. All which was most completely fulfilled unto them. And a very special and particular witness which they bare, and held forth concerning Him, was, that "He was manifested unto them." So that they could not but give a most correct and divine account of Him, in every particular which they declared of, and concerning Him. This consideration adds weight, and stamps dignity on all they have declared, and set before us, in the New Testament scripture. We have in our apostle's gospel, as also in his epistles, his witness and testimony of Christ. When we read the first chapter of his gospel, he in effect says to us, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and shew unto you, that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Which he very fully and freely expresses in ver. 14, of that chap. thus. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." The Incarnation of Christ, hath enlightened the pages of the New Testament with some glorious rays and reflections of his Personal, Inherent, and Ancient Primordial Glory. Yet what *John* says at the close of his gospel, which he declares is true of our Lord, to which he adds, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written

every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." John xxi. 25. It may be said of the Personal Glory which Christ shone forth in from everlasting—it surpasseth the uttermost which the reflection of it on our minds, even from the scriptures themselves, can give us any comprehension of. May the Lord bless what hath been delivered. Amen.

SERMON III.

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.—1 JOHN i. 3.

THE apostle in the two former verses had been speaking of Christ, and of the Father, as being in each other, as one in each other, and as having communion with each other. For if Christ was from everlasting with the Father, if He was *that Eternal Life which was with the Father*, and was manifested unto the apostles by his open Incarnation, then what hath been expressed is most certainly deducible therefrom. So he here in the words before us, informs the saints to whom he writes, concerning his end and design in his writing on this subject unto them. *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.* In the vast designs of Jehovah concerning Christ, God-Man, and by the Personal Union of the Essential Word, and Son of God to the Man Christ, a foundation was laid in the infinite mind, for an union and communion of all the elect in Christ, and by Him, and through Him. So that as the Father dwelleth in Christ, and He dwelleth in the Father, and by this most blessed incomprehensible union, the Father is in Christ, and Christ is in the Father, so there follows from it, that communion which is only known to them, and enjoyed by them, and which is wholly incommunicable, and ineffable. Yet as a pattern and evidence of it, the union of Christ as the head of the whole election of grace, with his whole social body, the church, is the foundation of all the communion Christ hath with each, and every member of the same. And from this union, all the blessings of Christ being their eternal head flow down to them. Our Lord saith, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me: the Father dwelleth in me." John xiv. 10. Of his church he says, "At that day. (viz. when the Holy Ghost should be given unto them,) ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." v. 20. Again, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so, he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." vi. 57. Where there is union there cannot but be communion. And it is according and in proportion to the union which is the cause thereof. In the words before us, which are a continuation of the former subject, we have the following particulars.

1. The declaration of the apostles, delivered by them, through the mouth of an individual, who spoke for them all. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.*

2. The end and design of the apostle *John* in this. *That ye also may have fellowship with us.*

3. Who they were with whom they had fellowship. *With the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

4. The truth and reality of this, which is thus confirmed. *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* That we have this fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, is infallible truth. I set my seal to it as such, says the apostle *John*. I am

1. To set before you the declaration expressed in my text: which contains the whole subject of the apostles ministry. Beyond which they could not go. Nor could greater things be expressed. It being the wisdom of God in a mystery. The hidden wisdom of God. The manifold wisdom of God. The unsearchable riches of Christ. The true knowledge of which, in the hand of the Spirit, is the means of comforting the hearts of saints, of "knitting them together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Surely all this, was contained in the preaching of the true doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ by the holy apostles of the Lord and Saviour. This most assuredly is, for the essence of it, contained in this declaration before us. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.* They could not declare more than they had seen and heard, in Christ, and from Christ, with whom they had personal converse in the days of his flesh. And all which they had seen and heard in Him, and from Him, they made a full declaration of, in their ministry unto the people. They were his witnesses unto the people. They had seen Him, whom many prophets and righteous men had desired to see, yet had not their desires granted. They had heard Him speak, who spake as never man spake, whom prophets and kings had desired to hear, yet were not admitted to have their ears thus favoured. They saw Him, heard Him, conversed with Him, who was *the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* Even Him, who said, "I came down from heaven." "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." "Before Abraham was, I am." They had heard our Lord Jesus Christ speak out all his heart. So that they were most abundantly qualified to bear their testimony of, and concerning Him. Our apostle using the plural number, shews that the whole testimony borne by all the apostles, was one and the same. It was one and the same gospel in each of their mouths. What they knew of Christ, they set forth. What they had received of Him, and from Him, they fully expressed. The communion they had with Him, they made known. They did not keep the knowledge of it within themselves; to themselves: and amongst themselves. The declaration which they made of this, was to saints. Not to others. No. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.* Who are holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. Who are with us partakers of Christ. A most noble instance of spiritual generosity. Worthy of imitation by all the servants and ministers of Christ, in every age, and throughout all generations. They should be as so many mouths, engaged and employed to speak out his whole heart. To sound forth his most glorious praise. To declare his glorious acts. To talk of his power. To shew forth his salvation from day to day. To speak of the glorious honour

of his Majesty, and of his wondrous works. To utter forth the memory of his great goodness, and to sing of his righteousness. They will do so. They cannot but act thus, if they have seen Him: if they have conversed with Him: if they have heard Him: if they have been taught by Him as the Truth is in Jesus. They and we cannot but speak what we have seen in Him: received from Him: and been taught by Him. And to whom will they make their declaration of Him? To sinners, and saints. To the former they will sound forth this most solemn declaration, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" which, when received by the power of the Holy Ghost into the heart, they will add, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life:" and these words also, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life:" then the ministers of Christ will proceed to shew them what they are in Christ. How they stand in him. What views the Father hath of them in Christ. How he loves them in his Son. How he hath accepted their persons in Him the Beloved. How completely saved they are in Christ. That they are blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings. And are called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The apostle here speaks for all his brethren, and in their names he speaks to all saints. Let them be distinguished as they might, by their age, and state in christianity: fathers, babes, or young men in Christ. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.* As they had themselves been feasted with a sight of Christ, with his having opened his heart unto them, with the words which he had spoken in their hearing, and personally unto them, so they make in, and by their writings, a free, full, and clear discovery of the same, for the universal benefit of the whole church of God. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.* This brings me

2. To speak of the end and design of the apostle *John* in this. *That ye also may have fellowship with us.*

Church fellowship, which is the communion of saints, is an inexpressible blessing. It consists in imparting to each other an account of what the Lord hath done for our souls: how he opened our eyes to behold Him: how he made way for us to receive Him, by giving us to hear his voice in the everlasting gospel, and by that very means entering our hearts, and possessing, dwelling, and continuing to abide in them. We receiving the same truths, enjoying the same spiritual apprehensions of Christ, and loving each other in Christ, by the same Spirit, who revealed Christ in us, and to us, it is hereby we are one spirit with each other in the Lord. We have fellowship with each other in the same Spirit; with the same Christ; in the same salvation: with the same God and Father: in the same ordinances. We are one family to the Lord. The apostle sets this forth most sweetly to the saints at *Ephesus*, whom he thus addresseth. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." iv. 1—6. It is said

of the members of the first apostolic church, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts ii. 42. Saints are not all of them embodied into a church state. Yet as saints they have fellowship with each other in Christ, at the Throne of his grace; in praying for each other; in praising and blessing God for what he hath done for each other; and in conversing with each other. And sometimes without having the least knowledge of each other. As they are importunate before the Lord, for his blessing on his church universally. The fellowship our text is speaking of, it is wholly and altogether supernatural and divine. It is with the Father, and the Son. It is with the apostles in their fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And this is his very end and design in his writing unto them. *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.* John and the rest of the apostles, being of one spirit in the Lord, he brings them in, as uniting with himself, in what he here inserts. We is the term he uses. So it was in the former verses. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. 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.* Most assuredly, his design in declaring to the saints, all he, and the rest of the apostles knew of Christ, in his Person, as from everlasting He was with God, and was God—of what He was, as God and Man in one Christ—of what he was in his Incarnate state—of what he spake and did in our world, in the days of his flesh—of what He did, and spake in his Resurrection state—and of what they knew of Him, and the communion which they had with Him; now that He was in his exalted state—with the fellowship he continued to hold with them, and which He was most graciously pleased to admit them to hold with Him, must be very interesting to the saints. If it had not been so, it had not been declared by him to them. It is well therefore here to remark, that the Holy Ghost intended by this very epistle, to admit real saints, into proper views and perception of this great subject, and what is contained in communion with God, in all his Persons. And this as suited to the relation they stand in to us. It is a personal communion. It is the very perfection of grace and glory. We cannot reach higher this side heaven. We cannot go beyond it, No, not in glory. It is the very perfection of the life of faith. It is the utmost blessedness of the life of glory. On earth we enjoy it by faith. In heaven by sense. Now, by spiritual perception, *then*, by supernatural sense and vision. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.* We cannot enjoy God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, any further than we have the true knowledge of them. The saints to whom John wrote and declared these important truths, might know them as truly, and intellectually in their own renewed minds, as the very apostles themselves did. Yet they did not know them so comprehensively. This being the case, the one could impart a

knowledge of these vast subjects, so as thereby to be improving to the mind, and lead them further and more apprehensively into the subject. Hereby way would be made, for real saints, to be led to apprehend the blessedness, of real, free, open, manifestative communion with the Persons in Godhead, in all their glorious acts of grace, and outgoings of their love, to the church in Christ, from everlasting. This therefore was the great and gracious design of the apostle to effect by this epistle. As also by his gospel, and the whole of his ministry. He, and the rest of his brethren, had but this one end and design. That as they knew Christ, the church might know Him too. As truly, fully, and comprehensively, as to all true spiritual communion as they did. That the saints with them, might have the same holy fellowship, with themselves, and that they might also enjoy amongst themselves, with each other, and in their own souls, the same blessed fellowship with the Holy Ones, which the apostles did. It being their birth-right, their one common privilege, as being of one and the same spiritual community. And God in all his Persons, love, salvation, and Glory, being their portion and inheritance, he would have them to have clear apprehensions of the same, and know themselves as truly invested into right and title to all these blessings, as any of the apostles were. These being the ends and design of the apostle towards them, in his saying, *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us,* is very expressive of the generosity and greatness of his mind unto them. That you, to whom I write may have fellowship with us, in all the mysteries of grace: in all the communicable blessings of everlasting love: in all the riches of Christ's most glorious mediation: in all the efficacy of his most perfect righteousness, and most precious blood-shedding. In his fulness. That there may be a free access to Him, and to the Father in Him, through the gracious guidance and influxes of the Holy Ghost, within you, and upon you. So as that what we have said, concerning his Person, in every particular, may have its inbeing and indwelling in your minds; so as to operate within you, and upon you, and be the very means of drawing out your hearts, affections, and desires after Him, who is the very centre and circumference of all our desires: and of yours also, so far as our account of Him, and declaration made, and given by us concerning Him, have been received, and are embraced, and believed by you. I conceive we may distinguish the real fellowship the apostles had with Christ, from what other saints have. They were favoured with personal converses with Christ. They received their knowledge of Him, more immediately, and intuitively from the Holy Spirit. In consequence of which, their faith was more simple. It was always, at all times, in every case, and circumstance, in act and exercise, after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them. All other saints, and we with them, receive the grace of faith and the subject of faith from the written word. That is the glass, and the ordinance of worship, in the which we behold the Lord. It is but at the best, but through a glass darkly. Whilst their sight of Him was most clear. And whilst in his incarnate state, they took in but very imperfect conception of Him; yet when the Holy Ghost came in upon them fully, after our Lord was fully invested with eternal glory, they were then so enlightened into the true knowledge of what they had seen, and heard of Him, as led them into such personal fellowship in a way of com-

munion with Him, as I should conceive, none beside were ever favoured with in a time state. There was an absolute necessity it should be thus with them. They were to speak and write on every article of faith, and state the same, as exactly as it was stated in the mind and will of God. They were to express everlasting love, in all its glorious fruits and effects, and in all the gracious discoveries made of the same by God himself, to the hearts of his people, in the real communion he is pleased to hold with them, and in the gracious manifestations of Himself to their minds. Their writings were to be immutable records of what God is in Christ, and to his Church in Him. And the very way and manner in which it pleases Him to make the same known unto them. Now most assuredly, in proportion to their knowledge of Christ, such must have been their faith in Christ. Such also must have been their confidence in Christ. Such their enjoyments of Him. Such their aspirations after Him. Such their high prizings of Him. Such their valuation of Him. Such their cleavings unto Him. Such their communion with Him. They knew Him to be their supreme life. Whilst we who acknowledge Him to be our life, scarce apprehend what is contained in the very expression. They obtained many blessed interviews with Him, in a way of personal communion with Him, in an immediate and direct way: whilst we are generally looking to our own inherent graces, to encourage, and bring about this holy communion between Him, and us. As they could write fully and freely on this subject, so they had a very large and comprehensive knowledge of the same. The end of *John*, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, in writing as he did, which was altogether under the influence and immediate unction of the Holy Ghost, was, that all the saints in Christ Jesus, throughout the whole world, might have fellowship with Him, and the rest of the apostles in this blessedness, which consisted in fellowship with the Father, and the Son. This brings me to my

3d. Particular, to consider those with whom the apostles had fellowship. I ask, who were they? the reply is, the Father, and the Son. *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This is now to be particularly discoursed on, to be opened, and explained. May the Lord assist herein. It being a point of vast importance. It may be best in going through this part of my discourse, to speak in a distinct manner on the same. In the first place, the apostle speaks in a very positive manner, and asserts for himself, and the other apostles, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This is here to be observed. The sacred writers speak in very positive terms on the most important subjects. They do not go about to explain the subjects they declare. But they utter the same, and there leave it, setting their apostolic seal thereto. Communion with God—it must be the supreme corner-stone of christianity. Yet our apostle does not say what it is, wherein it consists, nor by what means he, and the *we* in whose names he expresses this great truth, enjoyed it. He only says, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* I should apprehend, the *we* spoken of, enjoyed communion with the Father, in the knowledge they had of his everlasting love, which they had clear apprehensions of in the Person of Christ. In the views they had of Christ, as the gift of the Father's love. As his salvation. In whom was all his delight. In whom he shone forth in all the glorious beams of his everlasting love. This they had a real knowledge of. And so they had of the

Person of Jesus Christ. They knew him to be the Son of God. The God-Man, the Head, the Life, the Husband, the Saviour of his church and people. And so they had of the real and actual blessedness of having communion with Him. So that they could most truly say, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* As this was declared for the benefit of the whole church, down to the very end of this present time state, and the blessed fruits and effects of the same will remain in the minds of saints in heaven to all eternity, it may not be amiss to open this truth which is here asserted concerning fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and point out what it consists in. It may here be asked, is not the Holy Ghost a Person in the Godhead equal with the Father, and the Son? Is it not by Him, we have communion with the Father and the Son? Why then is he not named by the apostle? The reply to each of these particulars is this. The Holy Ghost is a Person in the Godhead. He is spoken of by our Lord Jesus Christ as such, again and again in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of *John's* gospel. It is by Him as the sole efficient cause, we have communion with the Father, and the Son, and we read of the communion of the Holy Ghost, in the apostle's benediction. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. And the reason why He is not here named by the apostle is this. The Father, and Christ are the Persons on whom our faith is exercised, and with whom we converse. The Holy Ghost his work is all within us. He is an indweller in our souls. It is by his indwelling in us that He puts forth his life and power within us. He reveals Christ to us. He sheds abroad the Father's love in our hearts, He leads us into fellowship with the Father and the Son, therefore it is, He being the author of all this, He is not mentioned. So as that thereby the subject of communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ might not be broken in upon, or interrupted. I would here ask, what is communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ? The answer is this. It is an unity of mind. So as for God to let in Himself upon our minds, as to give us such apprehensions of his love, as afford us a real, spiritual knowledge of and acquaintance with the same, so as for us to partake of the reality thereof. Our fellowship with the Father, consists in having spiritual sensations of his love imparted to our minds. Our Lord expresses himself on this great subject thus. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." And again, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John xiv. 21—23. The Father, and the Son, possessing the renewed mind, with thoughts of their great love, and this to such a degree, as for the child of God to enjoy the real apprehension of the same, this is for the Father and the Son to have and hold communion with us. And our fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, is the blessed fruit and effect of this. Our minds being thus spiritually enlightened and enlarged towards the Father for his love, and towards his Son Jesus Christ for saving us in Himself, with an everlasting salvation, we have free and blessed accesses to the Father and the Son, in the which we have real fellowship with them in our prayers, praises, and acknowledgements of them, in their everlasting favour and good will towards us. It may here be observed that the union we have with the Person of Christ, is the foundation of all the communion we have with Him

and the Father in Him on earth, or shall be admitted to in heaven, and the Holy Ghost is the manifestor of this union unto us. So says our Lord. He had been speaking of his giving his apostles the Holy Ghost. And he adds, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." John xiv. 20. There is a variety of unions in which Christ and his church are related to each other. There is first an *election* union, which is that comprehensive one, by which Christ and his church were united together from everlasting. He the Head, and they his members. Christ was not chosen for the church. But the church was chosen for Him, and the church was chosen in Him, and this was the first act of everlasting love towards her, and this was before the foundation of the world. This is election union. On this followed a marriage union. Christ and his Bride were set up in Heaven from eternity. The one was given to the other, and solemnly married before the Three in Jehovah before the world began. Hence you have Christ, God-Man, the Bridegroom of his church, thus expressing himself in the viii. chap. of the Proverbs. "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him : rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth ; and my delights were with the sons of men." v. 30, 31. There is also a representative union between Christ and the Elect. He represented them, and acted for them, as their Head, and Surety, in the everlasting covenant. This He gave full evidence of in the fulness of time, when he came into our world, and became thereby one with his people, so that "both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one ;" that is of one nature. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Heb. ii. 11—14. There is also a grace union. Mr. Joseph Hussey says, "There are three unions in Christ, suited to the three operations of all the three persons in God. I mean three unions of God's children, and all of them before faith. Viz. Election Union, Representation Union, and Regeneration Union. Out of all these ariseth a fourth union which is a union with Christ, distinct from union in Christ, this consists in union and cleaving to him by faith." There is also a Glory Union of which our Lord speaks thus ; "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. John xvii. 22, 23. This glory union will break forth upon the church in her resurrection state. Now in consequence of all these unions, there is a proportional communion with all the Persons in Godhead, in the Person of Christ, with the Church. And as these unions are made known to the spiritual minds of the saints, so they have likewise in proportion to the light and knowledge of the same, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, real communion with the Father and the Son. So as that they may say as truly as the apostle here doth, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* I would here recite the end of the apostles writing this. It was that saints might know what they had a right unto, what they should seek after, and expect. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, in all the truths, mysteries, grace and glory of the everlasting gospel, which contains a glorious revelation*

of the Father's everlasting love, and the Essential, Personal, Relative, Mediatorial Glories of Christ, of his Headship to his Church, as her Grace Head, and as her Glory Head, as we the apostles of the Lord and Saviour have. *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* We saw him with our bodily eyes, in his incarnate state. We saw him also with the eyes of our minds. We had fellowship with Him, and the Father in Him. This was the case with us, and the blessing bestowed on us, in his resurrection state. Now that He is ascended, and lives in heaven after the power of an endless life, we have further and more spiritual communion with Him. He hath made good his promise to us. "At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." John xvi. 26, 27, 28. By virtue of this having been realized unto us, we know the Father more clearly and as Personally distinct from the Son than heretofore. We have real communion with Him. We can and do declare unto you, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This is the greatest honour, dignity, and blessing which we can possibly be favoured with on Earth, or in Heaven. It was the highest attainment to which the apostles themselves arrived. As hereby the Father's love, and Son's salvation were most distinctly and spiritually realized in them, and unto them. The knowledge of God the Father and of his Son Jesus Christ, went first, and communion with them in real personal fellowship followed after. So it will in heaven and glory everlasting. So that to keep every thing in its proper place, the knowledge of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, is the first and greatest blessing, either in earth or heaven. And communion with the Father and the Son, is the very next unto it, both on earth, or in heaven. All which originate in us, and we receive the same into our minds, from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. *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.* This was the blessed state to which the apostles were advanced. John was one of these. He as well as they, had fellowship with the Holy Trinity. This must have been in the right understanding of the glorious display made of grace, in their everlasting love to the persons of the elect. In the union of each of the divine Persons unto them in the Person of Christ, God-Man. In the true knowledge of all those spiritual blessings bestowed upon them, as the fruit of God's everlasting love to them, in the Person of Christ. And into clear distinct fellowship with the Father, in his love to their persons in Christ, God-Man, in whom they were accepted. And with Christ Jesus the Son of the Father, in his love to them, and salvation wrought out for them. In whom they were everlastingly complete. In whose work they were everlastingly saved. In whom they shone with lustre, dignity, and majesty, and glory, in the sight of their heavenly Father. This brings me to my last head of this discourse, in which I am

4. To consider the truth and reality of this, which is thus confirmed. *And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* It is of great importance to us, and we do well to consider it, that our Lord Jesus Christ, sealed every truth he delivered all through-

out his incarnate state, with his own blood. The apostles set their seals, to the truth of all which they heard, and received from Him. And there are a variety of important matters, in their writings, which they have not only sealed, but have left their seals on, to express the immutability and importance of the same, in every age, and throughout all following ages, and generations. There can be nothing of greater importance, than what concerns the Person of Christ. His Incarnation in the fulness of time. The truth and reality of this. Next to it, there never was any thing of more importance to the church of Christ, than the testimony given concerning all this, by these very persons who were eye and earwitnesses of the same. It is from their writings, through the light and teaching of the Holy Ghost, we derive all our true knowledge of the Lord and Saviour. We therefore find their positive assertions concerning the eternal and immutable subjects of the everlasting gospel, very supporting to our minds. As they are expressed by apostolic authority. So we also do, when they in their own persons, and from their own knowledge and experience, set their seals to confirm the Truths they have been declaring. Communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Ghost, who dwells personally in the saints, is a most glorious mystery of grace. Nature cannot apprehend it. Sense must have nothing to do with it. None can have the least conception of the nature, the importance, the excellency, the blessedness of the same, but such as are born from above. No. Nor these either, but as enlightened, inspired, and supernaturally lifted up into the true knowledge and enjoyment of the same. Spiritual Life is a great mystery. The whole essence of which consists in communion with God. The apostles were favoured with it. Therefore one of them for all the rest, says in the words before us. *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This is, says he, an immutable verity: which we can each of us set our seals unto: and which I declare for your spiritual benefit and advantage also. *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.* This then is made known by the apostle, and declared to the whole church of Christ, for their benefit and advantage, which they should also seek for, and aim at the attainment of—real and distinct *fellowship, with the Person of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ.* They should not look at the privilege as being so supremely great, and so far beyond them, that they have no right to expect so inestimable a blessing. They were to look on it as a blessing of free grace, which they should look on themselves as interested in, and had a right and title unto, as truly as the apostles had. And if they did not enjoy the same, it was because their faith had not attained the true conception and knowledge of it. They were not to expect it in the same way, nor to the same degree as the apostles had it. They having been favoured with fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, in such a way and manner, as was personally peculiar to them, and them alone. They could say, each of them, and one for all the rest, *truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* They could freely and fully, from their own enjoyment of this, confirm the truth and reality of it to all other saints. Yet they would they also should know, the way for their having and holding fellowship with the Holy Trinity, was clearly

set before them also. That they wrote on this subject unto them, to express their love to Christ to them. To excite them to the enjoyment of the same inestimable favour. That the apostles and all the church of Christ, might most blessedly share, and partake of this blessing of gospel grace. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.* In all the blessings, benefits, gifts, and graces bestowed on the whole church, in her eternal Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Which belonged to each and every one of them, as real members in Him. *And truly,* says the apostle, *our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* It is without doubt the case with some saints, not clearly to apprehend and discover this blessed fellowship, carried on by the Holy Spirit in their souls. And even when they do conclude it must be thus with them, that they have some real fellowship with the Lord, yet it most certainly is the case, they have not clear and distinctive perceptions of real personal fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Yet there can be no communion with the Father without the Son, nor with the Father and the Son without the Spirit. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is the medium of communion. The Holy Ghost is the efficient cause of this communion. The Father is He with whom we have this communion. The God-Man, is the Mediator of all our union and communion with God. The more therefore we eye Him, and have our hearts drawn out after Him, and fixed on Him as our centre; so we the more clearly understand the grace of fellowship with God. What it consists in: how it is enjoyed: what our conceptions of it are: and how we have in our souls at times, clear personal communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, who liveth, dwelleth, and abideth in us. May the Lord accompany what hath been delivered, so far as agreeable with his truth, with his own blessing. Amen.

SERMON IV.

And these things write we unto you, that our, or, your joy may be full.—1 JOHN i. 4.

I CONSIDER these words conclude the first grand subject of this chapter. The next particular subject begins with the 5th, and closes with the 7th verse. Then the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses have a distinct subject. Yet as all stand connected together, they form one whole most glorious system of everlastingly precious and glorious truth. Let it be here observed, as in various Bibles, I read my text in them differently, as thus. *And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* In others, *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full*, so I have included both words, *our* and *your*, hoping thereby to give the fullest sense of the apostle's meaning and design in the text itself. The text stands entirely connected with the three former verses, which connexion as I greatly value, and always love to preserve, it most certainly reflecting a great light upon the whole, so I consider it is particularly necessary throughout the whole exposition of this very important epistle. The apostle had been speaking of the Eternity of Christ's Person, of his having been visible unto them, so as for their outward and spiritual evidence, of his real and open incarnation. They had heard Him: they had seen Him with their eyes visibly before them: they had looked on Him: they had handled Him the Word of Life. He was manifested to them. They knew Him to be that *Eternal Life*, which was with the Father from everlasting. In whom was all His delight. He being the Son of His love. One in the same Essence with Himself, and Spirit. Who as God-Man, was essentially, immutably, and invariably in his Person, the Image of the invisible God, the brightness of glory, who was in the form of God, the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts. In whom as one personally with the Son of the living God, all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth. He was with the Father all this, before the world was. He became incarnate in the fulness of time, and in his incarnate state, was manifested unto his apostles, and others, whom he had chosen. That which *John* and his fellow-apostles had seen in Him, heard from Him, enjoyed in fellowship with Him, they declared to the whole church at large. Their end in the same was most noble and most truly generous. Their end was, that all saints might be the better for it: that they might improve by it: and have the same fellowship, in all the blessings, and reality of it which they themselves had, with the Father, and the Son. All which was written to the whole church of Christ, and to every individual saint therein, that the joy of the apostles might be full. They having communicated unto them, all they themselves knew of these glorious mysteries of grace. And that the joy of these saints, and all saints to the end of the world might be full. As directed into an increasing knowledge of the Person of Christ, and God the Father, and into an acquaintance in what way, and by what means, they were to look for, and expect to participate in the same. Thus you have the outline of these first four verses; which I will now recite, that you may view for yourselves their real coherence and

connexion. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.) 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. And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* So it is in the Bible before me; in others it is, *that your joy may be full.* The words of my text may be thus divided; and considered as containing the following particulars.

1. The things which were before written.

2. The end and design of writing the same.

3. What the joy was which could not but result therefrom, both to the apostle, and to saints. *And these things write we unto you, that our joy, your joy may be full.*

4. What this fulness of joy consisteth in. These are the particulars I am to treat on, that I may fill up the division into which I have cast my text. I am then to begin

1. With the things which were before written. *And these things write we unto you, that our, your joy may be full.*

It does not appear any where concerned with our apostle, in writing this epistle. It seems the Holy Ghost called him, and influenced him to write it, and that under his immediate influence and direction. How then does he say, *And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full; or, that your joy may be full?* My reply to this is, the apostles were filled with, and possessed with one and the same spirit, respecting the whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was nothing they knew of Him, but they were of one heart and one soul, in the imparting the same. What they saw in Christ, what apprehensions the Holy Ghost had given them of his worth, and transcendent excellency, they were all of one mind in this very particular, to communicate the full knowledge of, so far as words could possibly convey the same. This being their one desire, our apostle might well use the term, *we.* There being in this but one soul possessing each of them. Again the subject they every where declared was one and the same. Their testimony of Him was one and the same. Their witness and setting of Him forth differed not a whit. Nor did their aim and end vary. It was to make Him known. To gain Him a glorious Name. To spread his fame and renown. That sinners under the operation of the Holy Ghost might be led to believe on Him, they preached Christ crucified. When any of these persons wrote to the churches of the saints, their one view was their real and spiritual good. And all the difference with respect to their particular, and distinct gifts, lay here. They neither of them wrote, but as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. He directed them to write as seemed good in his sight. There is no difference in their writings, but this—One is called to write on one particular subject. Another on what the others were not to meddle with. Every epistle is on a different subject, let it be written by *Paul, James, Peter, John, or Jude.* I would add, with a particular end and design also. In these their epistles, there is a difference, just agreeably to what they were influenced by the eternal spirit to engage on. But in their personal testimony of Christ,

they differed not a whit, their end being in the whole, whether by their preachings or writings to glorify and exalt their, and the one only, and common Lord of all the churches of the saints, they therefore sometimes use the term *we*, and *us* to enforce their writings on the minds of saints. You have an example of this in *Peter*. "This second epistle, (beloved,) I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour." 2 Epis. iii. 1, 2. And *Peter* and *John* before the senate at Jerusalem, said one for the other, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts iv. 20. It was the will of the eternal Spirit, our *John* should write on the most important of all subjects, which concerns inward, vital, experimental christianity. This is communion with God. He had the true blessedness of it in his own mind. He knew by what means it was begun in his own soul. How it had been maintained therein. That it was still carried on. He was well persuaded all the holy apostles, together with himself, were favoured with having real fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. That they would most cordially join with him, in aiming to promote this, ministerially, amongst all saints. That, were the end obtained by this means, it would afford them, and himself, joy: and it would increase the joy of saints also. He therefore says in the words before us, *And these things write we unto you, that our joy, that your joy may be full.* It may be here asked what are these things which he wrote to attain this end? And what are those special and peculiar subjects our minds must be conversant with, that we may attain this most blessed end, viz. fellowship with the apostle, and with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? I refer to the words of the preceding verse. *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. And these things write we unto you, that our, your joy may be full.* It is the utmost end and design of the ministration of the gospel, to bring believers into a state of fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This was the state of blessedness into which the apostles were brought. That other saints might enjoy the same blessedness, was *John's* aim and design in writing to the saints, this "First Epistle General," which will be continued down to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The things which the apostle had written to attain this blessed end which he proposed to himself, concerned Christ. Who he was. What he was. The Person of Christ, and the Incarnation of Christ, are the glory of the sacred page. The love of Christ is the spring of life to us. The salvation of Christ is our foundation to hope in Him. And to expect most blessed communications from Him. It is from his immutability, and his inexhaustible fulness of grace and glory, we are encouraged to expect to receive supplies suited to all our wants, equal to all our spiritual desires. Grace, now, and evermore, to the closing of a time state with us. And glory everlasting, out of the same immensity of blessedness, contained in the fulness of Christ, God-Man, to constitute us glorious to the ages of eternity. Christ as God-Man, is the Head of his Church. The Life of his Church. The Perfection of his Church. The Glory of his Church. The blessedness of his Church. He is her Treasure. He

is her Portion. Her Righteousness. Her immutable Holiness. Her ineffable Purity. What the apostle had been expressing concerning Him, as the word of Life, as that eternal life, which was with the Father before all time, who became incarnate in the fulness of time, which the apostles were witnesses of, could not but shed its influence on spiritual minds, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. It had this very effect on this apostle himself. Therefore he expressed the communion he had, and the reality of the same, with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Which, says he, I write unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us, in the same unspeakable blessing and blessedness. I would next take up the question, what are those special and peculiar subjects, that our minds must be conversant with, that we may attain this most blessed end, viz. fellowship with the apostles, and with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? To this I cannot but reply, they must for the subject and substance of them, be the same with what the apostle has been setting forth in the former verses. He had been treating of fellowship with the Holy Trinity. It is through the God-Man, Christ Jesus, we have blessings inconceivable. These are made known to our minds, as the Holy Spirit is pleased to open our understandings, to know the Father's love to us, in Him, the Son of his love. It is through Him, we have fellowship with the Father, in all the blessings of his everlasting love. All which we enjoy through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. It is he alone, who is the manifestor of our union to Christ—of our interest in Christ—of our title in Him to all the blessings of grace, and glory. It is He who is the efficient of all our fellowship with the Father, and the Son, in all contained in the realization of grace and glory, either in earth, or heaven. From hence a joy, yea, a fulness of joy abounds. God himself is the object of this joy. It arises from the knowledge we have of the Holy Three, being the fountain and spring of our exceeding joy. Our Lord says to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John xv. 11. And John, speaking after his Lord and master, says, *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* So we the Master and the disciple are of one heart in this. The one spoke out the whole of his heart most fully, that his beloved might have the fullest participation of fulness of joy. And the other wrote what he did, concerning fellowship with the Holy Trinity, that they enjoying the same fellowship, might also have a fulness of joy. But to the question. What are the subjects the mind must be engaged on, and conversant with, that we may attain this most blessed end, viz. *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ?* To this I reply. They must be the glorious truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel. Such as concern the Person of Christ. The Three in Jehovah, as revealed and manifested in Him. The everlasting love of God, to the persons of the elect in Him. His union unto them, and with them, founded on their election in Him, and settlements of grace: with his Personal interest in them; salvation of them, and his presentation of them in his Person, before the Majesty in the heavens: These are the Truths with which the mind must be spiritually occupied, and conversant, that we may attain this most blessed end, viz. fellowship with the apostles, and with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Then it must follow, the ministry of the gospel in our present day, is not calculated to promote, or attain

this end. The general stream of all, goes no further than to reach the minds of the hearers, with an apprehension of their sinful state, and the necessity of a change. If some go beyond this, yet it is not sufficient to fix the mind on Christ. Those who are looked on to be the greatest in our times, they express the terms of "Jesus Christ," and some doctrines of grace, more than they even attempt to open and explain his most glorious Person, or explain one single doctrine of the gospel. They may be said to name him, and some gospel truth. But it cannot be said with Truth they preach Him, neither can it ever be proved, either in this world or in the world to come, they ever were the means of establishing one real saint on Christ, or directing Him ministerially into real fellowship with the apostles, into clear views of the doctrines of God our Saviour, and into fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. It is owing to this, many who are saints wander from one congregation to another. Yet with all their goings from one to the other, they do not meet with that which does their souls any real good. They want guides to go before them. Pastors after God's own heart, to feed them with knowledge and understanding. The mysteries of the gospel must be opened and explained, the Personal Glories of Christ unveiled, the love the Holy Trinity love the elect in Him with, and the communion they have with the elect in Him, these are the subjects which the called of God in Christ Jesus must have their minds fully possessed with, that they may be disposed to seek after real, distinct, and personal communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. But I will proceed

2. To the apostle's end and design in writing on this subject: *These things write we unto you.* What for? The words of the text say, *that your joy may be full.* If we quote the words of the former verse, which may be done with safety, and bring them into this, then the end and design will be this. He aims these, and all saints down to the end of time, might freely and fully partake in their measure and degree, of all the blessings of Christ, and salvation, with themselves. He would they should know it a real privilege and blessing which they were interested in, as truly as the apostles were, to have and hold fellowship with the Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity. They were not to look into themselves for any worth or worthiness, to entitle them to this inestimable grace, but to look to the grace, and in the views of the same, seek for the blessedness contained in this holy, personal fellowship with the Persons of the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ in real, experimental access to, and fellowship with them. Assuring them of the reality there was in all this, by saying, *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* And these things write we unto you, *that your joy may be full.* This was most noble. It expresseth their spirit towards the saints. They want them to be as truly blessed as themselves, so far as it was possible, in their knowledge of the Father, and the Son, in their acts of grace towards them, in their relation and union with them, in their love to them, into that fellowship they had most blessedly opened for them, for their satisfying their souls with holy and divine joys, such as were truly foretastes of Heaven and Glory, as might give them the best experience of what those joys will consist in, they would be the real partakers of, when they should be admitted into the kingdom of glory.

All this could not be effected in their minds, but by this as the medium thereof. The supreme and transcendently excellent truths, which concern the deep things of God, The Person, and Glories of the Lord Jesus Christ, how he stood in the Father's sight before all time; how he was conceived in the divine mind, and laid as the foundation of all the eternal decrees, will, council, purposes, ends and designs of Jehovah respecting all things visible and invisible. How he was brought forth openly in his incarnation, as the first-born of all God's vast ends and designs, and He is God's Alpha and Omega, his beginning and ending, in all his displays of love, grace, and glory towards the elect. Now, if these are the subjects which alone can feed a spiritual mind, and increase the spirituality thereof; and if it is by means of the same, the mind is drawn forth towards the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, so as to breathe after, and really to enjoy distinct fellowship, in an apprehensive way, with the Father, in clear scriptural views of his everlasting love to his Church in Christ, God-Man; and so as also to have such blessed scriptural apprehensions of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in his Person and salvation, as to worship Him, by acknowledging his distinct Personality with the Father, whilst we confess his coequality in Godhead with the Father and the Spirit, this is that knowledge of the subject as alone can draw out the renewed mind into real affections and desires after communion with the Lord, so as to partake of this inestimable blessing—distinct and personal communion with the Father and the Son. I again repeat it, that to fit the mind for this, there must be a proportionable light, let in from the Lord on the same, to give it a holy relish for it, and draw out the desires after it. Hence it follows, that that preaching which suits this, must be wholly supernatural. It is not preaching Christ's salvation, and how complete we are in Him, is sufficient to effect this great end. No. It must be preaching what God is to us in Christ, above and beyond all consideration of the fall. It must be setting Christ forth in his ancient and primordial glories, and then coming down to his sub-lapsarian state, is the preaching which alone, in the hand of the Spirit can produce this. For a proof of which I only refer you to the three former verses, which issue in our text, in which the apostle says, *And these things write we unto you, that our joy, your joy may be full.* It follows then, the utmost the gospel produces, in the minds of the saints of the most high God, is, communion with him. And that this is the uttermost of its blessedness—personal fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. *These things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* To see the gospel as set forth by us unto you, hath produced this, which is the very essence of all its blessedness. That you and we, have real fellowship with the Father and the Son. *These things write we unto you, also, that your joy may be full.* As thereby you, and we, will have matter and cause for increasing joy. I come

3. To speak of what the joy was, which could not but result from the same blessed fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, both to the apostles, and to saints, *And these things write we unto you, that our, your joy may be full.*

Spiritual joy in God, is a most inestimable blessing. It flows from God himself. The people of God are the partakers of the same. And on many and various occasions their souls are filled through and through

with it. The joy which could not but result from being partakers of the same blessed fellowship with the Father, and the Son, the apostles had, must of necessity fill them with the same joys, in a measure, with which they themselves were filled. And this was a fulness of joy. *These things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* Here I will open what I conceive may be considered, as the joy which would result to the apostles themselves, from the saints having their minds fully possessed with the knowledge of those truths set forth. Which as the saints fully knew, received and understood them, would yield real joy even to the apostles themselves. For I am not willing to omit the word *our* any more than the word *your*. So that here I am altogether on the joy the apostles themselves would be the partakers of, by the saints enjoying joy to the full by the things which were here written unto them. This is a reality, that there is a mutual joy, in such as communicate knowledge, and those who receive the same. The end proposed by such as are the conveyers of it to others, is their benefit. Those who receive cannot but convey their satisfaction of the same, back again on those from whom they received it. The apostles were the conveyances of the best of all knowledge to the churches. They most highly rejoiced and delighted therein. So that it was an increase of their own personal joy, when they found they had been in their writings, and by them, the means of their increasing the spiritual joy of others. So that *John* might well say, *And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* This may receive confirmation from what *Paul* saith to the saints at *Thessalonica*, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." And again, asking this question, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?" he answers by another question. "Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ? for ye are our glory and joy." 1 Epis. ii. 13, 19, 20. He thus addresseth himself also to the saints at *Phillippi*, "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy, and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Chap. iv. 1. Which I conceive is equal with what our apostle says in these words, *These things write we unto you, that our joy may be full.* And again, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." 3 Epis. 4. So the saints were partakers of the joys of the apostles, and they of theirs, as there was an enjoying the one and same glorious grace of the gospel. And this in a very special and peculiar manner, as they had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. It was hereby that their joy was full. They having such personal fellowship with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ, as was as real and true, and so substantiated in their minds as ever it would be even in glory. It might be more highly raised, it might be more enlarged, it might be increased: but it could not be more real and personally enjoyed, either in this world, or that which is to come. The joy, the fulness of joy, which must have resulted herefrom, must have been of the same kind, yet not to the same degree, as what the apostles themselves, in their own souls, were the partakers of. The joy flowing into their minds in their fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, must have been purely spiritual, supernatural, and wholly divine: arising from the apprehensions created in their renewed

minds, by the eternal Spirit, of the everlasting love of the Father unto them in his beloved Son. This was opened unto them in their fellowship with the Father, as it could not but be, by all they heard and believed concerning it: because the Father shining manifestatively and influentially on them, in the Person, and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, he gave them hereby such intuitive apprehensions of his love to them in his beloved Son, as gave them as true inward evidence of his love to them, as the gift of Christ to them, and for them did. In these intercourses, the Father opened all his heart. Poured out of Himself upon them, in such communications of it to their minds, as they had a real enjoyment of the same. The apostle says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." He says, "we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom. v. 5, 11. In communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, the glories of Christ's Person breaking in upon the minds of saints, in real personal communion with Him, must be matter of joy unto them. His opening his heart unto them, his causing his goodness and his glory to pass before them, his giving them glorious views of his righteousness, sacrifice, salvation, perfection, blessedness, and his delight in them, all this must afford joy unspeakable, and full of glory to the minds of saints. Their joy must arise herefrom. It was the same joy the apostles themselves were the subjects and recipients of. They wrote as they did, and as *John* had in the former verses, to the intent that this joy in God and Christ, might be promoted and increased in the saints. This reminds me, of what I once dropped in the pulpit at Chard in Somersetshire. Including the person who was then the Pastor, who is now with God, I said, we preach Christ, exactly and precisely as we do—to answer and attain two ends. The first is, that Christ shining forth in his glory in the ministration of his everlasting gospel, and that light being reflected on your minds through it, you may be attracted and drawn, from a true spiritual apprehension of Him, to trust, and centre in Him alone. And our second end, in our preaching Christ precisely as we do, is that you may have clear, personal communion with Him. So that our ultimate end is to promote fellowship with the Holy Trinity. That you attaining the same, may know, in yourselves, and for yourselves, the blessedness which the apostle *John* speaks of, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* I would add, every ministration of the gospel and its ordinances, which does not aim at this, falls far short of what the Lord himself, hath instituted and appointed these for. And it becomes both the ministers, and churches of Jesus Christ to attend to this, and seek to the Holy Spirit, that they in their own persons, be brought to this. If the apostles were of one heart, and were one in union with what our apostle wrote, then this is sufficient proof of what I have asserted being right. His words are, *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. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* As there was a mutual joy, resulting from the apostles, and the saints to whom they wrote, in their fellowship with each other, in this inexpressible dignity and privilege-communion with the Holy Trinity, so I proceed to my last particular which is to shew and express,

4. What this fulness of joy consisted in. *That your joy may be full. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

We read of joy, of exceeding great joy, of joy unspeakable, of joy which is full of glory, in various scriptures. And here we read of a fulness of joy. The Psalmist says, "Rejoice in the Lord O ye righteous, for it becometh well the just to be thankful. Let the righteous be glad: let them be glad before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice." There must be good reason and ground for all this, or the Psalmist had not excited others unto it. We have sundry expressions of holy joy in God, one of them is uttered by way of a title given to God himself, who is the fountain of all holy joy and gladness. "I will go," says the Psalmist, "unto God my exceeding joy." It is in God all the fountain of spiritual, and everlasting joy originates. From Him it all flows forth. This was acknowledged by the church of old, who said, "All my springs are in thee." The prophet *Isaiah* expresses an exuberancy of joy, when he breaks out and says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." *Peter* speaks of the saints being "filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory." His words are these. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." 1 *Epis.* i. 8. *John* speaks of a fulness of joy. Which implies it must contain the very perfection of it. He took up what he here expresses from the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He had in one of his last interviews with his apostles delivered these words, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." *John* xv. 11. He had been delivering out the following truths—that he was the true vine—that his divine Father was the husbandman—that his members were as truly united to him as the branches were with the vine—that there was a real union and communion between Him, and them—that these persons present were clean through the word which he had spoken unto them. He exhorts them to abide in Him. He asserts of Himself, to be the vine, and they to be branches. He informs them as the Father hath loved Him, so he hath loved them. And concludes this part of his discourse with these words, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." More comfortable truths could not be delivered. No. Not by the Lord himself. These entering into their minds, and dwelling in their hearts, could not but produce a fulness of joy: yea, the joy of the Lord: so as for the joy of his mind to be their joy, as they would hereby be possessed of it, agreeably with his most holy word. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." The apostle says, *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* Our Lord spake as he did, that his joy might remain in the minds of his beloved, and they might derive a fulness of joy from the same. His beloved disciple who always appears very greatly delighted to express his Lord's words, says, *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* This fulness of joy then, must consist, in having such clear and blessed increasing knowledge and enjoyments of the love of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, in real fellowship with them, as could not but feed, and fill, feast, and satisfy the mind to a holy satiety. Which as abiding in them, would at all times be a permanent source and fountain of joy to their mind. And these persons

knowing the love of God was immutable, and the relation between Christ and them indissoluble, might derive a fulness of joy from the real knowledge of this. As also from the consideration of their being as truly interested in the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and as the elect of God, as truly the objects of his love, as the apostles were. So that under every spiritual consideration of the subject, there was matter for joy : for great joy : for holy and spiritual joy : for a fulness of joy. All which consisted in their fellowship with the Three in the incomprehensible Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the person of God-Man, Christ Jesus. This is the medium of this fulness of joy. It is hereby enjoyed. And in the enjoyment of the same, the joy of the saints is full. And that it might be thus with them, the apostle wrote just as he did. I here conceive the first part of this chapter ends. These four verses are closely connected together : so are all the following : yet they do not all contain the same subject with these ; I should style them the foundation of the whole epistle : the others, so many glorious fruits and consequences flowing from the same. May what hath been delivered by way of explaining them, be followed with a divine blessing. The Lord grant it for his great Name's sake. Amen.

SERMON V.

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.—I JOHN 1. 5.

THE apostle here begins a new subject, which extends itself, and is carried on, and ends with the close of the seventh verse : after which another new period begins. He here reminds those to whom he wrote, of the message which he, and his fellow apostles had received from the Lord Jesus, and which they now were in the act and habit of delivering unto them. It was in its own nature, and also in its consequences of the utmost importance, both as it regarded the Person from whom they received it, and the doctrine contained therein. They heard and received it from Christ himself. It was in his Name, and from his command, and his own authority, they declared and delivered it. What they declared respected the purity of the divine Nature, and the incomprehensible glory and dignity of the same. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. This is an essential Truth of the everlasting gospel. The apostle *James* introduces it thus. "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." chap. i. 16, 17. This Truth, that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, the apostles, who were with Christ, almost at the very commencement of his ministry, received from him. This they received as a message to be

delivered. This they did to the saints. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* This he begins with here, to shew there is every thing in the revelation God hath been pleased to make of, and concerning Himself, to give full evidence of this. There is not a Truth in his most holy, and written word, but is suitable with the Dignity, Majesty, Holiness, Purity and Perfection of his Essence. Every truth and doctrine of grace, hath an immutable and an inexpressible purity in it. Every purpose and decree of God, is equal to the perfection of Godhead. He cannot will any thing contrary to his Essence and Holiness: so that all his thoughts, will, council, acts, purposes and decrees; his ends and designs towards all things visible and invisible, are all holy, just and good. In his sovereign will in Christ, towards the whole election of grace, He shines forth in the full blaze of light inexpressible. The Essence of God, the Persons in God, the perfection of God, may well be conceived of, as contained in this expression, *God is light.* The word *God* is sometimes expressive of the Essence, and sometimes of a Person in the Essence, who is Personally expressed in the text or context. I conceive here, it may be understood both of the Essence, and of a Person in the Essence. As the Essence is one, and the Persons are distinguished by their relation to each other, and their distinctive personal properties, so I should conceive here, the Essence in the first place may be thus expressed, and a Person in the Essence also. Then it must follow the divine Father is here to be understood, as appears by what follows. I will give you the whole connection of these verses. Then you may judge for yourselves. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* From which it appears to me, it is the Divine Nature in the Person of the Father we are to understand here. And the Son and Spirit being equally possessed of the Divine Nature, they are the one true and living God, in the incomprehensible Godhead. So that they are coequal and coeternal. In the words of my text we have the following particulars, and which I shall aim to set before you under the following Heads. As,

1. The reason why this message, or declaration, is here introduced.
2. The assertion contained in it concerning God. In which we have a positive and negative declaration concerning Him. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

3. How Light and Darkness are made use of in Scripture, to point out prosperity and adversity. The state of sin, and the state of grace. The blessings and benefits of the one, and the tremendous evils of the other. Also heaven and hell.

4. The apostle's end and design in these words. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Of these as the Lord shall be pleased to assist. And that in the order as laid down; as I conceive thereby we shall have the substance of the words laid open before us.

And

1. The reason why this message, or declaration is here introduced.

It appears on the very face of it, to be designed to prevent all mistakes, which might arise in the minds of any, who were under a profession of Christ, and his gospel, concerning communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. That whilst it was open and free for all who were partakers of the Spirit of the Lord, to enjoy this most high and inestimable favour, yet unregenerate professors could not. He therefore says, *This then is the message which we have heard of Him, the most adorable God-Man, and which we go on still to declare unto you, without adding any thing unto it, or diminishing any thing from it. That God is light.* Holiness and Purity itself. Such as is Essential, incomprehensible, and unspeakable. Let this, says he, be carried in your minds, throughout your reading this whole epistle. Let this be ever remembered in all accesses at the throne of grace, *That God is light, and that in Him is no darkness at all.* So that you mistake if you conceive him to be the author and cause of sin. The words, *This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you,* are as if he had said, *This is the doctrine which he delivered to us, to give out and preach unto you—that God is light.* Our Lord had said of Himself, *I am the light of the world.* And he came from the bosom of the Father to reveal Him, so as in the light of Christ reflected on the apostles minds, they knowing the Father, from the revelation Christ had made of Him to their minds, might well say to those to whom they wrote, *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Therefore whatsoever we write to you of, and concerning Him, must be pure and perfect. If it be not so, it is not the message which we received from our Lord. Therefore we acknowledge it not. Neither in whole, nor in part. It is our will and practice to deliver unto you, that which the Lord hath delivered unto us. And this is the whole subject and substance of our message from Him, which we have heard from our Lord, and your Lord, and which in his most adorable name we deliver unto you, *That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* I proceed

2dly. To the assertion contained in my text concerning God. In which we have a positive and negative. 1. What God is. 2. What he is not. *He is Light. There is no darkness in Him.* By the one the Purity of the Divine Essence is declared. By the other the denial of all sin is made. He is light without darkness. He is Essentially, invariably, and incomprehensively, Light, Purity, Holiness, Blessedness, Truth and Goodness; such as can never be comprehended but by Himself alone. As this is what God is, and whilst it here seems as hath been before hinted, to belong Personally to the divine Father, yet it belongs equally to the Son, and Spirit; they having one and the same glorious Essence: Hence it follows what God is Essentially, He is Personally: for the Persons are one and alike in the Essence. When it is here said, *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,* it contains a declaration of what God is. The light is invisible. It is one of the agents of nature. It is extended over the whole creation. It is the manifester of all things. Without it we could see nothing. It penetrates to the very centre of the globe. It is in every direction. It is separated from darkness. It is wholly incomprehensible by us. We know the effects of it. And that is all we possibly can know of it. God himself asks this question of *Job*. "Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness,

where is the place thereof?" xxxviii. 19. Light is air in motion. Darkness is air motionless. We read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness." Gen. i. 1—4. Thus light and darkness were divided. They cannot be joined, so as to become one. Neither can the Purity and Holiness of the divine Majesty be tarnished with the evil expressed by the term, sin. The *Psalmist* addresseth the Divine Majesty thus, "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment." civ. 1, 2. *Daniel* said, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him." ii. 20—22. The apostle expresses the Divine Majesty as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. Another apostle speaks of Him, as *the Father of lights*. James i. 17. As light is invisible and incomprehensible, such is the nature of God. Hence the question originated, which was expressed by one of old. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Job xi. 7—9. Whilst the works of the Lord, in this our world, and in the visible heavens over our heads, and by the which we are surrounded on every side are "great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein;" yet these cannot be comprehended by the most acute searcher, and researcher into them; the outward works of God will never be, fully: and God Himself in his Essence, Persons, and Perfections will never be comprehended. It is wholly impossible. We may know God in all his Persons in Christ, and enjoy everlasting felicity with them in our own souls, but this is not to comprehend the Eternal Three, nor their self-existence in one glorious Godhead. As God is expressed under the term *Light* to express the Majesty, Holiness, Purity, and transcendentally glorious Perfections of God: our text asserts; *That God is light*. Which is the positive part of the assertion. The negative part is this. *And in Him is no darkness at all*. By which is to be understood the darkness of sin. This is not in God. Neither can it ever tarnish the Holiness and purity of God. He is Light Essentially and immutably, and incomprehensibly so. Sin can have no place in Him. Nor can it detract from Him. Hence the propriety of the following questions. "Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and

thy righteousness may profit the son of man." Job xxxv. 5—8. The creatures were once, all of them without sin. Holiness was their happiness and perfection, in their creation state. Yet even then, what is said by *Eliphaz* in the book of *Job* expresses, what was true of all the angels of the divine presence, with all the excellency of their nature and faculties, as well as of man, created once for all, and all men in Him, created in the image of God; there was no immutability in them. "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?" Job iv. 17—19. The angels of God's presence were created to continue in being and existence for ever. But they were not immutable. This is the Perfection of God. It is essential to the Divine Nature to be immutable. Their wills therefore were liable to a change. This the Divine Majesty saw. Therefore in his sight they not being impeccable, He was not as their Creator, and they the work of his hands, bound to bestow this favour on them. He could not in their very creation state, with all their holiness and purity put any trust in them.—He could not but charge them with comparative folly, as knowing if he left them to their own wills, they would fall from that state in which he had placed them. What the scriptures style *sin* came in at this door—the mutability of creature free will. God was pleased to display his sovereignty towards all the angels created by Him. He secured some of these to himself, so as to render it impossible they should ever fall from him, by appointing Christ to be their Head of union and communion with Him, and by so guiding their wills as to render them impeccable: whilst it pleased Him to leave all the rest of the then angels of his presence to the mutability of their own wills. Thus sin received its being and existence. The non-elect angels fell: not through any act of God within them, compelling or inciting them so to do; but from their own free will as creatures: by which exercise of their wills, they rejected God's will in setting up the God-Man, to be the one Lord between God and the whole creation. This was open rebellion against the Divine Majesty. For this they became what they now are. They acted thus as left to the free exercise of their wills. And in the very first instance of the same, it was their free will act. I ground this on the following scripture. "And the angels which kept not their first estate," or principality, "but left their own habitation." Does not this imply their own free will? They "left their own habitation." This most certainly was their act. Not the Lord's. What follows upon it was the Lord's act towards them. "He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." Jude v. 6. I might add this scripture also out of *Peter*. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." 2 Epis. ii. 4. Observe, sin was first committed in heaven, or these sinning angels could not have been cast out of it. Their being cast out of it, was an act of God's righteous displeasure against sin: which is a transgression of the law. The angels were created under a law. Their obedience to which would have been the perfection of their natures. They sinned against it. That was their crime. Damnation for it, was the righteous and holy expres-

sion of God's indignation and wrath against them for it. So that there is no unholiness in Him. The fall of man was brought about, and effected by the old serpent called the devil. Adam and his wife, were perfectly holy and happy by creation, and in their creation state. They being left to the mutability of their creature free wills, fell from God, on the first temptation, and corrupted themselves, and all who shall ever descend from them. And here it may be proper to ask some questions, which may be relieving to our minds. As 1st. Is not all which hath been delivered to declare God is the author of sin? To this it must be replied, some of our greatest Divines have asserted this. Yet not with the least intent to detract from the Holiness and Purity of God. In the 2nd place it must be asked, What is sin? The answer is; the least variation from the will of God revealed and made known. It is a mental evil. It originates in the mind. All the evils it further produces, are but the fruits and effects of the same. But say all this, How could sin originate in a pure mind? To which the reply is this. The creatures with all their created holiness and purity, could not continue so, if left one moment to themselves. The Lord God never created one individual, either angel, or saint, let the creature be created either in heaven, or earth, to exist of itself: or, to be a centre to itself: or, to derive happiness from itself: yet all creature wills, in all intelligent rational agents are inclined to seek for all their enjoyments and happiness in themselves alone. It is from hence the origin of sin, derived its being and existence. The mind of those bright intellectual beings in heaven, being left to think of happiness to be enjoyed by them, out of God himself, and it being his declared good pleasure, they should enjoy all blessedness and good out of the fulness of the God-Man, in whom it pleased the Father all fulness should dwell—they not assenting and consenting to this, immediately sought out happiness for themselves. This occasioned the loss of their original purity and holiness: and from hence, out of this as the fountain and original, all their actual beginnings and sinnings began, and are and ever will be continued. They one and all sinned in an Head. Mankind all sinned in an head. Let what hath been expressed be rightly understood, it will appear, nothing in all this reflects on the glory of God's Holiness, nor does it by any means tarnish it. This truth remains immutable. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Sin is in the creatures. Not in God. Sin is in the nature of the creature as fallen from God. It is no part of what the Lord God hath created in it. Sin is a privation of all good; and a positive inclination to all evil. The whole of which consists, let it be in angels or men, in self love. In the pursuit of those gratifications and desires, as make self, our chief end, and aim. It is the principle from whence all these proceed which makes us exceeding sinful. The existence of which is within us. Now God is not the author of all this. Yet God willed all this: or it could not have been. Therefore those great Divines who say, God is the author of sin, very accurately distinguish on it. They say, God willed not sin, as sin. But he willed it for his holy pleasure, and for holy purposes. When they say, God is the author of sin, they mean the fall both of angels and men, from the state in which he created them. Which they make out to be an holy act in God. So that what they say, does by no means set aside what our apostle says in the words before us, when he asserts, *God is light, and in him is no*

darkness at all. They shew there was a necessity for it. That the Holiness, purity, and excellency of what God is, as God, might appear. That the Personal union of our nature to the Son of God, was the alone foundation of knitting the elect, both angels and men to God, as alone could preserve them from sin, or raise them out of it, when fallen by it. That Christ God-Man, was the only foundation, for union and communion with God. That all the blessings of supercreation grace, were to be manifested in the alone and glorious Person of the Man, The Fellow of the Lord of Hosts. In whom, and by whom, and as in union with Him, the Elect angels were preserved from sinning, and whose wills are now rendered so impeccable, as that they cannot sin to eternity. And the elect of mankind, are so secured in Christ, and by Christ, and their sins are all so completely atoned for by Christ, and they so completely justified thereby, as that the Holiness of God, shines forth in its fullest manifestative effulgency and glory. Thus the Truth of our text remains invincible. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* God did not will sin, as sin. Yet without his will it cannot have existence. Nor can it be whilst it hath existence, but in a rational subject. It is only now to be found, in fallen angels, and fallen men. And all proves no creature, can for a single moment, stand before the Holy Lord God, in a state of purity and perfection, on their creation bottom. Neither the Elect angels now in Heaven, nor any of the election of grace, belonging to Adam's posterity, could ever have been beheld by God with immutable pleasure and delight; if he had not chosen them in Christ, and beheld them in Him with delight. And it is only as we are brought by the Lord the Spirit, into the true knowledge of this, from the word of Truth, we renounce all our vain hopes; and glory in the Lord. Here it seems very necessary to introduce the following passage. "But of him, are ye, in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

Having as well as I could, set forth what is contained in the solemn assertion in my text, respecting God, of whom *John* says, *That He is light, and in him is no darkness at all;* I proceed

3dly. To show how the terms, Light, and Darkness, are made use of in scripture, to point out prosperity and adversity. The state of sin, and the state of grace. The blessings of the one, and the tremendous evils of the other. Also Heaven, and Hell.

Light is a very marvellous and delightful substance. Its motion is said to be extremely quick. It is said to move about ten millions of miles in a minute. It renders other bodies visible and agreeable. Hence *Solomon* says, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." Eccl. xi. 7. The Lord God, after he had formed the Heavens, and the substance of the earth, he formed *Light*. It may be it was, in a kind of luminous cloud, moving round the earth, or having the earth moving round it, he divided it from the darkness. As it was in the first creation, so it is in the new and spiritual creation. *God said, Let there be light: and there was light.* Without it there could be no discovery of any one object. So the apostle speaking of the new creation says, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6. *God is*

light. He is essentially pure, and glorious. His nature is a fountain of all essential blessedness and glory. He is the fountain of all being and well-being to his creatures, both visible and invisible. He is in the Light: that is, he invariably and incommunicably possesses his excellencies, and from the full knowledge he has of the same, his blessedness is continually maintained. Christ is the Light. He is as God-Man, the fountain of nature, grace, and glory. He is the fountain of all light and knowledge, and Truth, natural, spiritual, and eternal. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. ii. 3. Light is with us, the sensation and perception and apprehension of the same. As it respects light and darkness, as emblematical of prosperity and adversity, the Lord himself speaks thus. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." Isa. xlv. 7. So the state of sin, and the state of grace, is expressed by darkness, and light. As also by death, and life. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." Eph. v. 8. So with respect to the state of unregeneracy, and a translation out of it into the state of grace, the apostle says, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Col. i. 13. The apostle *Peter*, speaking of the state the saints are in by regeneration and conversion to the Lord, expresseth himself thus. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Epis. ii. 9. Our apostle says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." iii. 14. This is expressing the state of sin, as death; and the state of grace, as life. The passage from the one to the other, is by regeneration. And also by a translation "into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Which consists "in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Sin is a work of darkness. And the renewed people of God are thus addressed. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Rom. xiii. 12. Afflictions are expressed by the term darkness, as prosperity, either spiritual, or temporal by that of light. The state to which the body is reduced by death, as it lies in the grave is expressed to be "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Job. x. 22. So is *Hell* expressed by the same term. "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xxv. 30. So Heaven, glory, and a blessed immortality, is expressed also by its opposite term. It is styled, "the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. i. 12. Heaven is *the inheritance of the saints in light*. The state of blessedness, glory, and immortality, is expressed by *white robes*: by *mortality being swallowed up of life*: by their being "before the throne of God, and serving him day and night in his temple." Rev. vii. 15. The state of the church in the spiritual reign of Christ, is thus expressed, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." Isa. lx. 19. The state of the church of Christ, in the new heavens and new earth is thus expressed. "And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple

of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Rev. xxi. 22, 23. And when the Lord addresses his church to shine out of obscurity, He says, "Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Isa. lx. 1—3. The passages which have been quoted, are sufficient to prove, that all good is expressed by *Light*, and all evil of every sort, by *Darkness*. And the Divine Essence and Majesty is declared by *John* thus. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*. There is nothing but sin in fallen angels, and fallen man. Yet it is not in them as creatures of God's forming, but as fallen from that state in which he created and placed them. Their wills are the whole seat of their sin and sinfulness. And all their actual sin and sinfulness proceeds from the activity of their wills. As *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, so his words, truths, doctrines, ordinances, are all pure and holy. Every part of the revelation he hath made of Himself, in his most holy word, is worthy of Him. It is all light, purity, and perfection. It is as pure as the light. His saints as they are brought out of darkness into his marvellous light, they walk in the light. They are as an apostle declares, *the children of light and of the day, they are not of the night, nor of darkness*. Hence the same apostle exhorts them, to *walk as children of light*. Their renewed wills are the seat of all habitual grace. The spiritual activity of their minds is the fruit of this. Their object and subject on whom, and on which their spiritual minds are exercised is God in all his Persons, as revealed, and shining forth in everlasting Love, in the exceeding riches of grace, salvation, glory, and Life eternal in the God-Man, from whom it is reflected on them. And all they have the inward knowledge of, and all they enjoy in real communion with the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, everlastingly proves, and demonstrates this immutable verity, that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*. That he is of purer eyes than to behold evil. That He is the fountain of Essential Purity. That "there is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside Him, neither is there any rock of salvation, but Him, and the Lord our God." All the holiness of all the saints and angels in heaven, is communicated unto them. It is not of, and from themselves. It is bestowed upon them, and continued in them, and their wills are rendered impeccable in holiness, and they cannot will to sin, no not for evermore. Yet all this is of free favour. It is not essential and natural to their nature. But God is Essentially Holiness itself. It is the very perfection of his Godhead. He can no more cease to be Holy than he can his being what He is. *God is light, and there is no darkness in Him*. I come

4thly. To the apostle's end and design in these words. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*.

Most assuredly one end and design was, to keep up and retain in their minds unto whom he wrote, a reverence of the divine Majesty. That they might consider, as light cannot mix with darkness, so they could not converse with God, but as they had a suitable frame, and proper

apprehensions of Him, as the Holy, Blessed, Glorious Lord their God. *This glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD*, was to be before them in their accesses unto Him: which would be the means of possessing their minds, hearts, wills, affections, and memory, with such proper conceptions of his Majesty, as would help and assist them in their worshipping Him, and in their walking before Him, and in their holding communion with Him. Another end of the apostle might be, to give all, who should come in succeeding ages and generations, and be brought to believe and profess the truths of the everlasting Gospel, to know that the Holiness of God shines in, and throughout every part, truth, doctrine, and ordinance of the same. Again it might be, to anticipate to their minds, that this was a part and branch of that truth he was about to pursue, in filling up his present subject. He therefore prepares their minds for the further and fuller reception of the subject. As this is contained in the next two succeeding verses, which will each be separately opened and explained, as the Lord may be pleased to assist, and impart light, and shed his Spirit, as the Spirit of grace, in his gifts, graces, and anointings, I shall say nothing more at this time. May it please the Holy Ghost, to shed his sacred influences on what hath been delivered in the present sermon, so far as will be for your profit, and His praise and glory. This I must entirely leave with his Majesty. It being with Him alone, to bless, or to withhold a blessing. I will therefore close with the following Doxology. “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God; be honour and glory for ever and ever.” Amen. 1 Tim. i. 17.

SERMON VI.

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.—1 JOHN i. 6.

IN the former verse the apostle had expressed an immutable truth, concerning God; which he received from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, from the very beginning of his being admitted to be one of his disciples and apostles, and which he was commanded to declare unto all saints:—*That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Which he makes use of, to speak on the subject of having fellowship with him, of walking before Him, of doing the truth from the heart. He here asserts in the most positive terms, that such as say they have fellowship with God, and are in a state of sin, are liars. So are those also who live in any known sin. So are they also, who walk in the course of sin. It signifies not what they know: what they profess: what they are in the Church by office. The apostle puts in himself, and the rest of the apostles, including them all in the word *we*. Denying this to be a truth of them, or any others: whosoever, or whatsoever they were; let them profess Christ the Essential Word, who was constituted by the will of the Three in the Essence existing, to be the Mediatorial Word, in consequence of which,

He became the Incarnate Word; yet if they walked in darkness, in a state and course of sin, it was not speaking the truth, to say they had fellowship with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This was contradictory to the message which the apostles had heard of Christ: which they received from Him: which they declared in his Name. It was directly and positively contrary unto the same. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* Thus you see the introduction of the words, and from the same may have some general insight into the true and proper meaning of them. To open them, so as that the general and particular meaning of them may be clearly understood, I will divide them into the following particulars.

1. We have a positive declaration, we have no fellowship with God, whilst we are in a state of sin. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*

2. What it is to walk in darkness, and what we are here to conceive of the same. Darkness is here opposed unto light: walking is a progressive motion. It is therefore expressive here, not only of being in a state of darkness, but of a walk according to that state. *If we say that we have fellowship with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and walk in darkness, we lie, even in so saying.*

3. To walk in darkness, and say we have fellowship with Him, who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. This is not to walk according to the truth. Such do not the truth. The truth of God is not in them, neither are they even externally influenced thereby. I think these particulars if properly opened and explained, will give us a full and clear account of the subjects contained in these words: *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* May the Lord himself help and guide me through each of these particulars, so as to do justice to the text, give you satisfaction, and glorify the Lord. To which I say Amen. For without him we can do nothing. I am

1. To set before you, that which we have before us. A positive apostolical declaration. Which is this: we have no fellowship with God, whilst we are in a state of sin. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* This is delivered by our apostle, in the name, and as the universal acknowledgment of all the apostles, that it was wholly incompatible with the grace of God, to have fellowship with God, whilst any remained in a sinful state. And the Lord Christ himself had expressed the impossibility of it, when he said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3. But this being a truth which seems to be universally acknowledged by all sorts of persons, and our apostle using the word *we*, *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*, I conceive it does not, nor is it designed, to express the state and case of sinners in their unrenewed and unprofessing state, but it must belong to such as made a profession of Christ, and might make a boast of having communion with the Holy Trinity. Which subject he had been writing on, to this very intent, that the persons written to, might have the same blessed fellowship with himself, and the apostles in this un-

speakeable grace. His words are these. "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. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." He could not write thus to unregenerate persons: it could neither suit him, nor them. Therefore it must be saints, or such as were connected with them in church communion, and by a Gospel profession, whom he must have his eye, and design upon, when he says, *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* So that such as are designed by the apostle, most certainly were under a profession of the same truths, the apostles declared unto them. They professed the knowledge of the Person of Christ—of his eternity—of his incarnation and manifestation in the flesh—of his being the Essential Word—of his being *That Eternal Life* which was with the Father, before all time. They also professed they had received the knowledge of Him, and that they had communion with Him. It may here be observed, it was in *John's* time, as it now is. The outward visible church of Christ, was constituted both of persons who were born again of God, and who were not. The former were partakers of Christ: the latter not: yet what they were, was with the Lord, and not known to themselves, and others, until it was manifested by outward conduct; or by a defection and a departure from the truth. And this declaration of the apostle contained in our text, *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth,* might be designed in the first place, to prevent real saints from being careless and remiss: to arouse their minds: to reach their hearts: to express how the best of them, had need to watch their hearts: to be careful of their walk: to avoid in themselves, and others, every thing which tended to sin; seeing it would interrupt them in holding and maintaining communion with their heavenly Father. He being Light, Purity and Holiness, there could be no communion held with Him, if the mind was impure. No. Holiness becometh the house and worshippers of the Lord for ever. As also in the second place, to declare that such persons who were under the influence of their own sins, and corruptions, could not, so long as this was the case, say what they might, have fellowship with the Lord. To shew the impossibility of the same, he expresseth the subject thus. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* Were we, the apostles of Christ, to be found walking in darkness, and at the same time were we to say, we have fellowship with God the Father, who is Light, and in him there is no darkness at all, we are liars: we tell lies: *we lie, and do not the truth.* The *if* here, is not to express it to be a possible case thus to act. No. They were established in the immutable truths of Christ's Person and salvation, and the love of the Father in Him to them. They were most immutably fixed in their knowledge and evidence, that they had communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and had in their own souls the evidence of the real blessedness of the same. They knew the influence and effect which it produced in their hearts, tempers, frames, lives, and conversations. In their walk with God, and in their holy warfare against self, sin, the world, and devil, they knew the blessed

effects of what flowed into their minds, from their fellowship with God. It was a preservative from sin: it saved them from it: their hatred against sin was increased by it. They could therefore set, and leave their seals on this as infallible truth, which concerned themselves, and others also. *If we say that we have fellowship with him,* (God the Father is the predicate here,) *and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* Fellowship with God, and walking in sin, will never agree together. So that it may be here brought in by the apostle, by way of discrimination, to distinguish between one professor and another. The law of God is the holy will of God: by the which all sin is forbidden upon pain of eternal damnation. The gospel is a revelation of pure grace: yet it connives at no one sin. It has no provision for the commission of any one sin, or any one act of sinfulness: whilst it contains a full, free, and glorious pardon of all sort and manner of sin. Yet this is founded on the sacrifice of Christ. And such as are effectually called, are, before they know Christ, and his salvation, brought by the omnipotent agency of the Holy Ghost, out of the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And on their being led to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, they hate sin with an eternal and an invincible hatred. It is a truth somewhere expressed by *Dr. Goodwin*, "*that the gospel is more holy than the law.*" Not to contradict that most excellent Divine, how that can be I cannot say. For the law is holy: yea, it is immutably so: it is the will of God, and a transcript of his holiness. The gospel is as holy as the law: it being wholly and all of it from the Lord. Therefore the Doctor means most undoubtedly this—that there is a greater shine and display of God's holiness in the one than in the other. And this will be most readily admitted of. It contains the utmost shine of God in Christ, upon an elect world: it unfolds the glories of the Divine nature, and the Persons in God, beyond what the law doth: in it the Father shines on his Church, in the face of his anointed: and all the secrets of everlasting love, and divine clemency are declared. So that as the grace of the Gospel is unspeakable: so sins committed immediately and expressly out of opposition to it, are the most tremendous. And even such as are under the profession of the same, should be very careful of their walk and conversation: as should such as are the partakers of the grace of the gospel. It is not impossible but the apostle might have in his eye what is too commonly a sin committed by persons under a profession of Christ in our day. Many will be bold and forward, they will put in their claim, and will insist on it, they have communion with the Lord, when it is evident by their whole walk and conversation, they have not. I do not here mean, such as are actually known to live in sin: I mean such as, as it respects outward things, are naturally religious, and devout: yet they know not Christ spiritually. His glories have never been supernaturally reflected on their minds, so as to have true and spiritual apprehensions of them: yet they will not acknowledge this. They are so far from this, that they will presume, and venture to assert they are as well acquainted with what is contained in fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, as any of the saints, be they who they may. Now it may be to knock off the fingers of such, the apostle expresses himself as he doth here; with an *if*. For there were the same spirits in professors in *John's* days, as are in ours. He might well write such a sentence to such, as this before us. *If we say that we have fel-*

fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. It implies, some would confidently affirm this to be their case, who were destitute of this grace and blessedness. They would not stand on telling a lie, that they might pass for saints on the highest form in the school of Christ. Yet their very want of spirituality was a witness against them : yea, it was full proof, that they did not the truth : they neither walked in the truth, so as to give evidence of their having communion with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. So that their affirmation was real and substantial evidence, that the truth of this assertion could not be proved by them. Finally I conceive, the apostle writing thus, was to clear it to the very end of that age in which he lived, and down to the very end of time, that no unholy sinner could have fellowship with an holy God. Our Lord says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Now where the Holy Ghost hath created a new and spiritual mind, and illuminated the same with the true knowledge of God the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ ; by this means it is suited for communion with the Lord ; as without this it is not : so that it remains a truth, and an immutable one, that *If we say that we have fellowship with God, who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all : yet walking in darkness at the same time we make this declaration, we lie,* in so doing, and the truth of Christ's doctrine is not in us. I hope I have said enough to clear these words from any ambiguity. Therefore I will proceed to my next particular.

2. To state what it is to walk in darkness, and what we are here to conceive of the same. Darkness is here opposed unto Light : walking is a progressive motion. It is therefore expressive here, not only of being in a state of darkness, but of walking according to it. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* We lie in so saying. This therefore is to add sin to sin.

I am under this head, to set forth and state what it is to walk in darkness, what we are to conceive of the same. I have in the former head suggested, it is not here to be considered as referring wholly to an unregenerate (or unprofessing) state ; which is indeed a state of darkness : and such as are in it, cannot but walk in darkness. And they walk on, and proceed, they being alive to sin, cannot but so do. But as what is here spoken, belongs to such as are in the visible church of Christ, the darkness here is to be applied to the inherency of sin, and to the power and prevalency of the same on the mind, so as to have its awful influence, and produce its sad effects on the heart, life, and conversation. Yea, this may be the case, where there are no outward evidences of the same : for sin being a mental act, it may put forth abundance of its effects on the mind, which are only discernible unto the allseeing eye of God, and which the mind alone is conscious of. The best fruits and effects of grace, which are produced in the minds of saints, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Heavenly Father in Him, are only known to the Lord. They are all in his sight. It is but seldom we have the spiritual discernment of them : so with respect to sin which dwelleth within us : it puts forth, and produces ten thousand acts in our minds, which serve to damp our affections, and draw off our hearts from the Lord, *the fountain of living waters.* Now there may be an abundance of heart departure from the Lord, when the outward walk, and deportment, may have no irregularity in it. Yet even

this cannot but be accompanied with a neglect of communion with God ; which can only be maintained in us, as we give our hearts to Him. He can hold communion with us, when we cannot with Him : but we cannot hold communion with the Lord, if we regard iniquity in our hearts. I would here observe in the words of our text, *darkness* is here opposed unto *light*. So that by the term *darkness* here, we cannot but understand *sin* : as by *light*, as here set in opposition to darkness, we must naturally and necessarily understand *grace*. It must be so for this invincible reason : in the former words the apostle had said, *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*.

The *darkness* spoken of in my text, is the darkness of sin. It is not in God, it is in us : it is our fallen nature : it is there it hath its sole existence. Out of it spring all the errors and heresies which ever were in the human mind. And I conceive errors in judgment, concerning spiritual and eternal things, are comprehended in the words of the apostle, who says, *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*. We cannot have fellowship with God, who is light without darkness, and walk in darkness. As the *darkness* in the words before us must mean *sin* ; so the *light* which is opposed to it must therefore be the *light* of grace, which is communicated unto us, in and with that new birth the Holy Ghost is pleased to produce in us, by his omnipotent power, when he brings us out of darkness, into his marvellous light. As hath been already hinted, every doctrine of men, every thing which is contrary to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, all such as are derogatory to the honour and dignity of Christ's Person, and opposite to the glory of the free grace of God, in Election, Predestination, Salvation, Effectual calling, Perseverance in Grace, and eternal Glorification, all such are mental errors, and are sins in the sight of the Lord and before Him. He hath given us his truth, not for us to pass our own judgments on the same, but for us to receive into our minds with all submission to his own revelation thereof. And there can be no communion between the Lord and us, but in the belief of the truth. When, and whilst at any time, we walk in the reception of any thing contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, we cannot have fellowship with God, who is light, and in, and with whom there is no darkness of error. It may be this darkness of error, may be designed by this phrase, *we lie, and do not the truth*. Paul says to the *Thessalonians*, " But we are bound to give thanks alway to God, for you brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Epis. ii. 13. The whole life of faith consists in living in the belief of the truth. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*. This is fully expressive, that at such times we are not walking according to the truth of the gospel, nor in the belief of the same. I am further to observe, that *walking* is a progressive motion. It is therefore made use of here, not as expressive of a state of darkness, but of walking according to the same. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness*. None can walk with God, and have fellowship with him, who are in a state of sin : neither can such as walk in the ways of sin : neither can such as go on, and proceed in the commission and practice of sin. Such as are under the influence of sin, cannot have fellowship with God, who is light, and in whom is no

darkness at all : nor such either as are alive to sin, for such will most certainly live in it, and walk in it. Neither can such as live in the habit of any one sin : nor such as walk in a course of sin, and willingly and wilfully commit it, walking after their own heart's lust. Nor can such as walk, and live in any doctrine contrary to the gospel of the grace of God. It is by the truth of the everlasting gospel, we can only live to the Lord. It is only, as the glories of Christ's Person shine in upon our minds, and the love of God is enjoyed in our hearts, we are drawn into communion with the Lord. It is the true knowledge of the same, which make us rejoice in the Lord. It is as the Holy Ghost is pleased to reveal Christ unto us, and in us, by taking of the things of Christ and shewing the same unto us, and thereby glorifies Jesus in us, and sheds abroad the Father's love in our hearts, that we rejoice in Him and have fellowship with God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. If therefore we abide in the darkness of sin ; walk in the ways of sin, secretly, or openly, let us say, and think, let us profess and express whatsoever we may of God's everlasting love, and concerning the Person, work, and Salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ : yet we have not, we cannot have any fellowship with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ, if we are not born from above. If we are walking in darkness, this being our state, and case, *If we say that we have fellowship with him, who is light, and in whom, and with whom there is no darkness at all, we lie, and do not the truth.* The truths and doctrines of Christ, are all like God himself : they are light : they are pure and perfect : they are according to godliness : they promote it : they increase it : they administer such motives for the true practice of it, as carry all before it. They are only properly received, through the channel of regeneration : it is in the regenerate mind they work effectually. It is by the truths of the everlasting gospel, and those which most immediately concern the glory of the self-existing Three in the self-existing Essence, with such as have an immediate respect to the Person, Worth, Glory, Excellency, Perfections of Christ, his love and salvation, which the Holy Ghost is pleased to work most immediately by, so as to lead real saints into real and actual communion with the Father, and the Son : by these he works effectually. It is in the true knowledge of these, he produces faith, and all "the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." The Holy Ghost lets in spiritual and supernatural light, into the renewed mind, so that "the path of the just is as the shining light ; which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." I proceed to my last particular.

3. I am to shew, that to walk in darkness, and at the same time to say, we have fellowship with Him who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all ; this is not to walk according to truth : such do not the truth : the truth of God is not in them. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.*

Darkness and light can never become one : they are essentially distinct bodies : they cannot unite : it is contrary to their nature, properties, and qualities : the absence of the one, is the cause of the other. Sin and holiness are contraries to each other : there can be no communion with each other. Purity and impurity can have no commixture. Truth and error can never agree. There can be no walking in the truth, and at the same time living in that which is contradictory thereunto :

we cannot be true men, and at the same time utter lies. This appears to me to be the sum and substance, of the apostle's declaration and assertion here. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* We neither speak the truth, nor do we act the truth, nor according to it. As every thing which is not true must be falsehood, it must consequently be a lie. So the apostle avers such are liars, as make a profession of having communion with the Lord, who walk in sin, who embrace erroneous and bad doctrine, and are under the influence of the same. It might here be observed how clearly the apostle here speaks to the case. He is not speaking to such as made no profession of the Lord Jesus Christ, but to such as did.—He is not here upon the subject of free grace, but upon the glorious fruits and effects of it. He has been speaking on the very tendency of the truth, and what the truth of divine knowledge produces in the soul—Joy in God: yea, a fulness of joy. This is actually enjoyed in the spiritual mind, in communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ: the apostles enjoyed this: they would all the saints might partake of this inestimable favour: it being that unto which they were called. To this very end, and for this very express purpose, *John* wrote this Epistle to the saints: well knowing, their personal purity and holiness would increase and more fully appear, as they lived in real personal fellowship with the Lord. So that the words before us, may be considered, as designed to remove all impediments out of the way of real saints, which might prevent them from this holy fellowship with the Lord, as well as prevent such as were only professors from professing they had this blessedness in their souls, whereas they had not, by saying, *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* Suggesting hereby, that they should consider every unholy affection which might arise in their mind, if indulged, and given way unto, so as that their affections might be influenced thereby; would be a preventive to their enjoyment of this most holy communion with Him, who is Light, Purity, and Holiness, beyond the uttermost of our conception, and who said to the saints under the Old Testament dispensation, and continues to say the same, under the present dispensation of grace, *Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy.* So it most certainly became them who called on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, to pass the time of their sojourning here, in this present time state, in his most holy fear. It might also be intended to put them on their guard, so as they might be preserved from receiving into their minds, that which might be the means of leading them off Christ. As for instance, such as have not with their hearts believed unto, or into the righteousness of Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, can never aim after, nor desire to have fellowship with Him, who is the Lord our Righteousness—with Him in whom all saints centre; and of whom they all say, "In the Lord have we righteousness and strength." We are made the righteousness of God in Him. Yet if any error in judgment, arises in our minds to darken this, we cannot, so far as it prevails, have fellowship with Christ, as Jehovah our Righteousness before the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens. It must be so in, and as it respects all other branches of eternal and divine truths. It can only be in the true

and clear knowledge of them, we are kept from those errors which are contrary to them : and it is by our true knowledge of them, we only can have communion with God in the belief of them, by the sacred influences which attend the reception of them into our minds. To be preserved from errors in judgment, respecting the glorious truths of divine revelation, is an unspeakable mercy. We only receive the knowledge of God ; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost into our hearts, as we receive the same in, and from the doctrine thereof set before us, in the word of inspiration in the sacred scriptures. The Holy Ghost teaches us nothing contrary to them : He teaches us nothing which is not contained in them : He neither leads us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, nor into fellowship with Him, and the Father in Him, but as he is pleased to make the written word the mean thereof. So that it is hereby we are most blessedly preserved from sin, and error, and are more and more advanced into true and real fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Thus I have endeavoured to open the text before us, in the most comprehensive way and manner I could ; and I am not conscious of having done any injustice to it. For as it most assuredly must be confessed it must belong to the church of Christ, so it follows it is delivered by way of discrimination : which must be expressive here, not of saints, and open (or unprofessing) sinners, nor of saints as saints, so as to make a distinction between them as such : that is not the case here. It must therefore intend to point out some essential distinction between real saints and such as were merely and nominally so. We generally express ourselves on such a subject thus : we say, such are professors only : such are possessors. By the which we mean, such are only and merely professors of the doctrines of the gospel : such are the actual partakers of the grace of the gospel. Yet even the latter dare not say, if they walk in darkness, if they fall into sin, if they act and transact it in their minds, they have fellowship with God. He is light. So that even saints as saints, if they walk in the darkness of sin, and error, let it be ever so transiently, cannot say, at such times, and whilst in such cases, they have fellowship with Him. This is a truth worthy of the gospel. It sets a lustre on it. Therefore it should be in its place insisted on : yet not in the common way in which it is generally treated. We are generally disposed to insist, we must be holy that we may be interested in Christ : whereas holiness is the fruit of our being in Christ, not the cause of our being in Him. Our being in Christ is the fruit of God the Father's everlasting love to us, in Christ, God-Man : we being in Him, is our everlasting foundation. On this we are immutably fixed. From Christ, God-Man, as our Head, all the communicable blessings of the Holy Trinity flow forth in a way of communication to us. Nothing can put a stop to this. When we clearly apprehend this, and fully believe this, we have the real enjoyment of the same. When we live to ourselves in any instance, we drop our holy fellowship with the Lord. He being light without darkness, so there can be no fellowship on our parts, when we in any instance, be it in thought, word, or deed, act, or walk in the darkness of sin ; or receive, entertain, and maintain any thing contrary to sound doctrine, of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Neither by such as have not received the Lord Jesus Christ, into their minds, hearts, consciences, and affections. To say, profess, or preach otherwise, is to declare a lie : it is to prove to a demonstration, that which is contrary to the truth ; we do not the truth :

we are not acting according to the truth : we do not agree with the truth : *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* May the Lord seal and settle this as truth in our hearts, so as that at all times we may act under the influence thereof : so as to be kept from every thing which may mar and interrupt our communion with the Lord, and from acting, or saying that which is contradictory to his Truth, and so be chargeable with a lie, and not acting according to truth. Amen.

SERMON VII.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.—1 JOHN i. 7.

THE two former verses, as connected with this, contain one entire subject. This is most easily perceived, and may be fully confirmed, by the first word in the present text ; which is the word *But*. Which knits it with the former verses. It will therefore be necessary they should be recited : seeing the true connection of these, will be one means, of seeing the harmony, dependance, and influence the one hath with and upon the other. The subject began thus. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth : But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* The whole contains a most important text and context. Such as is no where to be found, on the subject, which concerns that holy, blessed, and free communion, which the apostles had with the holy and ever blessed Trinity, and which is here expressed, by way of excitement to all saints. That they might look out for, and have their hearts going out after, with holy longing, to have, and hold, to expect, and to receive and enjoy in their own souls, fellowship with the divine Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, through his indwelling in them. As this blessed intercourse with the Three in Jehovah, according to the revelation which they had been pleased to make of themselves, in the glorious gospel, was a part of their message of grace, which was delivered by Christ to *John*, to be delivered to the church, so he informs them of the same : one grand article of which was, the Essential, and Manifestative Light and Purity of God. This he expresses thus. “ God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” From this it most clearly follows, that such as have fellowship with Him, must be such as are pure : or, without it, an holy God could never converse with them : but none of Adam’s posterity are in and of and from themselves, clean and pure in the sight of God ; where is there any purity to be found, in, or throughout any amongst them ? The reply is, in none out of Christ. But if such as are

in Christ, are clean in the sight of God, why then did the apostle put in these words, as a remora? "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." The answer is this—It is one thing to be pure in the sight of God from all sin, by the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is a distinct part of the same subject to know this, and to live in the belief of the same. And to live and act in the belief of this, is the effect and fruit of believing it. Such as are professors of Christ, and such as truly know Christ, are thus distinguished—The one walk in darkness, the other in light. Such as walk in darkness, are such as are under the influence of sin, and under that sort of doctrine, which is not the same with the faith once delivered unto the saints. Such cannot have, and hold fellowship with the Lord. No. Nor believers either, if so be they step forth into any act of darkness. It is a saying attributed to what is commonly called the primitive church, "Holy things belong to holy persons." It might have been founded on our Lord's own words. He says, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Matt. vii. 6. It is an immutable truth, God holds fellowship with his beloved people, as he brings them into a state of fellowship with himself. The apostle speaking to the saints at Corinth, says, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Cor. i. 9. And our apostle says, *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* These two verses are contrasted with each other: they are set in opposition with each other. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." I have opened these already, in the former sermon. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* These words are now before me to explain. It may be fully and with the utmost confidence pronounced, these words contain as great a cordial for the spiritual mind, as is to be found in all the Book of God. I shall endeavour to open and explain my text, hoping thereby, to give a full and clear outline of the whole substance of it, as contained in the following particulars. I will propose

1. What we are to understand, by walking in the light. With the connexion this hath with Him, before whom, and with whom we walk. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light.*

2. That which proceeds therefrom. *We have fellowship one with another.* By which I understand as included in the *we*, the apostles, and the rest of the saints: intimating hereby, that they had one, and the same holy and blessed fellowship, one with the other, in the same grace, and with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Not it may be to the same extent and degree: but the same as to the reality of it. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.* Even with Him of whom it hath been before asserted, that "He is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

3. I would take notice of the blessed relief for our minds, to carry us above all our sinful infirmities, and all, and whatsoever we are the

subjects of. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

4. How we receive and enjoy the efficacy of this truth into our minds. These are the particulars I mean to pursue, which will bring me to these words, *and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* May the Lord most graciously guide me through the same. Amen. I am, beloved, as the

1st. Particular of my discourse, to shew you, what we are to understand, by walking *in the light*. With the connection this hath with Him, before whom, and with whom, we walk. *If we walk in the light as he is in the light.*

To walk with God is an high privilege. It is an honour which is conferred by free grace, on some; not on all; to walk with God is a progressive spiritual motion, which consists in going on in the ways of the Lord, and abounding therein. There is a twofold walk with God. The one is internal, the other is external. That we may walk with God inwardly and spiritually, we must be of one mind and will with God: we must know his truth: receive his truth: be well pleased with his truth: and rest in the same, and walk before Him in the belief thereof. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed. The mind must be renewed by the Holy Ghost. He must also enlighten it into the knowledge of God, and his Son Jesus Christ, or we cannot have fellowship with them. I would here observe what we are to understand by walking *in the light*. It having been in the past Sermon what it is to walk in darkness, it will, I think, be very easy for us to conceive what it must be to walk in the light. If to walk in a course of sin, and error, is to walk in darkness, by the which we are disqualified to have fellowship with God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all: then it is such alone as walk in the light of grace and truth, can walk with him. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 23. Such only as walk agreeably with the doctrine of grace, and under the influences of the same, and in concert with the truths and doctrines of the everlasting gospel, are the persons who walk with God. And to walk in the true spiritual knowledge and acknowledgment of the doctrine of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, this must be to walk in the light. The apostle writing to the Colossians, speaks of their knowing the grace of God in truth. It is the knowledge of the grace of God in truth, fits us for walking with God in the true light of the same. As we walk in the true knowledge of the Father, and of his Son Jesus Christ, our minds are spiritualized, and raised up into communion with them, under the sacred influences and energy of the Lord the Spirit. It is as God shines into us, and upon us, in the Person of God-Man, Christ Jesus, our Head, Saviour, and Lord, that we approach him with holy pleasure and delight. It is as we have communion with Him, we walk before Him: we are made light in the Lord. We have a spiritual inherent faculty, suited to the apprehension of the nature and grace of God, so as to receive into our hearts the revelation He hath been pleased to give of the same in his holy word: we have therein, and thereby communion with Him. From this springs our walking with Him, and our walking before Him, unto all well pleasing. This is an everlasting truth, that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." As we walk with God in the purity of his Truth, he lets in the true knowledge of Himself, in his

Persons, and perfections, as he hath manifested the same in the Person of the God-Man, so as that our understandings are possessed with the truth of the same. As he gives us to know, how he stands related to us in Christ Jesus, we are led to apprehend the fixation of his love upon us. All this is internally, spiritually, and supernaturally. Our hearts and affections are influenced and drawn after the Lord hereby: so that as we go on to walk with God, and in the real light of faith, to behold the real blessedness of walking in the light, as he is in the light, we prove to others hereby, that we have communion with Him, "Who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all." Our Lord saith, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John viii. 12. Our walk with God, with Christ, with the Spirit, is wholly from the Lord alone. It is wholly from the Three in Jehovah. When the apostle is writing to the saints at *Corinth* concerning church communion, he asks the following questions. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" The answer must be, None. He adds, "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." 2 Epis. vi. 14. 16. All which belongs to the Holy Spirit: who is the living God, equal with the Son, and with the Father, as one in the same infinite self-existing Essence. So that He is Light without darkness, as also the Son; and Father are: consequently such as have fellowship with Him, and such in whom he dwells, and directs their hearts into the love of God, and into a patient waiting for Christ, cannot but be such as are children of the light and of the day; who have put off the works of darkness, and have put on the armour of light. If we walk in the light of faith, purity, and holiness, we give outward evidence that we are in the state of grace. This *If* is used, as it was in the former verse. To substantiate the truth contained in the assertion. Not by any means to weaken this most solemn and positive assertion, or make it doubtful, but to shew there can be no walking with God, who is *Light*, but as we renounce and avoid every false way; and walk in the truth, in the light of it, and under the sacred energy of the same. This brings me to speak of that which proceeds from this—

2nd. Which is contained in the words following, *if we walk in the light, as he is in the light—we have fellowship one with another*. By which I understand, as included in the *we*, the apostles, and the rest of the saints. Or, if you will, all the saints: as intimating hereby, that they had one and the same holy fellowship, one and the same grace, and transcendent privilege: and with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Not it may be to the same degree and extent; but the same as to the reality of it. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another*. Even with Him, of whom it hath been before asserted, that "He is light, and in him is no darkness at all." This is the present particular which is now, if the Lord please, to be filled up. May it be so, to his praise, and our benefit. Amen.

Fellowship with God, and saints, is what proceeds from walking with God, and it is most truly enjoyed as we walk in the light of holiness and righteousness before him. The apostle puts himself into the number of those he writes unto here, in the word *we*, as he did before, even from the very beginning of this chapter. This you will easily perceive by looking

back to the first four verses. All is expressed in the plural number : and it comprehends there the holy apostles of the Lord and Saviour, and them only. What they knew of God-Man, Christ Jesus in his Incarnate Person, and state, they declared and made known to saints, that these also might have fellowship with them, in all the mysteries of grace and salvation. "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." And these things, concerning our real fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, which we are honoured with, we write to you ; that ye may have a fulness of joy, in the participation. Now let us bring down this to the subject here before us : we shall then see a glorious agreement and union in, and throughout the whole. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.* We apostles, with you the brethren and followers of the Lord and Saviour. There is but one and the same way of access to, and communion with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for us, and you : we have access by one and the same Holy Spirit, unto the Father, and the medium of that access is one and the same Lord Jesus Christ. If we as apostles say, we have fellowship with God our heavenly Father, and walk in darkness, we, as well as you, lie, by such an assertion, and do not the Truth. But if we, and you also, walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another : you with us, and we with you, in the knowledge and enjoyment of these eternal and divine realities, contained in the Person of God-Man, and the Father's immense, infinite, and everlasting love to Him, and to us in Him. I think I have so linked all this together, in a glorious coherency and connection, as may give complete satisfaction respecting the same : as also shew that the apostles, and primitive believers had a mutual union and communion with each other in the same truths. It is expressly said by the evangelist *Luke*, respecting saints on the day of Pentecost, or rather after it, (yet it begun on that day,) that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." Acts iv. 32. It could not be otherwise, if they received the Lord Jesus Christ, by one and the same doctrine. The apostle knowing the great importance of this, addressed a whole church thus. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. i. 10. A unity in the faith, is no small blessing : it is only from it there can be a communion of saints : and it consists in knowing the same truths, in receiving the same into their minds, and in walking and centering in the same. The apostles and the whole church were one in Christ : they were one and the same as the objects and subjects of the Father's everlasting love : they were one and the same as the subjects of the Holy Spirit : they had an equal right and title to all the blessings of grace and glory. The apostles were but in Christ, and the whole election of grace were equally in Him—beloved by Him. The apostles had the true knowledge of Christ ; so had the saints likewise. The apostles had fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit ; so had the saints likewise. It might be, and most assuredly I conceive it must be so, that the knowledge the apostles had of Christ, and their personal communion with Him, must far exceed all other saints whatsoever, or whomsoever : it having

been their case of receiving their knowledge of Christ from Himself; and their communion with Him, was equal with their knowledge of Him. All other saints receive their knowledge of Him, and of the Father, mediately by the Word and by the Spirit. Whilst the reality of this knowledge is the same, yet it is not such an immediate knowledge, it not being received into the mind in the same way: nor can the communion be so free, intimate, and particular as theirs. As ours is by intuition, from the word, and in the use of ordinances. Here I conceive, we may, and ought to allow a difference between them and us. Yet in all the Truths, and ordinances of the gospel, in all the graces, benefits, and blessings of Salvation, there, they and we are all one. So also we are in the reality and personal blessedness of communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. *If we, and you, says the apostle, walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another*, in the same inestimable grace—with the same most divine and essentially blessed Persons, and in the enjoyment and comfort of the same blessings and blessedness. Out of the which consideration, an holy joy flows into our souls, and yours also. This is the fellowship of saints. And we have also fellowship with the Father, as God our Father. *Who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. Of whom it hath been before said, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."* Therefore *if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.* We with you, and you with us: and we and you also with God in the Person of the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: in the which we enjoy all the true blessedness which we possibly can, out of heaven. This I conceive is the true and genuine sense and meaning of the words before us. I have been constrained to go over this again and again, to make it the more clear and easy to the spiritual mind, and of becoming thereby the more useful. These words then are to confirm the saints in right apprehensions of what the apostle had written, concerning the fellowship he, and the other apostles had with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: so as they under right apprehensions of the subject, and knowing there was no obstruction to their full and free enjoyment of the same, might be thereby confirmed in it. *If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another*, in this same fellowship with the Father, and the Son; and the blood of Jesus Christ is our everlasting purity before the Divine Majesty. Our fellowship with the Father, consists in clear apprehensions of his love to us, in the Person of Christ, and in a real sense and enjoyment of the same. Our distinct fellowship with Christ, consists in clear views of Him as God-Man—of him also as our Head—of our union to Him—interest in Him—of our complete salvation by Him. It should ever be remembered, the fellowship of the Holy Trinity with us, and our fellowship with them, are distinct subjects, and should be treated as such. The former is the cause, the other the effect. It is a display of everlasting love and favour. The apostle *Paul* pronounces this benediction to the saints at *Corinth*. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." And our apostle invokes grace and peace, on the seven churches in *Asia*, thus, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his

throne; and from Jesus Christ." Rev. i. 4, 5. Here all the Three in Jehovah are acknowledged, and that in their economy of grace. And thus I close the second particular of this Discourse. I therefore proceed,

3rd. To take notice of the blessed relief provided for our minds, to carry us above all our sinful infirmities, and all, and whatsoever we are the subjects of. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* This contains ineffable consolation.

As the apostle had been before making a discrimination who had not, and who had, communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and declared they only had, who walked in the light of truth and holiness, it might lead saints to question the reality of their being of the blessed number of such, seeing they could not but be fully persuaded, they were in themselves unworthy of such an unspeakable favour; to come before the Lord in the character of sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty: to present themselves before his divine Majesty: to view themselves as clothed upon with the righteousness of Christ, and made clean from all their sin before Him, by the most precious blood and sacrifice of God-Man, Christ Jesus. It ought not to be so, that any one of the children of the most high God, should look on themselves, or to themselves, or within themselves, for any thing to recommend them to the divine Majesty. Such a thought, as not being worthy, or unworthy, ought never to come before them: because communion with God and them is wholly a matter of grace. There can be no such thing as worth or worthiness in saints, either on earth, or in heaven: it is utterly impossible there should: yet we all find false thoughts are conceived by us: these produce their miseries within us. Therefore we have such a most blessed cordial as this before us, provided for our use, *The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin.* In our very walking with God, we have our sinful infirmities oppressing us. Such as walk in the closest fellowship with God; and with his Son Jesus Christ, cannot but be humbled at sights of their own inherent sinfulness, and coldness and deadness, which they have the inward sense, and experience of. Some saints lament how little their hearts are spiritually affected in prayer: others of the deadness and formality of their minds, when exercised therein; others on account of their daily infirmities: and some on account of the sin which most easily besets them: which frequently interrupts them in their fellowship with God as their heavenly Father, and his Son Jesus Christ; to whom they should continually fly and resort. Here is an antidote for such: exactly suited to all their case and complaints. And as these words stand here, and are considered in their proper place and connection, they do not concern sinners, but saints: the greatest as well as the least: we commonly take them up, I do myself, and in speaking to sinners concerning the everlasting efficacy of our Lord's most precious bloodshedding, we inform them by quoting these words, *that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin.* Beloved, observe and mark, and remember what I say: I am not to set aside the truth contained in these words, but to set them in their proper place, and shew the true and right connexion of them: and that is in this present discourse, absolutely necessary. The apostle is writing to saints: he includes himself, and all the other apostles, and speaks for

them, saying, *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* The *us* are real saints—such as had fellowship with the Father and the Son. These persons were the subjects of sin, or they could not have needed cleansing. It was the blood of Christ was their purity. It was his relation to the Father made his blood so efficacious. This is noticed. The whole emphasis of the text rests on it. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* Christ is, as one in the Godhead, personally and essentially, as distinct from the Father, his Son. He is the Son of the living God : He is God-Man. He having taken our nature into Personal union. He became Incarnate, and as God and man in one Christ, he gave himself for us. His blood hath all the virtue and perfection of his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, contained therein. By it he hath washed, cleansed, purified and sanctified his whole church. They are without all sin in Him. They are presented by Him a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. And the Father beholds them, in his Person, and finished work, complete in Him. And the blood of Christ maketh clean, and keepeth clean from all sin. The *us*, the Church, the whole mystic body of Christ, are washed in the blood of Christ : they are now, and evermore clean from all sin thereby : no sin is, in consequence of this, imputed unto them : and they are every moment, pure and clean in the sight of their heavenly Father from all sin, because the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, is their perpetual purity. To express this, the word is used in the present tense, *cleanseth*. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.* All that Christ is to his church, all he hath done for his church, was of the Father's own will and appointment. It must be, therefore, everlastingly well pleasing unto Him. He will have Him and it, in everlasting remembrance. Nor should it ever be overlooked by us, the vast extensive efficacy of our Lord's blood. *It cleanseth us from All Sin—us* who have fellowship with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, have this most divine Truth declared to us, in the everlasting gospel—that “The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father in Truth and love, cleanseth us from all sin.” This is to encourage our minds in all our approaches to God ; in acts of fellowship with God. We cannot but desire it. One of old said, “one thing have I desired of the LORD.” This one thing I prefer above and beyond all others. “That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty,” or the delight, “of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.” The God-Man, Christ, is taken up into the mount of Personal communion with God. He is one Personally with a person in the Godhead : though not Personally one, in the unity of the Godhead. His communion with the Three in Jehovah, is agreeable with his union to them, as God-Man. He is our Head, and we are his members. His communications to us, and our communion with Him, are according unto the union which subsists between Him, and us ; as he is our Head, and we are members in Him our Head. It is by virtue of this that we have communion with the Father in Him. All which is manifested unto us, and we have the knowledge and the enjoyment of the same in our renewed spiritual, and enlightened minds, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. The true and realizing knowledge of this most glorious subject, made one of old express himself on the same thus. “Blessed is the man whom

thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Ps. lxxv. 4. For God as our own God, to open all his heart to us, and to admit us to open all our hearts to Him, and before Him; it is in this consists the whole of this blessed fellowship. Our communion with the blessed Trinity, is agreeable with our union to them, and interest with them, of which the God-Man is the sole foundation. We shall enjoy this communion in glory, to the very uttermost perfection thereof: it will consist in the uttermost manifestations of the Father's everlasting love, to our persons in Christ; to us, so as for us to be swallowed up in the full enjoyment of the same. But whilst this fellowship is, and will be all the season here below, by some blessed visits and refreshings from the presence of the Lord, and many of these most suitable to our present case and circumstances, yet I am not disposed to enter into these, so much as I am to give some scriptural proof, there is such a communion between God and his saints: and that their sinful and natural infirmities should be no discouragements unto them, because *the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, cleanseth us*, now this moment, and every succeeding moment, *from all sin*. I proceed to my last particular, which is this;

4. To shew, how we receive and enjoy this truth, which is declared here, in our minds—*The blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin*. We must most certainly receive and enjoy the benefit of it, before we can rejoice and be glad in it. There can be no doubt, or dispute concerning this. It is amongst the first truths we receive into our minds, when we first are led to know the gospel—that Christ died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification. In the belief of this, we received Christ into our minds; and this made way, by the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit, to receive the knowledge of the Father's everlasting love into our hearts. In the belief of which the Holy Ghost shed abroad the sense thereof: so as for us to have an actual enjoyment of the same, by the further light and teaching of the Holy Ghost. It was herefrom and hereby, He was pleased to lead us into fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. And he opens our minds to receive this most important Truth, concerning our purification from all sin by the blood of Christ; and in believing apprehensions of the same, he realizes it, in us, and unto us. Our receiving the atonement is by faith, or a spiritual and gospel apprehension, of the infinite worth, efficacy, and virtue of the same: with the Father's free acceptance of it, of his delight in it: and of his setting it forth, by the word of the gospel, to be the true propitiatory sacrifice for sin: as all-sufficient, and everlastingly acceptable unto him: He himself on the immutable truth, saying, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins, and your iniquities will I remember no more." All which must be received into the believer's mind, before he can walk, and have communion with God. And it must be also maintained in the mind, so as that the believer being brought into a manifestative communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, may persevere therein. Our state of communion with the Father, and the Son, through the Spirit is immutable: but our present enjoyments of it are not. All our enjoyments of the same, are as we have the spiritual apprehensions thereof by faith. By which as the mean, it is, we receive and enjoy this most cordial and reviving Truth into our hearts, that *the*

blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin. The true knowledge and right apprehension of this in our souls, is of the uttermost importance. I was once in company, where one asked, "Is there not such a scripture, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin?" I was answered, "Yes." Then it was asked, "How does the blood of Christ cleanse from all sin?" The reply was, "By imputation." Then I thought if so; we who are the Lord's, are everlastingly pure and blessed. It is by our believing this, we have blessed freedom in our accesses unto God, and in our communion with Him. The Lord bless his Truth to us. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.—1 JOHN i. 8.

THE apostle having delivered himself, most gloriously on the former subjects, is disposed to pursue a subject most closely connected with them. To acquit the conscience from all sin and guilt on gospel grounds, and thereby to raise up the mind of a real believer to such apprehensions of the virtue and efficacy of the blood of Christ, as to encourage the saint to hold communion with the Father, in the clear and full apprehension that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth him from all sin, this is most noble and divine. Even in the very ministerial end and design of the same. Yet the apostle, being in his own mind vastly comprehensive, lest there should be any mistake on the great subject he has been delivering, enters on a new one: which concerns believers, himself, and all who profess to have communion with the Father, and the Son, and who believe this most precious and fundamental truth of the everlasting gospel—that they are pure and clean from all sin in the blood of the Lamb. Whilst this is as true as God is true: and it is by the belief of this, they can approach their heavenly Father, and enjoy fellowship with Him, notwithstanding all their infirmities, and all they feel, and are the subjects of: yet he would not have them to conceive, the blood of Christ cleanseth their unholy nature, and makes it pure from sin: or makes their sin purity. No. Whilst they were clean from all sin in the blood of Christ, and had liberty and boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus: they having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water: yet the inbeing of sin existed in their fallen nature: yea, it was that very nature: in it dwelt no good thing. Therefore, not to call back the truth which he had delivered unto them, which was an essential truth of the gospel, and as true as God is true, and in the knowledge and belief of which they alone could have victory and triumph over sin; yet he would they should

clearly understand, and distinguish, between what they were inherently in, and of themselves, and what they were in Christ; and not so blend the subject, as to conceive because they were pure from all sin in Christ, they were without all sin in their natures. This was so far from being the truth, that he says, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

With a design to open and explicate these words, I will set before you the following particulars.

1. Shew the speaker, and of whom, and to whom he speaks. It is the apostle is the speaker. He includes himself, and the rest of the apostles in what he here expresses. Those who are spoken to, are such as had fellowship with the Holy Trinity: to whom he said, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

2. What he here saith unto them, concerns the inbeing of sin. He asserts it is in them. If we say that we have no sin in us, we do not say true.

3. It is self-deception, and such are mistaken ones, who say they are sinless in themselves. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.*

4. The Truth of God is not maintained by those who say, there is no sin in them: it being contrary to the scriptures, to experiences, and confession of all saints; who have all been of one heart and one soul in the acknowledgment of this. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* Having given you the plan, I proceed to fill it up, as the Lord may most graciously be pleased to assist me in the same. I am

1. To shew the speaker, and of whom, and to whom he speaks. It is the apostle. He includes himself, and the rest of the apostles, in what he here expresses. Those who are spoken to, are such as had fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ: to whom he had said, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The speaker is the apostle *John* himself. One who was an high favourite with our Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks here in his own name, and also for all the rest of the apostles, as he had in all the former verses. He uses as he before had done, the term *we*. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* He speaks to saints. Those he speaks unto are such as had fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. These had fellowship also with the apostles, in all the blessings of the everlasting gospel; which contains a fulness of blessings. He here writes to those, to whom he had said, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And here in the words before us, he says to these very same persons, *If we say*, If I myself say, If any of you say, *that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* But if it be so, how are we to understand the former assertion, concerning the cleansing virtue and efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Our apostle had affirmed, the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. And here he says, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the*

truth is not in us. How do both these assertions agree together, that is the present question? To which the reply is—The blood of Christ is our everlasting purity in the sight of God. In it we are cleansed body and soul from every spot and stain of sin. Our purity cannot be fully conceived by us: we are without all sin in the eye of God's justice: He having transferred all our sins from us, and laid them all on Christ; who was sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Yet this hath not removed the inherency of sin out of us: our old nature remains in us. The blood of Christ hath no influence on it. We are in our nature-selves what we ever were, and so we shall ever remain; so long as we are in the body, we shall have sin in us. It may be the following observation may reflect light on our minds. Our Lord Jesus Christ had once, all our sins on Him. He was made sin: yet there was no sin in Him: yet all the sins of the whole election of grace were laid on Him. So we, to whom his righteousness, blood and sacrifice are imputed, are discharged from the imputation of all our sins thereby: and are in the sight of God, perfectly holy, righteous, and pure from all sin, by virtue of the imputation expressed. Yet we are not freed from the inbeing of sin hereby; any more than our great Surety, Christ Jesus, was defiled with the inherency of Sin, by the real imputation of sin to his Person. I conceive this rightly considered is a proper reply to the question, concerning the apostles assertions. As 1st. How the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin: and 2nd. How this assertion is agreeable with truth, and by no means contradicts the former. This the apostle *John* declares was his own case. It was alike true of all the apostles. It was so with those very persons included in the *us*, who had fellowship with the apostles, and with the Father and the Son, and whom the blood of Christ had purified, and who enjoyed the benefit and sense of the virtue of the same in their own souls—that they were notwithstanding all this the subjects of sin. They had it inherently in them. To deny this was to prove themselves liars. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* This brings me

2. To observe that what the apostle here saith unto them, concerns the inbeing of sin. He asserts it is in them. If we say that we have no sin in us, we do not say the truth.

We are all one in the first Adam, and have derived from him, the whole inherency of sin, which is the total corruption of our whole nature. This we received in our natural birth, and we have the whole of it existing in us. It is a very mortifying consideration, and should at all times humble us, before the Lord; we being in our nature-selves always one and the same as it respects our fallen nature. The assertion of the apostle, no doubt, hath a very deep and good design in it: surely it fully clears up this to our minds, that we are to look without us, for our present and everlasting purity from all sin before the Lord. That it is not in us: nor even in the new creation and workmanship which the Holy Ghost hath wrought within. Not that there is any impurity in the same. No. There is no sin in the new creature. Yet we are to look for purification from all sin to the blood of Christ: and we need always to be looking there, and to be continually receiving this truth into our minds, that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin, because sin is always in us. Nor can we get above the influences and effects of the same, but as our spiritual minds are engaged in real

fellowship with God, and in the true apprehensions of what is contained in this most precious, and everlasting efficacious remedy. It would be of no advantage to know our sinfulness, if we were not at the same time, directed to the Healer. Nor could we be borne up under our inherent sinfulness, without some blessed views of what we are in Christ, and of our being everlastingly complete in Him. It is the knowledge of the one, is the only mean of carrying off from the other. We may also well conceive, the apostle foresaw what false conceptions might arise in the minds of some, in that, and after ages, concerning perfection in the flesh. This might, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, be a motive with him, for saying, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* And most especially it might be with this end and design delivered, that the saints might not think their own cases such as none but themselves had the experience of. No, says the apostle, it is not. I myself, who was so blessedly and personally acquainted with our Lord Jesus Christ, and all *we* the rest of the apostles, have sin in us: so that here, you and we are the same: we are but sinners saved by free grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and you are just the same. If sin be in us, we have nothing inherent to boast of: we have then all evil in us: then we are what the apostle *Paul* speaks of himself, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." There is nothing but evil in our fallen nature. No. Nor will there ever be. Our apostle, as such, declares and positively asserts the inbeing of sin, in saints: in such as had fellowship with the Father, and with his Son. Of these, whom the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, he positively asserts, sin was in them. He does not say they were under sin: he does not say, sin reigned in them, and over them: neither does he say, sin had the dominion over them. He could not say this of the saints of the most high God. Sin is in them, but it doth not reign and domineer over them: yet it often threatens so to do: but it is incompatible with the state, the saints are brought into by regeneration that it should thus prevail. As we have sin within us, it cannot but follow, we must more, or less, have the evidence of the same in our own experience. Therefore to deny this truth is to be guilty of a lie. It would have been so in the mouths of the apostles: it would have been so in the saints our apostle here writes unto: it would be so in us: and in all others. The words are an apostolical assertion; which will be found true in all ages, and throughout all generations. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* It is well for us therefore to acknowledge this to be the truth: to be humbled for it: to carry about a sense of it within us: so as to feel our continual need of looking off it continually to Jesus the Rock of our Salvation. We should make this use of it—To renounce ourselves, wholly, and entirely—To be making continual use of Christ, in all our communion with the Father, in Him, the glorious Mediator—To maintain this truth in our renewed minds, that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin. That as sin hath its present and momentarily existence in us, and we are never without it, No, not in our highest acts and outgoings of our souls, in holy fellowship with the Lord: so neither is there a moment, in which there is not the present virtue and worth of the blood and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, put forth for us, and on our behalf. It is always present with, and before the Lord, to cleanse us in his sight, and

before Him, as sin is inherent in us, and consequently present with us. I view this as what follows on the apostle's assertion, and as containing the improvement of the same. I would therefore proceed to my next particular which is

3. To shew, that to say we have no sin, is self-deception; and that such, and all such as say, they have *no sin in them*, are mistaken ones. They are self-deceived. They are self-deluded. They are liars. The truth of God is not in them. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

How can it be otherwise, seeing all have sinned and come short of the glory of God? If we all sinned in Adam, and received our natures from him, we being in his loins by creation, as we proceed from our immediate parents by generation, how could it be, but we must in our very conception and birth, be the subjects of, and derive the whole contained in sin into our persons, as his descendants? It is expressly said of Adam, "That he lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth." Gen. v. 3. He could beget in no other image than his own. It was his sinful image he only could communicate and beget in the likeness of. For "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." It is wholly and everlastingly impossible: therefore it is not to be expected. This being the case, there cannot be the true knowledge and experience of it in the mind, and that which is contradictory to all this be expressed; for none of all the sons of men, be they saints, professors, or sinners of any sort or kind, can say personally, or individually, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin." No. They cannot. So that if any are so bold, and fool-hardy as thus to express themselves, let them be saints of the very highest attainments, and which may shine forth as stars of the first magnitude, they are liars. They neither know the truth of God; nor do they abide therein: nor are they acquainted with their own hearts: nor with what is passing continually in, and within themselves. If they did, it would be more likely they would cry out, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." No one that knows himself to be a sinner, but must be a self-deluded person to conceive himself to be without sin. He must be evidently so, who dares say openly, and declare it to others, that he is a sinless person, and that there is no sin in him: it matters not who he is, or what he is, either in his own eyes, or that of others; or what his walk and conversation may be, but he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. This is declared by our apostle in our text. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* The words are so expressly declared, we cannot mistake them; hence it must be positively a wilful lie: it must be self-delusion: it must be self-deception. We are chargeable with this, whoever we are, who dare affirm we are inherently without sin. Nay this is not all: we are charged here by the apostle, with giving the lie to the Holy Ghost, who here declares we are not without the inherency of it. It seems almost incredible any under any sort of a profession of Christ, should hold and maintain sinless perfection in themselves, seeing every man living is altogether vanity. And even the best of men, those who are real saints, it is said of them, and it belongs to them, such a declaration as this, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness and glory of man, as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower

thereof falleth away." That it should be so—to maintain such erroneous notion, is a manifest proof of the self-righteousness of the mind; or how otherwise can it be accounted for?—that a mind of itself, naturally sinful the whole essence of which is sin, should be sinless? Why it is a contradiction in terms. Indeed, Sirs, it is. Yet it even starts up in the minds of real saints at times: and it appears it does so, by their aiming to strive, and seek for that in themselves, from which they may draw their evidence of their being in Christ, instead of receiving Christ into their minds from the word of the gospel, and the revelation and testimony which God hath given therein concerning his Son. This is also another proof of the self-righteousness of the heart; the propensity of looking for evidences of grace and holiness in ourselves short of and separate from Christ: whereas, none of them are to be so found there. Whilst this does not amount to saying, we have no sin in us, yet it is from hence it originates. All those who ever were so bold as to declare this, it originated from the self-delusion of their own minds. Those who in these latter days, I mean since the apostles' times, have dared to give the lie to the Holy Ghost, who here says, by the apostle, in the name of the whole church of Christ, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*; have been found amongst the *Papists, Mystics, Quakers, and Wesleyans*. It is not worth my time to take notice of them: many of whom their lives have proved them most detestable sinners: some of them having been guilty of the most monstrous sins, and sinning. And what hath the very design of the devil himself been, in setting these on making any such a profession, so contrary to truth, and in direct opposition to the Holy Ghost? I reply, to set aside Christ, and to prove that men may be holy and good without Him—that it is all mistake that we need Christ as the scriptures say we do: or the Holy Spirit either—we can be holy without him—it is only for us to attend to such and such workings in our own minds, and by our own thoughts, workings, and exertions, we shall be inwardly holy; yea, far beyond what the gospel treats of. This is Satan's delusion: with which I may be bold to say, he has corrupted the minds of many under the profession of what is styled Christianity. And all to depreciate Christ, and to lead off wholly and entirely from Him: whilst he allows those to have the sound of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ in their mouths, and even to attribute great things to Him, and his Spirit, he at the same time, corrupts the mind, so as there is a secret and an entire renunciation of Christ, under all their confessions of Him, and the Holy Ghost. Some of these self-deceivers, and self-deluded ones, the Devil hath so inwardly wrought upon, as that they have seen visions, been filled with raptures, and so transported with ecstasies, as have had the appearance of the marvellous in them, and been taken for such. And all this the more effectually to deceive these self-righteous ones: all of whom have fancied themselves to be pure ones: holy ones: pure ones in their own nature: sinless ones. All which hath arisen from the self-righteousness of their own minds; wrought upon, stirred up, and drawn forth into act and exercise, by the devil; who turns himself into the appearance of an angel of light to suit them the better; and act the more powerfully and effectually within them, and upon them. It would be well for believers in Christ Jesus, never to be taken with accounts from any, and every quarter, given of the holiness, purity, walk, and conversation of any, who

are not savingly acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ. No. Nor with what may be recorded of such as these, any further than it is evidenced they walked as saved sinners, with the Lord, in an entire dependence on Him alone, to keep them from the evil of their own hearts, and from the sin which most easily beset them. In the true account of such, we shall have the grace of Christ realized in them, and towards them. Yet we shall not have persons without sin: but we shall have sin in them: and who needed Christ every moment, and for every thing; and who without Christ could do nothing. I proceed to my next and last particular.

4. To shew the Truth of God is not maintained by those, who say, *there is no sin in them*. It being contrary to the scriptures: to experience: and also to the confession of all saints recorded in the word: who have all been of one heart, and one soul, in the acknowledgment of this truth—that they were the subjects of sin. Then sin must be in them, or they could not be the subjects of it, so as to be inwardly defiled with it, and afflicted by it. Here then comes in our text, with all its weight and authority, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*.

If our asserting, *we have no sin in us*, is not to be supported by the holy scriptures of truth, then we do wrong to maintain an assertion which is not agreeable with them. Now that there is no part thereof, in which can be found, or by which it can be made to appear, sin is not in the saints of the Most High God, then to assert the contrary, must be to sin against them: it must be to deny the authority of them: consequently it must be, yea it is to sin against them—to assert that we are without sin, seeing they all declare and testify we are not. Not one saint is mentioned in them, but was a sinner. *Noah, Job, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel*, and all the saints had sin in them; or how came they to sin? I need not instance their particular acts of sinning: yet this I would observe, as their sins are not recorded for us to practice the same: so neither are they for us to insult their characters. Which I conceive is done, when we too much expose them, and beyond the truth also. I look on it as well spoken by one, who says, *Noah* is no where called a drunkard, nor *Lot* an incestuous person, nor *David* an adulterer, nor *Solomon* an idolater. And why are they not? It is not because they were not guilty of these sins: but it is because these were transient acts. They were not what they lived in and pursued. They only fell into them. And soon eluctuated out of them. Yet they could not have fallen by them, though but transiently, had it not been for the inherency of sin within them. *Noah* is called an Elder, and mentioned in the catalogue of believers, and *Lot* is styled just *Lot*, in the New Testament, and no notice taken of the sins they fell into. So are *David* and *Solomon*, without the least stigma on their persons. Should it not teach us to speak with reverence of those who are gone to heaven before us? I think so. It is expressly said in the scripture, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." Eccl. vii. 20. By a just man, is here meant, a justified man. One made righteous in the righteousness of Christ imputed unto Him, and that by the Lord himself. So it is just equivalent to the words of the apostle before us—That such as were cleansed in the blood of Christ from all sin, and had fellowship with the Father and the Son, yet they had sin in them, and would tell a wilful lie if they were to have said

otherwise. We have *Abraham* falling into the same sin, again and again; in the denial of his wife. He confesses himself before the Lord to be but dust and ashes. *Job* a saint high in God's estimation, of whom he is pleased to make his boast: yet he falls down before the majesty of *Jehovah*, and cries out, *Behold I am vile*. He saw and felt himself to be so, or he had not spoken the truth. What made him vile? the indwelling of sin in his nature. *Isaiah* cried out, of and concerning himself, *Woe is me! for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*. This had not been if he had been without sin. The apostle *James* tells us, even that great prophet *Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are*. No perfect character in the word of God, no not amongst all the saints. Some of them fell by sin: others cry out by reason of their inherent pollution: some confess their exceeding sinfulness before the Lord. And so it is with saints in the New Testament also. None could ever express the heartfelt bitterness of indwelling sin, more than holy *Paul* doth in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans. So that it is contrary to scripture, to experience, to what is recorded of real saints in the Bible, yea of the greatest of them, even of *Moses* and *Aaron* the saints of the Lord, to say any of them were without sin. Our text therefore is by all this confirmed to contain a most unquestionable truth in it. Which is this, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*. We must act contrary to our feelings, when we so think, or say. It cannot be that we exercise our judgment, or speak agreeably to what we are the subjects of, if we at any time say, we are free from the inherency of sin. Were we so to do, it is to contradict all recorded of the saints under the past, and present dispensation of grace: it is to discountenance all recited of their experiences in the written word. It is to sin against God's own testimony concerning this: which is absolutely to give the lie to the Holy Spirit. We deceive ourselves in so conceiving. It is to contradict matter of fact. "The just man falleth seven times a day, and riseth again." It is not our being kept from outward acts of sin, nor our being preserved from a course of sinning, frees us from being the subjects of sin. So that our being kept near the Lord, favoured with his most gracious presence, admitted into free, open, blessed fellowship with Him, and his Son Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth us from all sin,—this does not give us, at any time warrant to say, we are without sin in us: for the whole body of sin is in us, let our sense, feelings, and perceptions of it be as they may. I will acknowledge there are seasons, in which believers are so favoured in actual fellowship with God, and with such believing views of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are so swallowed up, as to forget the whole of sin, and to have no apprehensions of the same: yet this does not expel sin out of them. So in the very article of Death: it is the case of many saints to be so swallowed up in God, and Christ, as to forget themselves for evermore. Even let it be thus, yet it does not eradicate sin. Nothing but the actual separating stroke, which rends asunder the union of the soul and body, will ever free us from the indwelling of sin. It is well for us to know and rightly apprehend these truths from the word of God—to be taught all which appertains to the same, from the word, and by the Spirit—to be settled in the clear understanding thereof; as hereby we are enabled to walk in the belief of the same: we are also hereby preserved from many, very many mistakes.

It would be well here, if real saints did not attend too much one to the other, concerning these points, but be more concerned to know, how these subjects are stated by the Spirit of the living God in the written word. That should be our directory. We here should never lean to our own understandings: these are matters of too great importance. To the law, and to the testimony we should repair. We are all prone to self-deception: we should therefore give up our own judgments to the word of God, to be guided and influenced by the same. To have true scriptural views of sin, of the inbeing of sin in us, is of vast importance. To be delivered and discharged from the whole, in God's way, as stated in the everlasting gospel, and set forth therein, for our present benefit, and salvation, is of the uttermost importance to our minds. To know this by the inward teachings of the Holy Ghost, this only renders it effectual unto us: and by it we are saved from sinful guilty fears, and from innumerable errors. May the Lord the Holy Ghost bless what is here set before you, if he please. Amen.

SERMON IX.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.—1 JOHN I. 9.

THE apostolic writings were immediately from the Holy Ghost. They are the great bulwarks of the church of Christ. The very walls of salvation which surround the city of our God. They are ever to be treated with the utmost reverence. They are wholly Divine. They are immutable. The truths contained in them will outlast the world. They will remain in our world immutably the same; let our various apprehensions of them be what they may. And our greatest wisdom consists, in our giving up our minds to such right apprehensions of them, so far as the Spirit of God may be our teacher, as to understand them rightly, and properly for our advantage, and the Lord's glory. The apostle has been aiming to assist saints in their communion with the Lord, by removing from their minds, any, and every thing which seemed to them to obstruct the same. As they had sin in them, and therefore must have as the consequence of the same, their sinful, as well as their bodily, and natural infirmities; and as these would, and could not but produce in their minds, such effects as naturally followed from them; so he prepared a most noble remedy to ease their minds from all this, by saying to them, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Lest any mistake might arise in their minds, concerning the cleansing virtue of Christ's most precious blood, as if it actually so cleansed them, that they were never to expect to see, and feel any sin, or sinfulness in themselves any more, he immediately adds, "If we say that we have no

sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It will prove us to be self-deceivers so to say, or think. It being to be contradictors of what is recorded in the scriptures;—of what is recorded in them of all the saints. Their confessions of their own inherent sinfulness, and their experiences of the same, were full proofs to themselves, of sin being in them. We are the same inwardly, and in our fallen nature as they were: therefore to affirm of ourselves, that we have no sin in us, is to deceive ourselves—to contradict the scriptures—to tell a lie. And this is incompatible with truth. We ourselves, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, have sin in us. We are not without it: so neither are you. If so, it may be asked, do we not sometimes fall by it? most assuredly we do: it cannot be otherwise: for if it dwells in us, if we are the subjects of a body of sin and death, it cannot but be, we must sometimes be under the partial influences thereof. Therefore the apostle proposes a relief suited to this part of our spiritual distress. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* In these words, we have a most blessed direction how to act when in, and under sinful cases: so as to improve for ourselves that most blessed cordial proposed to us, by the apostle in these words, *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* As we go through our present text, this will be further elucidated. In speaking on these words of my text, I will propose to set before you the following particulars.

1. That the saints are at times, in various cases, and circumstances, in which the only remedy for them is, to confess their sins to the Lord. *If we confess our sins.*

2. How this is to be done.

3. The benefit of so doing. We have the forgiveness of them.

4. From whom we receive this forgiveness, and the faithfulness, and justice of God made known therein. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

5. The perception of this grace; which is thus expressed. *And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* O glorious grace! It is wholly and altogether from above. It is everlastingly divine. I will for the preserving the connexion quote the former words. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* The former words having been opened, it is the latter which now lie before me to explain; of which I have given my plan of division, and which by the Lord's blessing I am now to fill up. And my

1st. Particular is this—That the saints are at times, in various cases, and circumstances, in which the only remedy for them is, to confess their sins to the Lord. And this is here proposed by the apostle. *If we confess our sins.*

Whilst all saints are in an immutable state of grace, and the work of grace within them is invincible, and can never undergo the least change; yet the minds, the frames, the cases, and circumstances of saints are not so. If they have sin within them, they will feel it: yea, and this cannot be but they will be afflicted, and affected with it. They will in consequence of it, lose their sweet frames. Their free access to the Lord will be broken in upon: their minds will be distressed. Their

cases will be various. Sometimes the remembrance of sin will fill them with holy disquietude; sometimes circumstances in a providential way, will greatly agitate and embarrass their minds: sometimes they will be in a sinful case: their old besetting sin will overcome them: this will most sorely distress them. They will write bitter things against themselves: they will refuse to be comforted: yea, they will confound their case with their state, and say it may be, on such and such accounts, that their state is a sinful state. This cannot be. Their case may be a sinful one: they may have fallen into sin: they may have fallen by their iniquity, into that very sin, which most easily besets them: they may have the guilt of it on their consciences; the pollution of it on their minds. It cannot but bring with it great sorrow and grief into their hearts: yet all this is quite distinct from their being in a sinful state. No: none of the Lord's regenerated ones, can ever be any more in a sinful state: yet they may over and over, be in a sinful case, and sinful circumstances. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we consider, sin liveth and dwelleth in them—Satan hates them with implacable hatred—all the world out of Christ, are watching them, and every snare is laid in their way, and set before them, to turn and divert their minds from Christ. It is also to be considered, they cannot support themselves: inherent grace can do nothing for them. It is the Lord alone who can uphold them. He leaves them at times to themselves, in various, and a variety of particulars, to the intent they may know their own inherent sinfulness, and weaknesses, and find to a demonstration, that without Him they can do nothing. It is the Lord's will, they should bewail all this, and confess all this before Him, to the intent, that by their own words, they may more sensibly apprehend their own personal, and peculiar, and particular cases. And there are seasons, in which they find, the only remedy for them is, to go and confess their sin before the Lord. One of old said, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." Ps. xxxii. 3—6. There is no case more distressing to a real saint, than a sinful one. He cannot get relief from it, but by going to the Lord. He cannot have access unto the Lord, but he must open his griefs, and confess his sins, and sinfulness: and this is what the Lord himself will bring him to. Then he finds, as one of old did, and acknowledges the same, to the praise and glory of free grace; and says, "Thou, LORD, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." Ps. lxxxvi. 5. The Lord is pleased thus to address himself, saying unto them, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you:" they hearing his most blessed voice, rejoin, "Lord, to whom should we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." He says again to them, "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD, say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Such scriptures as these suit us, when we are in peculiar cases, and sinful ones, and distressing circumstances, arising from our inherent sinfulness and actual defilements. Such passages as have been quoted, had not suited the cases of those to whom the Lord speaks them, had not their cases been

sinful ones. They are on the Lord's part strong memorials of his grace : and on the part of those to whom they are spoken, they are very solemn testifications of their alienation in heart and affections from Him the fountain of living waters. One whose case was a sinful one, said in an entire agreement with all this, and with the whole of the subject now before us, " Iniquities prevail against me, as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Ps. lxxv. 3. This, as I conceive of it, fully proves, that saints are at times in various cases : in a variety of circumstances. They have various frames and feelings : it will not do to conceal them in their own minds. They must if they would be relieved, pour out their hearts before the Lord. If oppressed with sin, their own sin, and inward sinfulness, it is not sufficient to confess the same to one the other. There is no remedy for them, but to confess the same before the Lord. This is the only remedy : and it is exactly suited to their case. This is that which only can do them good. It is true the apostle *James* says, " Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." Yet most assuredly, he means matters which may arise against each other ; the best remedy for which is, to confess the fault, one saint, to another : so as they may both share equal blame, so far as each may deserve, and thus mutually settle the difference on both sides. Yet that is not the subject here before us : so that it hath no place here. It is our sinnings against the Lord, and our confessions of the same before Him are the subject. And also, that this is the only remedy for real saints, in some particular cases, and circumstances : as hereby the glory of God is advanced. I would here mention the words of *Joshua*, who said to one who had sinned in the thing accursed. " My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him." vii. 19. It appears to me, the whole contained in all this, is opened in the following scripture. " I acknowledge my transgressions : and my sin is ever before me : Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight ; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Ps. li. 3, 4. Sin as sin, is an act immediately against God. It is an offence against his majesty. A transgression of his law. He only can pardon it. To him we must therefore go for the pardon of it. Which brings me

2. To set forth how this is to be done. " If we confess our sins." Which implies we are so to do. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* But what comes before me, in this second head of discourse, as connected with the former, concerns the confession of sins. Of which it hath been before said, that there is no remedy for saints, in some particular cases, and circumstances, but by a confession of their sins. And this remedy is now to be spoken of. The question therefore is, how is this confession to be made, and unto whom is it to be done, so as that saints in their sinful cases, may receive relief. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* To confess sin is our act : the right confession must be in the faith of the everlasting efficacy of the propitiatory sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth us, now, and evermore from all sin. The confession is to be made to, and before the Divine Father. He is the Person intended in these words,

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. With respect to each of these particulars, I know not how I can set them forth more completely before you, than by reciting what was transacted by Aaron, and all the congregation of Israel, on the great day of Atonement. You have the account of it in the 16th chapter of Leviticus. It was to be a day of solemn fasting and humiliation. Aaron the High-Priest, who was the representative of the church, and a type of Christ also, was to act as follows. He was to lay both his hands on the head of the goat called the scape-goat, and confess over him, all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions of all the people of Israel. Not any thing belonging to their iniquities was to be omitted. I will quote the passage that you may see it for yourselves. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat." A very strong figure to set forth our Lord Jesus Christ, as the substitute of his people, to whom the Father transferred their sins, and all and every thing contained in them. So that He bore our sins in his own body on the Tree. It is the true knowledge of this, makes way for our true and proper confession of sin. It consists in our total renunciation of all we are, or ever shall be; acknowledging our exceeding sinfulness, and resting, pleading and confessing before the Divine Majesty, our expectation of receiving everlasting life, pardon, health, cure, and purity, for the whole contained in our inherent sinfulness, and every effect thereof, from the virtue contained in the one sacrifice of Jesus: which is so complete that He hath thereby for ever perfected the putting away of sin. Now as the High-Priest, and people, both in his own name, and in theirs also, as representing them, made a confession of their sins, iniquities, and transgressions in all their sins, before the Lord, and thus laid them on the head of the scape-goat, a type of our Lord Jesus Christ—so we New Testament saints, when we have fallen into sin, and have to lament our sinful cases, are to come before our heavenly Father, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and laying our hand on his head, as our true and only sacrifice, confess before the Divine Majesty, what, and wherein we have done amiss. And this is our only remedy. I have said, we are to lay our hand on his head. It is impossible for us so to do: the meaning is, we are to rest all our dependance on the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, before his Father and our Father, his God, and our God, for our everlasting life and salvation. I conceive no one can be more inherently defiled than myself: nor can have been more deeply sensible thereof, and in experience seen themselves more vile. And this is the way I have been often led in real spiritual practice—to come before the Lord—to place myself in his view—to beseech him to look on me in Christ;—to pardon me influentially and manifestatively, in the full knowledge he hath of the worth and perfection of Christ's everlastingly efficacious bloodshedding. And I have in the real exercise of faith trusted before Him, on the finished work of the God-Man, for everlasting health, cure, purity, and salvation from every spot and stain of sin, on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ: not looking at any thing good or bad in me; but looking wholly without me, to the free grace of the Divine Father; who hath revealed his Christ in the gospel, and set him forth therein, as the propitiation. Beloved, I have, as I conceive, opened the

apostles meaning unto you. We are to come in, and we are to come with, all our sinful cases to the Lord, our heavenly Father. We are to confess what we feel, and what we have done amiss before Him. We are to act thus, in the faith of Christ, his blood and righteousness. If we thus confess our sins, we may be sure we shall find this an all-sufficient remedy for us; let a sight and sense of the same be to our own apprehensions what they may, it is the blood of Jesus Christ, now, and evermore cleanseth us from all sin. And in a true spiritual conception of the same, we have a complete cure for all our wounds: yea, an infallible remedy for our every case, be it what it may. We coming before the Father, with all our inward wounds, and wants, confessing our inherent and actual sinfulness, this makes way for our being benefited in so doing: which

3. Is this—we have the forgiveness of them. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

This is what we approach Him for: and it is an inestimable blessing. The true apprehension of the same received into our minds, is present life and salvation to us. It is because we feel our present sinfulness, we confess it before the Father. Nothing can be a present cure and antidote for us, but his free and full forgiveness. It is recorded of Him, by one who had full proof of the truth of it in his own mind, and who therefore spoke it out, that He might be glorified thereby; “Thou, LORD, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.” Ps. lxxxvi. 5. It is in the realizing of divine mercy to our minds, we are deeply impressed with it: have real apprehensions of it: and are again and again, filled with holy admiration at the same. It was a great display of mercy on us, when the Lord first opened the eyes of our minds, to apprehend the salvation he had provided for us, in his beloved Son. We did not then first look to Him, but he looked on us, in Christ. And he having revealed Christ unto us, we were then led to look unto Him: and we found in Him everlasting life; with all the blessings of a free, finished, and an everlasting salvation. We then were most divinely overcome with it. We did not expect to have ever felt and found that in ourselves, which we now do, and have since done. We need Christ to the present moment: we shall need Him the next: we shall need Him in our last moments: nor shall we need Him then, more than we do now. It is our various and sinful cases prove the truth of this to our minds. We are never without sin: we have never more, nor less, the inherency of it in our fallen natures. It is true we see, and feel its influence and operation within us, more at one time than the other: yet as it respects the inbeing of it in us, this is always one and the same. We scarce believe this. To prevent our mistakes concerning it, the apostle says, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* But if we have no sin in us, if we never commit sins, we cannot confess them. It follows that the Lord’s people have sins to confess. It must therefore be that they are sensibly affected, and afflicted with them; or, this had never been prescribed as a true and proper remedy for them—to go to the Lord and confess them. Nor would the benefit consequent thereon have been thus freely and fully pronounced—the forgiveness of them. *If we confess our sins, he is*

faithful and just to forgive us our sins. An old Puritan divine, *Mr. Bridge*, expresses himself on our present subject thus. "*God*, (says he,) *hath set up a Pardoning-office.*" It is really so. And any of those who are believers in Christ may repair to it. His title is a *God of Pardons*. See the margin to these words, "*Thou art a God ready to forgive.*" Neh. ix. 17. To this, sinners, even such as have tasted that the Lord is gracious, may repair: they may give in their bills: they may confess their sins: they may particularly specify what they are: and say, each for himself, I have sinned. They will on this receive the following answer. "I will heal your backslidings. I will love you freely. For mine anger is turned away from you." Sometimes it will be individually to one of these, *Thy sins which are many, are forgiven thee. Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace.* This is all, and evidentially true, in the real cases, experiences, and minds of many of the Lord's beloved: who find the truth of this in their minds, and can set their seals to the truth hereof. And it serves to set the apostles words before them, in a true point of view. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* This is the blessed fruit which follows on the confession of sins: of our sins before the Lord. We his children, going, and confessing before Him, our present sin, guilt, and defilement, and pleading the Person, blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, are discharged in our minds, by his royal free and sovereign pardon: which he is pleased to give us a renewed sense and apprehension of, so as that we enjoy an inward sense thereof, rejoice in him, and bless him for the same: saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." We are hereby sometimes so refreshed in such experiences as these, of the forgiving grace of our heavenly Father, as to be lifted up in love to, and communion with Him, more than we were, when he first manifested himself in Christ Jesus unto us: and no marvel, because it is such a proof to us, that he delighteth in mercy, as makes way for a more full reception into our minds, of what he saith—"With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer." It is well then for us, to come before our heavenly Father, in the Person, Name, blood and righteousness of his coequal Son, with all our fresh cases, wounds, sins, and miseries: to confess them: to sue out a fresh pardon for them: and never to forget this is our only remedy. *If we confess our sins*, this is what will follow thereon. *He will forgive us our sins.* It is but to ask, and we shall receive the same. This is the gospel way for us to be discharged. It is the present way for us to obtain relief for our present, and particular cases. It is agreeable with what the Lord saith, and puts us upon in the following words, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified." Isa. xliii. 25, 26. This leads me

4. To consider more particularly from whom we receive this forgiveness, and the faithfulness and justice of God, made known therein, and thereby. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

As the benefit, saints reap, by confessing their sins before the Lord, in the way and manner as hath been expressed, as agreeable with the words of our present text, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and*

just to forgive us our sins, hath been opened; so we are now to consider Him from whom this blessing comes—who is said to be *faithful and just*. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. This is the Divine Father. It is before Him we confess our sins. It is to Him we apply for the pardon of them. It is *He* who hath been included in the text, and throughout the whole context: of whom it is here said, *If we confess our sins*, God, even He who “is light, and in whom is no darkness at all,” of whom it hath been declared, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” It is even *He*, of whom it is here said, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. So that the whole of this grace here thus divinely expressed, flows from the covenant transactions between the Father, and the Son. Hence *Mr. Romaine* once said, in my hearing, “I do not,” said he, “know any scripture so calculated to settle the peace of conscience, as this, *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*.” It is an act of justice in God to pardon the sins of his people, as truly as it is an act of mercy. I would here ask, whom is God just unto? In answer to which question I would reply, to his Son Jesus Christ: and to his people also. In the everlasting council and covenant, the Father promised the glorious Surety and Representative of the elect, that if he would “make his soul an offering for sin, He should see his seed, the travail of his soul, and the pleasure of the LORD should prosper in his hand.” It was also promised to Messiah, in the same everlasting covenant, that the Father would be ever mindful of his covenant to, and with Him; and to his seed also. He says, “My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips, once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.” Ps. lxxxix. 28—37. You have here, the Father’s covenant faithfulness to his Son, the glorious Mediator thereof: and to his seed, and saints also. The Father is not only merciful in the pardon of our sins, and in the revelation and manifestation of the same to us, on our confession of them, unto, and before Him; but he is just also. It is with Him an act of justice, as truly as it is in Him an act of mercy. Our sins having been laid on Christ; they have thereby been removed from our persons; and also out of the sight of law and justice: and all this upon the footing of the oblation of the worthy Lamb. The Father’s law having been hereby magnified, his justice satisfied, his holiness most gloriously displayed, and He having accepted the Mediator, and his most glorious work of mediation, He is just, and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus. He therefore says, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” And again, “I will cleanse them from

all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me, and will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me." Jer. xxxi. 34., and xxxiii. 8. This is the open display of the exceeding riches of his grace : such, as when received into the renewed and spiritual mind, by the power of the Holy Ghost, cannot but be very relieving, and efficacious to the hearts of the people of God. Thus I have endeavoured to open to you these words, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*, in a manifestative and influential way, which most assuredly, and evidently, is the meaning of the apostle here. Otherwise, as it respects pardon of sin, it is an act of the Divine mind. It was solemnly declared over and over, under the Old Testament dispensation. It was fully expressed when our Lord made peace by the blood of his cross. It was most freely and fully published by the apostles, in their preaching the everlasting gospel, as it had been by all the prophets before them. Hence *Peter* says, "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth on him, shall receive remission of sins." Acts x. 43. And *Paul* says, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Acts xiii. 38. He also writing to the saints at *Colosse* speaks to them of this forgiveness of sins, in the past tense. "Having forgiven you all trespasses," ch. ii. 13. It is the manifestation of it to the mind is what is intended in the scriptures cited, and also in the text before us. And, as the Lord's called ones, going to our heavenly Father, with our sins, wounds, disease, and maladies, He most graciously compassionates us. And by creating such conceptions in our renewed minds, how he stands related to us, as our Father in Christ Jesus ; that he hath ever in view and remembrance, the everlasting covenant, which hath been fulfilled, ratified, and sealed with the blood of his Son, He is pleased to shine upon us in Him. Our heavenly Father thus manifests, and makes known afresh his pardon and forgiveness to our minds. In so exercising himself towards us, He proves himself to be what he is, *faithful and just*. He is hereby faithful to his Son. He is just in the fulfilment of his promise unto Him ; and He is just and faithful to us in Him, in exercising himself towards us, agreeable with his covenant relation to us, and his promises of grace, which are set before us, in his most holy word. And this is the substance of what is expressed, and set before us, in these words ; which are designed as a means of consolation. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*. It is the knowledge of this, is to support us under all the miseries, and infirmities, which cannot but arise, from the inherency of sin in us. I come

5. To notice the perception of this grace, in the spiritual mind, which is thus expressed. *And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*.

We have access to the divine Father, spiritually and mentally. We come before Him with our complaints : we deeply bewail what we are in our fallen nature : we confess before Him the prevalency of sin : we express what our cases are : we recite before Him, what the glorious Mediator hath been, and done, and completed. This is performed under and by the inward energy of the Holy Ghost within us. The Father is pleased to open our minds, and let in upon them, such blessed concep-

tions of our precious Lord Jesus, as carry us before we are aware, from all our sins, and miseries. He gives us such clear views of the eternal dignity of the Person of Christ, as fills us with holy admiration. He admits us to entertain such thoughts of the everlasting worth and perfection of his righteousness and offering, as lead us off entirely from ourselves : and off from sin too : so as that we clearly apprehend in our own minds, the value and virtue of Christ's most precious blood : by means of which we have the Lord Jesus Christ so inwardly made known to us, by the secret and imperceptible operation of the Holy Ghost, within us, and upon us, that we see ourselves to be in the sight of our heavenly Father, clean from all sin in the blood of the Lamb. And thus the divine Father is pleased to manifest, and evidence to us, the free and full forgiveness of our sins : of our past, and present sinfulness, which we have been bewailing before Him : and to give us fresh light into this mystery of grace, that he cleanseth us from all unrighteousness, in the blood and righteousness of his Son ; which he having once for all imputed unto us, he is continually reiterating his vast mind on. And by the renewing the thoughts of, in ours, we enjoy and feel the blessed effects of. I can say, I know the truth of all this, in my own case, and in my own mind. Yet it may be, I may not have stated it so as to convey the subject fully to your minds. I must say this, what I know most of in these important, personal, and experimental particulars, I can say the least of. Not for want of the true knowledge of them, but for want of words in which to clothe them. May the Lord bless what is here set before you, and give you the true knowledge of it. Amen.

SERMON X.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.—1 JOHN i. 10.

THE subject of personal communion with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, is deep, and most truly sublime. It proceeds from the knowledge of the Person of Christ, God-Man, and of the Father in Him. It was the will of the Eternal Spirit, that this Apostle should write on it. He being in a peculiar manner qualified for the same. He doth so as to make the same clear and plain. So as that he which runs may read. He shews it is the greatest fruit of everlasting love, of the love which the Three divine Persons in the one boundless and ineffable Essence, have in their infinite mind towards the Elect. The manifestation of which is begun on earth. They know it, believe it, and have the enjoyment of it now. It will be continued in Heaven. In the which, the uttermost manifestation of the blessedness contained therein, will be made known to the saints, agreeable to their enlightened faculties. This great and wonderful expression of grace, concerning fellowship with the

Father and the Son, which had been, and still was enjoyed by the apostles, it being an increase of blessedness to them, the apostle informs the saints of, that they enjoying the same, the joy on both sides might be increased. He then aims to remove every thing which might be an interruption on either side, to this most blessed fellowship. This is stated, and it is also removed. It was the natural, or sinful infirmities the saints were each, and every one of them the subjects of, which could not but be considered by them, as obstructions to this most holy, and blessed fellowship; yet there was a most blessed provision made for the same, in the one everlastingly efficacious sacrifice of the holy and immaculate Lamb. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It was a constant course of sinning, which was full proof that such and such, let their profession, and pretensions be what they might, had no lot nor part in this inestimable favour. To the intent the whole purity contained in this invaluable subject might be preserved and maintained, the apostle adds. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In going through the two former verses, it has been stated, that none of the saints are without sin. They have all, and each of them, their inward constitutional sin, and inherent sinfulness. It is the one and common case, of each, and all of them. They all know in and for themselves, the plague of their own hearts. It hath also been expressed, the one only remedy for them—it is to confess their sins to their heavenly Father. He will deal with them agreeably with the everlasting covenant. He will be gracious and full of compassion. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He will do this, as an act of justice, as it also is an act of mercy. He will create in their minds fresh apprehensions, and open by the teachings of the Holy Ghost, such views of the everlasting perfection of his Son's righteousness and blood, and let in such influences of the same on their minds, as will revive them: and thereby they will be blessed with fresh thoughts of the perpetual virtue and efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. Then the apostle closes his present discourse thus. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* This terminates his present subject. He here alters his terms: he before had been speaking of the inherency of sin. This denied, constituted such persons liars. They must be self deceivers. They were destitute of the truth. If sin had being in believers, it must be as the consequence thereof, that real saints must in some cases, be under its corrupting influences, and fall thereby. We cannot confess our sins, if we have none to confess. It is allowed by the apostle, saints have their falls, and actually commit sins. They as considered in Christ, are without all sin. As in themselves, and so long as continued in a time state, they have the whole essence of sin within them, and need the virtue of Christ's sacrifice continually. In our text the apostle says, *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him (i.e. God) a liar, and his word is not in us.* I will aim with the Lord's assistance to open, and set forth the substance of what is contained in the words of my present text thus:—

1. The apostle's assertion, which is positive. He says that they had

sinned. It was a past act which they could not deny. *If we say that we have not sinned.*

2. What follows on the denial of this. It makes God a liar. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him (i.e. God) a liar.*

3. I will shew in, and by what way we make God a liar.

4. By such an assertion, that we have not sinned, it most evidently appears, that the word of God is not in us. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* Of these in their order. I begin

1. With the apostle's assertion, which is positive. It includes himself, with all that "call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs, and ours." *If we say that we have not sinned.*—We who are on the Lord's side, who have real and blessed fellowship with the Father, and the Son, we should tell a lie in so saying. It is well for us to know what sin is. That it is a mental act. That it wholly and actually originates and springs from its inherency in us. This is the very spring and root of all actual corruption. Inherent sin is a self-acting principle. It is always in act whether we perceive it or not. So that our continued sins, even such of the Lord's people as are most, and best kept from actual falls into actual sin, are above and beyond all conception. It is well for us, the Lord God hath set bounds to our sinnings. That those, and Christ's sacrifice are so commensurate, as that we cannot exceed and go beyond the virtue of his blood. Some, sin most in thought; it is chiefly mentally. Others, by words, the expression of bad tempers, and sometimes by outward corruptions. It is in its proper place, a real blessing to know what sin is. To know the nature of it. To see the exceeding sinfulness of it. And to abstain from all appearances of evil. Sin as it really is, can only be seen in the light of God's word, and Spirit. Such as are most spiritually illuminated into the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and have the most intimate fellowship with Him, are the only persons who see sin properly; yet all their views of it, and real hatred against it, and, in every particular act, and out breaking of it, do not deliver them from the inherency of it, nor from its sinful influences through which at times they fall by it. Nor does their fellowship with God, and Christ, through the Spirit, save them, so as that they do not fall by their own particular besetting sin over and over again. No saint, let him be who, or what he may, is so saved from his constitutional, and besetting sin, as he may conceive. Some will have it, we are never overcome by the same sins, after conversion, that we were before; but this is a real mistake. If we are overcome at all, it must be by the same. It must proceed from the same cause. And that is the sin which dwelleth in us. Whilst we cannot enter into any hearts but our own, yet most assuredly it must be so, that no saint can sin any other way than he has heretofore. None of us, I say, are saved from sin, so much as we conceive. We are saved from a state of sin, and sinfulness. We are also saved from an outward gross way of sin, and sinfulness. Yet we are not always saved from cursed and carnal affections. Nor from expressions and dispositions which are evidences of our inward sinfulness. Whilst all this is our own, personally and particularly, and each heart knoweth its own bitterness, and it is well it is so; yet so it is, we are taught by the Holy Spirit in the word, not to deny the truth of this. It is not here, "If we say that we have no sin," but it is, *If we say that we have not sinned,*

we give God himself the lie. We must not deny this. Every one of us sins, when, it may be, we perceive it not. It may be, we who are the Lord's, and are now here before Him, may have been favoured with some most blessed communion with Him, and our hearts and affections may have been raised heavenward; yet even such of us, cannot say, *We have not sinned*. No. Nor can we say we have not sinned this morning. No. That we cannot. How is it possible we should? seeing we have at all times within us the same root from whence all evil originates. We have then the close of the apostle's subject concerning sin, and its influence in, and on the saints. It is not only in them, but they feel and are afflicted with it, and at times influenced by it. A remedy for which he prescribed: and for their spiritual support, he said, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The justness of God in so doing, as it respected his truth to himself, to Christ, to saints as one in Him, and with Him, is expressed to sustain the faith of saints, and to increase, and confirm their faith and hope in the Lord. He then says, as having finished what he had expressed in the two foregoing verses, *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*. So that it fully appears, by writing these three last verses of this chapter together, the apostle would have them know the whole of sin as it concerned them: in its inbeing in them: in its effects within and upon them: in its continuation, and their lapses thereby. He would have them know, and also acknowledge the same, thereby leading them to understand how deeply they were concerned in this subject; which may most truly be considered as a mean of leading them into further and increasing views of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose blood cleanseth now and for ever, all the holy brethren from all sin. To walk in sin, and at the same time to have fellowship with God, this he will not admit of. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness;" this is to utter a lie. If any say that we have no sin, this he will by no means admit of: but declares all such are liars. That such as are in Christ, who hear his voice, and have fellowship with Him, are not free from falls into sin, he admits of: otherwise he had never said, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Saints are not so free from partial falls into sin, as some, it may be then conceived: and it may be as some conceive also in our day. Sin is sin in saints, as truly as it is in sinners; or, why should saints so deeply lament it as they do? If they did not fall by it, they would not daily need manifestative pardons for the same. To close the whole, therefore, of his discourse, he says, *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*. He is not here contented to say, we have sin in us, therefore we may, must naturally fall by it on some occasions; neither is he contented to say, all this is through the infirmity of the flesh; but he will express himself in the strongest terms: he therefore uses the word *sinned*. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*. If we say, we have not transgressed the law of God since we knew Christ, and have been favoured with real fellowship with Him, and with the Father in Him, we make God himself a liar, in so saying. I proceed to my next particular, which is

2. To observe what follows upon a denial of the positive assertion

of the apostle—It is to make God a liar. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him* (i. e. God, who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all) *a liar*.

I conceive, we are very greatly mistaken, concerning what we style actual sin. We generally speak on this subject, as if what hath been only mental, does not come under the term of actual sin: yet it should be known, that what is only mental, or in the mind, has its existence there so really, that it actually defiles the mind. It must, therefore, in the sight of the Lord be actual sin. Now if it be thus, and if this be but allowed, then this question comes in—"Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" and if none can, then it follows, there is no one can come forward and say, I have not sinned. No. Not one single saint, of all the number of them which may at any time exist in our world. If we are not without sin inherently, then we are not without sin influentially. If it be so, then we are not, we cannot be without falls into it: which if we were, there could be no need of our confession and humiliation before the Lord. Then we could not stand in need of a reiteration of the virtue of the blood of Christ to our minds. We must give up the verse going before our present text altogether, if we have not sinned. We no longer need the propitiatory virtue of Christ's blood and righteousness, if we have not sinned. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Whilst looking at, and living on the Lord Jesus Christ will keep us from ten thousand evils and sins; yet let this be ever so blessedly the case, it will never so completely keep any one of the Lord's beloved ones, that he shall not sin, either in thought, word, or deed. No. "There is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good, and sinneth not." This is equal with our text. *If we say that we have not sinned*. The apostle speaks here for himself, and all the apostles. If I, or they say that we have not sinned: if any of the saints, who have fellowship with us, and with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ: if we who have sin in us, and have confessed the same before the Lord, and have had in our own souls, a real sense and apprehension in our own minds, of the virtue of the most precious bloodshedding of Jesus Christ, as cleansing us from all sin—should any of us say, that we have not sinned; we should tell lies. It would, in effect, be to contradict the word of God, which declares "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It would be full and present proof against us, that we do not allow his word to be true: we should sin against our own consciences: we should contradict our own experiences of these matters. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*. If we saints, says John, let our age, and state in christianity be what it may, say that we have not sinned, we do not utter truth. We should be false witnesses for God, and before Him, were we to assert this. We, says the apostle, who walk in the light, and have personal communion with Him, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and who are cleansed before the Lord, through his most precious bloodshedding, yet we are not without the very present inherency of sin: we have all sinfulness in our fallen natures: we who actually walk with God in holy and blessed communion with Him, are this moment subject to fall and slide into sin. We do so: our confession of sin is the proof of this. In so doing, he is pleased to make known in us, the present and everlasting

virtue, worth, and efficacy of his Son's most perfect offering of himself: so as that we know in our own souls, that we are clean from all sin before Him: yet were any of us to say, that we have not sinned, since we had the knowledge and enjoyment of these most blessed and divine truths in our souls, we should lie to God, and against him. And so, men and brethren, should we do also, were we to say, that we have not sinned since we knew the Lord. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

3. I will shew, in and by what way, *we make God a liar*, in saying, *we have not sinned.*

God is Truth itself. He is Holiness itself. We cannot in a certain sense make God a liar, any more than we can mar the holiness and purity of the Divine Essence. All the sin and sinfulness of men and devils, cannot cast the least blemish on the Divine Majesty: neither can all the errors which are amongst the sons of men make the God of Truth a liar. No. God is immutably holy. He is immutably true. So is his word, and all revealed of Him, and concerning Him in the scriptures of Truth. They may be said to be true as God is true, because they contain the sacred and revealed will of God. They are the testimonials of his mind and will. They very especially concern, and respect his church and people in Christ Jesus: so that they should be very carefully attended unto by all the called of God in Christ Jesus. Such, therefore, as receive, believe, and profess any thing contrary to what is contained in them, and therewith, and thereby confront any sacred assertion in the divine revelation, may be said to give God the lie; seeing the whole volume of inspiration was given by Him. It is an apostolic assertion which is here before us: *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar*: because it is fully set forth in the Book of God, that all men sinned in Adam—that we are all the subjects of the fall—that we are all one and the same subjects of sin and corruption—that it belongs to all the elect throughout the world, what the prophet *Isaiah* spoke in their name and his own, “all we like sheep have gone astray.” Now if we have once gone astray, though the blood of Christ atones, it does not make our impure nature clean; i. e. old Adam nature is still in its essential impurity felt: and if it is perfectly unclean, and if that which is born of the flesh is flesh, how can we say at any time, we are, in our selves, without sin: or how can we, with the inherency of sin in us, at any time say, we have not sinned. Now it being so expressly contrary to the word of God; it is to make God a liar. A most tremendous sin. One would have at once thought none under a profession of the gospel should have ever needed to be put on their guard against it: yet the words before us are spoken to saints, as well as to all under an outward visible profession. If we saints say that we have not sinned, we give the God of truth the lie. It is in our professing what is contrary to the truth of the Lord's most holy word, we give God the lie. The prophet, speaking for the whole church and himself, says, “we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” He is here speaking of saints: of real saints: and of himself also. Then if it was so, these persons could never say, *we have not sinned*: and if we say, we cannot deny this, then we are true speakers; but if we say *we have not sinned*, it would be a direct contradiction to this truth. Therefore as it is contained in the Book of God, and therein witnessed as the truth by the Holy Spirit

of God, to deny this to be the truth, is to make the God of truth a liar. If we, any of the saints, say, *we have not sinned, we make God a liar.* Even Him, who is "light, and in whom there is no darkness at all." It most assuredly strikes at the very root of all the self-righteousness in our fallen natures. Therefore these words should not be overlooked by us, who are on the Lord's side, and who are disposed to say, there is no good in our fallen natures; for we cannot but confess when we do not actually perceive the cursed workings and operations of the same, we are frequently led to think better of ourselves than we ought. I would therefore consider these words, as admirably suited to bring down every high thought within us; to lead us at all times to acknowledge the exceeding sinfulness of sin: and thereby to freely acknowledge how seldom it is, we live out of ourselves, and off from ourselves, on the Lord Jesus Christ, independently of any thing in ourselves. In all we do, we sin in one instance or other. We sinned before we knew Christ: we have done so since we knew Him. And it comes to pass, that at times, when we have been most refreshed with his life-giving presence, and had more than ordinary communion with Him, and some peculiar outgoings of heart and affections after him, we have most suddenly and unexpectedly fallen into sin. I must confess I have had the bitter experience of this. Such of the Lord's as have not, are greatly indebted to the Divine favour for not being thus and thus a prey to their own inward corruptions, the snares of the devil, and his hellish blasts, whereby he stirs up inward corruptions. We most assuredly all find and perceive, that we are one moment all alive to Christ: the next all death to him. Surely we do find we are to our shame and confusion of face, tired of holding fellowship with him. We want to be unbent: to have our thoughts exercised on this, that, and the other: what is all this but going off Christ? what is all this but sinning against God in Christ? what does all this prove, but that we have sinned? So that at times we cannot but confess it, and say, as it respects our original apostacy, our inherent, and actual apostacy of mind from the Lord, and the awful proofs we have, and in one instance or other daily and continually give of the same, "the crown is fallen from our head, woe unto us, for we have sinned." We must tell a lie therefore, if we, let us be real saints, yea, if saints of the highest advancement in the school of Christ, if we say that we have not sinned. Our text declares it: we cannot deny the charge. The Lord give us proper views of it, that we may be humbled for the same. May we be truly sensible of what another apostle says, "In many things we offend all." I might add, in a variety of ways: and many a time imperceptible to ourselves. In fact it must be so, as every thing which issues from our nature selves, even though it should wear a religious appearance, must be essentially corrupt. The fountain being wholly corrupted, all which flows from it must be corrupt also. Our Lord says, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." All, therefore, which issues from the one, is wholly like the mind from whence it issues; so that sin is not grace, nor grace sin. They are both in the regenerate person, yet will they never coalesce. Hence it is peculiar to them who are born of the Spirit, and to them alone, to know that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that (says the apostle,) ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal. v.

17: so that none can say, I have not sinned. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar*, by contradicting his truth, and his word is not in us—If we so say. This brings me to my last particular,

4. That by uttering such a declaration, and giving out such an assertion, that *we have not sinned*, it most evidently appears, that the word of God is not in us. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* This is to sin immediately against the Divine Majesty in the Person of the Father; even him who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. His Word, his Truth can have no place in our hearts if we so declare, and assert of, and concerning ourselves. If it had, we could not so say. When the written and revealed will and word of God dwelleth in us, we speak the truth in Christ, and lie not. We acknowledge ourselves to be, what we are therein declared to be; and that the salvation revealed in the same written word, suits us as sinners, and because we are sinners, and shall continue to be such in ourselves to the last moment of our lives. It would be a full evidence against us, that God's truth, the word in which a clear account is given both of sin, and salvation is not in us, were we in direct opposition to the same, to say, *that we have not sinned.* Every ordinance under the Old Testament dispensation was full proof that sin was in the saints: that they could not save themselves in whole, or in part from it. They were therefore directed to the use and observations of such washings, sacrifices, sprinklings, and purifications for cleansing, as were so many memorials of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was to make them clean from all their sin before the Lord, by the one offering of Himself. Now had these persons been without sin, if they had not sinned; then to provide means for their purification, could never have entered into the mind and will of God, for they would have been needless: so also had any made use of these, it would have been to contradict the very design of them. If a man had not sinned, he could have no need of the sacrifice of Christ, nor of the memorials thereof; yet as it would have been a lie then, in any one's mouth, to say, I have not sinned, so it would have been to make the God of Truth a liar, to have expressed such a sentence. In like manner under our present dispensation of the same everlasting gospel, it is contrary to the very revelation of grace declared in, and by it, to say, I have not sinned. It being the very essence of it, that "it is a true and faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." If they had not sinned, they had not been sinners: therefore if we say we have not sinned, we give God's word the lie: and we give full proof that his Truth is not in us. It is also to sin against the very solemn institutions of the Lord and Saviour. What is baptism, and the supper of the Lord for? are they not sacred records of the Person, Sufferings, Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ: and of the everlasting efficacy of his one expiatory offering? surely they are. Now where would there be any use, to put us in continual remembrance of the most precious bloodshedding of our Lord Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all sin, were we not inherently sinful? If we never sinned, after having received the atonement of Christ, what need was there for these ordinances? are we not directed by, and in the use of them, to Christ, and what he hath done for us as sinners? And is it not the view and appre-

hension of his having died for such as we are, that give us encouragement to rest wholly in him for life and salvation? Then it is plainly to sin against all this to say, I have not sinned. By such an assertion it most fully appears, that the word of God is not in us: that the Truth of God is not in us. By asserting *we have not sinned*, it fully appears the word of God is not in us: we are not speaking agreeably with it. Neither can Christ the Essential Word of God, who liveth and abideth for ever, and who liveth in the hearts of his renewed and beloved, and called people, by his word, and Spirit, be in such as say, *we have not sinned*. For by such an assertion, we contradict God's testimony given of us, in the written word. And thus, in a most awful way and manner, we give the God of Truth the lie. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* Let us learn from hence, to speak at all times of ourselves, and cases, agreeable with the word of God: this will be for our own real profit, and for the Lord's praise. Let us never want to force ourselves to be what we are not: it will do us no good. We shall never get above sin, but as we are looking unto Christ. We shall never be in ourselves, but what we now are, so long as we are in this present state. All we want is to see and apprehend how most exactly we are suited to Christ, and how most exactly he suits us. Then to walk in the practical belief of our sinnership, and his Saviourship, this will make way for us to gain an increasing knowledge of our most precious Lord Jesus, and gain a blessed sense of our heavenly Father's love towards us in him. Let us never attempt to speak after others. Many saints are, and ever will be strangers to the views and attainments of other saints. And we, though far below them in knowledge and experience, want to say just as they and others do: this is spiritual pride: this is to commit sin: we sometimes hereby tell lies for God. We sin against the truth, and the word of God, by declaring that it is so and so with us: when at present we are not arrived at such an experience: nor have gained such and such clear full views of the Father's everlasting love to our persons in Christ, as by our own expressions we bolt out, and would have others conceive concerning us. We are never better than when we are contented with what the Lord hath taught us, and made clear and plain to us, and given us to receive from his own word. This is that teaching which makes the simple wise unto salvation, by faith which is in Christ Jesus. It is one fruit of divine teaching to have low thoughts of ourselves, and all we are in ourselves, whilst we are led to have high thoughts of God, and of his Christ; and prize communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, as the greatest blessing we can possibly enjoy. This will lead us to avoid every thing which would be a means of taking off our hearts from this most blessed fellowship with God, and his Son Jesus Christ. Our apostle has been doing this for us, saying, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* May the Lord the Holy Spirit be pleased to give a clear knowledge of his most holy will, in the scriptures which have been set before us. He only can to any good purpose: and as they all serve in a various way, to disengage the mind from every entanglement which may arise from wrong views of sin, and grace, and of what does, and of what does

not take off, and interrupt our communion with the Lord, may He therefore be so our teacher, as to make us profitably acquainted with the subject. Grant this, thou Holy Inspirer of all scripture. Amen.

SERMON XI.

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.—1 JOHN ii. 1.

THE apostle here begins, as I conceive, another part of this most important, and interesting subject, which concerns all believers in Christ Jesus; so as they may have the true knowledge how their minds may be fully relieved from guilt and distress, by faith in the blood of Christ, and proceed on in holy fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. To state this most exactly, none was so qualified as our apostle. He says all which was absolutely necessary on it. He says not too much of sin: nor too little. He aims to remove the guilt of it from the mind in a right gospel way. His intent in so doing is to glorify the Lord—to exalt Christ—to do good to real saints—to shew them how they were to persevere in a holy walk, and thus proceed perfecting holiness in the fear of God. He knew this truth must at all times prevail with them, or they could not attain to a steady walk with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, viz. they must receive this truth into their minds which he had before delivered unto them, that the blood of Jesus Christ was their everlasting purity: that they were washed in it: justified, and sanctified, and reconciled, and brought nigh unto God by it: that they were in the sight of God, everlastingly pure and clean from all sin. In the true knowledge and full belief of this, they were to have, and they hereby only could have free access to the Father, and be preserved from every evil which might lead them off from walking before the Lord unto all well pleasing. He had, in the three last verses of the former chapter, insisted on the inherency of sin in the saints. He prescribed a remedy for them, when at any time they were overcome by it. He declared if any of them were to say they had not sinned, this was to make God a liar: and here he proposes a most powerful cordial, to bear up their minds, in the worst case they could possibly be in. If they committed sin, it would be the worst thing which could befall them this side glory. He therefore says, *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.* I have written as I have, to prevent your falling by sin: to prevent your falls into sin; yet as no man liveth and sinneth not; I cannot suppose you will live so as never to sin. I know the guilt which will be brought into your minds thereby: and the grief it will be the occasion of introducing into your hearts. I know what accusations the devil will also bring in against you, when at any time you fall into sin. With these views of the subject I write unto you. My aim is to prevent your sinning:

to keep you from it : at the same time, well knowing the inward power and influence of sin, and your inability to stand one single moment, by any power of your own, and knowing also the Lord himself may leave you to your wills in the hour of temptation, as he did his beloved *Peter* ; I write to inform you, should any of you, who have fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth us from all sin ; should any one of us sin, *we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : And he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* I have here put all these three verses together, because they belong to one and the same subject ; yet in my explaining them, I shall make a distinct sermon of each. My present text contains present and immediate relief, for the worst which can ever happen unto us. There is no evil in the world but sin : and it is in us : we all more or less fall by it. On the consideration of this, the apostle gives the information, that we have an advocate who pleads on our behalf. He had before declared that *the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* Thus he presented sin and Christ's blood together, declaring, how the one exceeds, transcends, and overcomes the other. So in our text, he brings sin and Christ close together : the one as the disease, the other as the Physician ; so that the one hath no sooner given the wound, but the other is present to heal it. This most certainly is the outline of the text, which contains a variety of glorious particulars. Which I will endeavour to open and explain in the following method and order.

1. I will take notice of the words, by which the apostle addresses the saints to whom he writes, together with his end in writing unto them. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

2. What he writes to them. It is concerning what very greatly interested them to know and believe. It was also concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The adversary against whom Christ pleads is Satan. The clients for whom he pleads are saints. The Person before whom he pleads, and with whom he pleads, is the Father. It is in consequence of our sin committed, Christ pleads on our behalf. He does not plead on the behalf of sin ; nor does he plead for it. No. It is on the behalf of his people, when they are fallen by it. So that neither the words, nor doctrine of our text, contain the least encouragement for sin.

3. Christ is a *righteous Advocate.* Therefore his plea on the behalf of his sinning people, cannot but be successful. So that they need not despair. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

4. How we receive the benefit of this into our minds. This is by the Holy Ghost : who is styled *Advocate* by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, in these words, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John xiv. 26. The learned say the word *Comforter* in this verse, is *Advocate*, in the *Greek*. He, to relieve us from the suggestions of Satan, of the world, and our own sinful hearts, pleads the cause of Christ in our consciences, and enthrones Him there. He also "maketh inter-

cession for us with groaning, which cannot be uttered." See Rom. viii. 26. May the Lord lead me, so to fill up these particulars, as may be for your profit. Amen. I am

1. To take notice of the words, by which the apostle addresses the saints to whom he writes: together with his end in writing to them. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

The words of the address, put me in remembrance of what is by some said of our apostle: who, as he lived to be an hundred years old, so when he came to the christian assemblies all he could say, was, *little children love one another.* I can scarcely believe, our Lord Jesus Christ would keep him out of heaven to answer no other end by him than this amounts to. These words; *my little children*, seem to express that he had some particular interest in these persons. He might have been their Spiritual Father; or, he might thus address them, out of the love of his heart, which he bore to all the saints. It is most certainly a very winning way, by which he could not but draw out their hearts towards him; and thereby make way for them to receive what he had to deliver unto them. I should conceive, this may be looked on as one reason for this address; and also for the title *children*: and *little children*. No one who has read with attention his gospel, and the 13, 14, 15, and 16, chapters of the same, but must see and perceive how he carries our Lord's Spirit, and sometimes expresses himself very nearly in the same language which our Lord did. As he addresses those to whom he wrote thus most affectionately, with the title *my little children*, so he informs them why he wrote to them as he did. It was that they might not sin. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.* This was a most noble end. The things written were such as concerned personal fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. If they attended to this subject, they would most certainly be kept from sin. They would lose all relish for it, as they were favoured with soul-refreshing views of the everlasting love of the Father, and the glories of Christ's Person as God-Man, and his complete salvation. Whilst the minds of saints are so engaged, all is well; sin is subdued, and grace is quickened, revived, excited and strengthened. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.* Yet he knew they were liable to sin: *Peter* sinned; yet Christ had warned him. He had prayed for him. If he sinned, it must be expected other saints would also. They could not be more exalted than he was. He had been pronounced blessed by Christ. He had seen Christ on the mount of transfiguration. He had been with Him at his holy supper. He had been with Him in the garden, and beheld Him in his passion and bloody-sweat. Yet all this did not prevent *Peter's* sinning against his Lord. Yea, he sinned grievously, even in the very hearing of Christ. If this was his case, what is there to prevent its being in the substance of it, the case with others of the Lord's beloved? They cannot be more near and dear to Christ, nor can they be more and better beloved by him than *Peter* was. And as his fall was brought about by Satan, so the same adversary is always on the watch to swallow up, in the hour of temptation. Our apostle therefore writes to these *little children* to keep them from sin: to prevent from falling into sin: to put them on their guard against it: that they might be delivered from it. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.* I love you as mine own. I love you in the bowels of my Lord. I write

on purpose on the subjects set before you, out of real love to you. No other apostle hath any hand in my present writing. I write of, and from myself to you: yet not without the influence and direction of the Holy Ghost. I write these things which I have set before you, in the former part of this Epistle, *that ye sin not*. I proceed to consider,

2. What the apostle wrote to them. It is of that which very greatly concerned them, to know, and believe. It also concerned the Lord Jesus Christ. *These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* There is no heart can ever fully conceive the evil of sin: the bitterness saints have the experience of, when they sin against the Lord: nor can any one so feel for them, and sympathize with them, as to suit their inward frames and feelings, when they are actually overcome with sin, and are fallen by it, but our Lord Jesus Christ. He can. He doth. Even though he is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Our text gives us full proof of it. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The apostle puts in himself, in the word *we*, as being as liable to sin, as the *little children* he wrote unto: and as having interest in the same Father, and also in the same advocate. *Mr. Romaine* was for reading the words thus. *If any one of us, who have fellowship with the Father, and the Son, sin, we have an advocate with the Father.* Most certain it is, this is the apostle's meaning. Every man that sinneth doth not belong to our Lord Jesus Christ: such as do not, will everlastingly perish in their sins. It is only those for whom Christ became their sacrifice, who have him for their advocate. And he is their advocate against their adversary, who is the devil. It is the devil who pleads against them. Christ pleads for them. He does this with the Father. It is in consequence of sin committed, Christ pleads on the behalf of his clients. We are they. He does not plead on the behalf of sin. No. Nor does he plead for it. Yet he pleads on the behalf of his sinning people: not to extenuate their crimes, be they what they may. He pleads on the behalf of his people, when they are fallen by their iniquity: so that neither the words, nor doctrine of our text, contain the least encouragement for sin. I thought good to express this, for the following reason—that so it is, we are prone to suspect the free grace of God: to think we may make too free with such a scripture as this: that to allow it possible for a real believer to commit sin, will have a dangerous tendency. Hence we are for avoiding such a passage as this. Or if it be taken as the foundation for a discourse, to say as little about sin, and sinning as possible. Beloved, we should aim to unfold our text; or why do we take one. This, here before us, does not concern sinners, it belongs to saints: nor does it even suit *them* when they are in the mount of high and exalted fellowship with God. It suits them when the devil has broken in upon them: when sin has prevailed over them: when they have been actually overcome by their inherent corruptions, and cannot but cry out, we have sinned. I am not going to say, as the renowned *Dr. Goodwin* does, that the apostle by the term *sin* here, means some gross act of sinning: but whilst I am not going to particularize what is to be understood, and comprehended here by *sin*, yet I must so understand it, treat, and explain it, as comprehending every sinful case of the called people of the most high God. Let their sins be what they may, after they are called with an holy calling, we must understand the pas-

sage before us, as designed by the apostle, to be a grand catholicon for them all. Let their personal sins be what they may, none of them must be left out, unless we are unwilling to have a complete cure for all our spiritual maladies. It belongs to all the saints. It is thus directed unto them. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: "And he is the propitiation for our sins."* This is the first place in the New Testament we have our Lord Jesus Christ presented unto us under this title: yet we have all included in it, and in his execution of this office, set forth in a vision *Zechariah* the Prophet saw, and records in the 3rd. chapter of his Prophecy. He says he saw in vision, "Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" v. 1, 2. Here is the substance of what is contained in our text. If the saints did not sin, they would not need Christ to be their advocate. When they have sinned, Satan their adversary immediately turns their accuser. He brings in his accusations, and pleads against them in the court of their own consciences. They fall under the same. They cannot but acknowledge themselves guilty. He pursues them, even when, and whilst they are at the throne of grace. They are self condemned, and confounded. Yet the Lord Jesus Christ who is interested in them, pleads against Satan's charges, on their behalf: He pleads for them, as his clients, his own blood and righteousness, the everlasting and present efficacy of the same. The Person with whom he pleads is the Father. Even He who is, and stands in this relation to all his family in heaven and in earth, who are named in Christ, and are one with Him. Our Advocate pleads before him, in the high court above. *If any man sin, we have an advocate*, who is deeply concerned for us: who stands up on our behalf: who lives in the presence of God for us. It is our misery to sin. We feel the guilt of it in our minds, and experience unspeakable sorrow for it in our hearts. Yet this neither undoes what we have done: nor can it remove the guilt of the same from us. Our Lord is in our nature in the highest heavens. He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He is not such as not to be touched with a feeling of our *infirmities*, but he is so affected with the same, as to be a merciful and faithful high priest. It is sin, yea, actual sin designed by the word *infirmities*: nor must we leave this out: if we do, we shall omit bringing in Christ, when, and where we most need him. Let us not go beyond the apostles: we shall do wrong so to do. If any man who belongs to the election of grace *sin, we have an advocate with the Father*. This is our consolation: and by it we have most blessed relief from the accusations of Satan, and our own consciences, when we are most sorely oppressed with actual falls into sin. I proceed to my next particular,

3. To shew that Christ is a righteous advocate. Therefore his plea on behalf of his sinning people, cannot but be successful. They therefore need not despair. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, hath a righteous plea to make, on the behalf of his sinning people, and that with his righteous Father, whilst he does not by any means excuse any part of their sin, or sinfulness. He is in-

terested in the persons of his people, and in each and every one of their concerns. He has them in perpetual remembrance, and liveth after the power of an endless life, in his Father's presence on their behalf. His appearance in the presence of God for them, is their eternal perfection. As he bore their sins in his own body on the tree, and put them away by the sacrifice of himself, and washed them clean from all sin, in his most precious blood, so he presents them in his own Person, blood and righteousness, before the divine Majesty in the Person of the Father, without all sin. They are without all blame before the throne of God. In him they are complete: as such he beholds them: yet they having sin in them, and they sometimes falling by the same, hence to relieve their minds from the guilt thereof, Christ is set before them in the gospel as an Intercessor and Advocate, which I conceive to be one, and the same: only so expressed in a two-fold point of view to give the mind of real saints the more complete relief: especially in cases of sin: it is then we need the same views of Christ, and apprehensions of his blood and sacrifice as we were favoured with when we first believed. Yet the atonement of Christ being a past one, although it be everlastingly perfect and efficacious, yet we seem to want some renewal of the knowledge of the same to our minds, as may suit and be agreeable with our present cases and circumstances. Hence the advocacy of our Lord, is spoken of here, as our present and immediate remedy: it containing the same present health and cure, which was in the wounds and blood of Christ. As he died for us, when we were sinners, and ungodly, so He is an Advocate for us when we have sinned. And the true knowledge of this, is proposed by the apostle, to be our consolation and cure when we have sinned actually. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The expression, *the Father*, is a general and vastly expressive one. All the elect make but one family: a part of them are in the house eternal in the heavens; and a part of them are here in this our world. Those in glory cannot sin: such as are here upon earth may: yet they are all equally interested in the Father's love: they are equally and alike before Him, in his love and favour. Christ is their advocate with him, He is the friend of his people, in the execution of this his office. He is a righteous advocate. He is the Lord our righteousness. He is in heaven as such. He thus appears before the throne. And the Father beholds all the members of Christ, as made the righteousness of God in Him. It was his own act to make them so, by imputing the righteousness of Christ unto them. As they are thus in Christ, so he also pleads his own righteousness with the Father on his, as also on their behalf: whereby he has more to plead for them, than sin, or Satan can possibly have to plead against them. The Person of Christ, God-Man, exceeds in worth and excellency all his people, even though they are, and have been the objects of the Father's everlasting love and delight from before all time. His undertakings on their behalf, were before they had sin in them: thereby they were secured from the imputation of it. His being made in the fulness of time, sin and a curse for them, which was the act of the Father, must have a worth in the same, which transcends all sin, as inherent in the elect. The obedience, sufferings, blood and sacrifice, death, and soul-travail of Jesus Christ cannot but everlastingly exceed all the guilt, evil, and demerit of sin: all which, this great Advocate hath to plead, on

the behalf of his sinning people : which cannot but invalidate all charges of sin, and sinfulness, which may be brought against them, by Satan their adversary and accuser. The saints therefore of the Most High, should consider this, so as to take the benefit of the same, and plead it on their own behalf. It is the will of the Holy Ghost they should do so : or it had never been written thus. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Whilst I am on this subject, I would say, I do not conceive the Intercession and Advocacy of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Holiest even in heaven itself, to be a vocal one. It is enough, and allsufficient that he lives and appears in the presence of God for us. This is of itself, in its own nature and efficacy, equal to whatsoever may be included in such expressions as these. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Rom. v. 10 : "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us ?" Rom. viii. 33, 34. Christ became incarnate, and lived, and spent his whole life for us in this our world. He put away, and purged our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. He lay in his body in the grave for us. He rose from thence for our justification. He entered Heaven as our forerunner. He sat down on the right hand of God : which was an everlasting proof of his acceptance of the Father. He there lives to represent us. And his appearance there is a solemn memorial of what he completed on earth : the blessings and benefits of which, he wills the Father should bestow on his church militant in this our world. His office of Priesthood in heaven, is represented unto us, as consisting of two parts : Intercession and Advocacy : the whole of which is set before us, by Christ himself, in the 17th chapter of *John*. And most wonderful it is to consider, we have the whole life of Christ in glory, as we had his whole life in our nature and world, to carry us above and beyond, all our sins, and miseries. We sin against Christ, now He is in Heaven, yet he is our Advocate there. *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.* Our Lord himself says, "The Father himself loveth you." And, "as the Father have loved me, so have I loved you." And he says to the divine Father, "Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." See John xvi. 27. chap. xv. 9. chap. xvii. 23. God loved us in Christ. He sees us as so many jewels, presented before Him in the Person, and shining forth in the heart of Christ. God's love and Christ's intercession are commensurate. In the death of Christ we are acquitted : In the resurrection of Christ we have an irrevocable act of justification in the high court of Heaven, that Christ was then justified, and we were then justified in Him. Christ at his ascension took possession of Heaven for us. He is seated at God's right hand with all power in heaven, and earth, to bestow and continue eternal life, with all the blessings of the same to his beloved ones. And in his Intercession and Advocacy we are completely and everlastingly secure. Believers in Jesus, look over the words of our text, over and over. It contains an infinite fountain of grace : such as we all need : especially when we have sinned. Consider the Advocate, who he is, and what he is. It is the Son of God. Even he *whose blood cleanseth us from all sin.* Remember with whom he intercedes ! He is *an advocate with the Father.*

If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father. The interest of the Father in Christ, and Christ's relation to the Father must have a mighty influence here. The expression *with the Father*, is indefinite, to express as fully and comprehensively as possible the prevailing efficacy of Christ's advocacy. Then the justice of Christ's plea on the behalf of his clients is noticed. He is *Jesus Christ the righteous*. His titles afford inexpressible sweetness. *Jesus* is a name of the utmost importance to us. He is the Self-Existent, the Allsufficient, the Almighty Saviour: who by virtue of his office, He being, and living a Priest for ever and having an unchangeable Priesthood, "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He is also a righteous intercessor and advocate.—He is *Jesus Christ the righteous*. His pleas are all righteous ones. He lays in no claims, but he has a most just right unto. He pleads on our behalf, with his Father, and our Father; with his God, and our God. He is well acquainted with whom he pleads, and with those for whom he pleads; and for what he pleads, and against whom he pleads. He never lost one single cause yet: so that we may with safety put our every case into his hand, and trust it wholly to him and with him. I come now to consider,

4. How we receive the benefit of what hath been treated of, concerning our Lord's advocacy, into our minds. This is by the Holy Ghost, who is styled *Advocate* by our Lord himself, in these words, "But the Comforter," (the learned say, the word is *Advocate*), "which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

It is in our own minds we are oppressed. That which most sorely afflicts us is our personal sin, and guilt. We have fallen so and so, through the deceit of our hearts, and the malice of the devil. He follows us with accusations. He suggests them, and he brings them against us, and charges them on us, in the court of our own consciences. So he also does before God, when we fly to his throne of grace, to supplicate for mercy. He will suggest the remembrance of our sins to us. He will convey such thoughts of our own sinfulness unto us, as shall serve to swallow up. If he possibly can, he will swallow us up in despair. The Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in the saints, is pleased to put forth, beyond the perception and apprehension of them, his indwelling power and grace. And when their cases are vastly extreme, and their souls bowed down within them, He is pleased to act for them, and within them, and on their behalf, the part of an Advocate and Intercessor. He pleads Christ's cause in the court of their afflicted minds. He takes of the things of Christ, and shews the same unto them. He brings to their remembrance what Christ is to them: what he had done for them; how he stands in union unto them: the offices he sustains on their behalf. He creates fresh conceptions of the same in their renewed minds. He pleads the cause of Christ there. He brings the blood and righteousness of Christ to their remembrance. He shews them afresh the eternal worth, and everlasting virtue of it. He creates in their mind some most blessed apprehensions of Christ being in heaven, with all the worth of his one offering, appearing in the presence of God for them—that he is their Intercessor and Advocate—that he is most deeply interested in the cases of

his people, especially every thing concerning sin. He then opens this Scripture, as it belongs to them, *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Thus it is, we are led to receive the knowledge, and benefit of Christ's intercession and advocacy into our minds; so as to enjoy the same, and be relieved thereby, and gain a triumph over sin, condemnation, and the oppression of the enemy. As the Holy Ghost dwells in us, so he works every good motion in us. When we are most deeply surrounded within and without, by views of our exceeding sinfulness, and we cannot open our mouths in prayer, He is pleased "to make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." See Rom. viii. 26, 27 : all which is the fruit of everlasting love : a glorious part of the everlasting covenant : an echo to the Intercession and Advocacy of Christ in heaven. And it is hereby we partake and enjoy in our own souls, the blessings flowing from the same, and have fellowship with Christ in his intercession and advocacy, and with the Father, before whom he appears, and with whom he pleads. Christ is our advocate in heaven to maintain and plead our cause there ; so as no one charge can ever there be admitted of against us. It is only in the court of our own consciences, we can have any charge and condemnation. The Holy Ghost is our Advocate on earth. He performs this office within us. He effects it by pleading the Person, righteousness and sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord. And he so prevails as to stop the clamours of conscience, and produces the peace of God there : and he casts out the accusations of the devil. He maketh intercession in the saints, according to the will of God, which they express in prayer, with groanings which cannot be uttered. May we have a more increasing spiritual and scriptural light and knowledge of these truths in our own souls than we have yet attained. Amen.

SERMON XII.

And he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for our's only ; but also for the sins of the whole world.—1 JOHN ii. 2.

THE apostle is pursuing the glorious and everlastingly precious subject. It respects the advocacy and atonement, the righteousness and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a subject which at all times, in all cases, and circumstances, must be very acceptable to the called people of the most high God. To know the heart of Christ, what it is, since he left our world, and is entered into his glory, is most truly desirable. We were given to know in the words which preceded our present text, what the office of Christ is, since he is entered within the vail ; which is most truly blessed and comfortable. His glory is Essential. It is Mediatorial. It is Personal. It is altogether Divine. His Person is

immortal and immutable. His Priesthood is eternal. He is a Priest upon his throne. He liveth for ever after the order of *Melchisedek*. His office is unchangeable. The perpetual efficacy of the same, is thereby continued. He is "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." This he is with regard to every thing which concerns his people on earth, in their every sinning case, and with regard to every thing which regards any, all, and every one of their sins, and sinful cases. The apostle introduced this subject in the former verse thus, *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* To which he adds. *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* Both verses united, contain one and the same subject; the separation of them is only for a more full and comprehensive explanation of this most divine and important subject—which concerns the Priesthood of Christ in heaven: founded on his righteousness and sacrifice which he completed here below. On the footing of his Priesthood and office in Heaven, the veil is opened, and we are admitted to enter into the Holiest of All, in the believing views of his most precious blood, and are admitted also to converse with Him. He is consecrated, as the Son of God, to be a Priest for evermore. "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Heb. viii. 1, 2. In the former chapter, our apostle had said, to such of the Lord's people as had sinned, "If we confess our sins, he (i. e. God in the Person of the Father,) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In the first verse of this chapter he says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" to which the words of our text are annexed. *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* With a design to open and explain these words, I will cast them into the following method and order.

1. I will aim to shew the connexion of them with the former, which I conceive will be the proper method for preserving the strength and efficacy of them: and thereby conveying the same, throughout every part; it is pity any particle of the same should be lost: they being so most truly precious, excellent, and sacred.

2. To open what is said of our Lord in these words before us. *He is the propitiation for our sins.*

3. That the propitiatory offering of Christ, extends to us, and not only to us, but to others also. *And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only.*

4. The uttermost extent of the virtue of Christ's propitiation. *Not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world.* These words, *the sins of*, are supplementary: leave them out, then the text reads thus. *And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our's only, but also for the whole world.* The text without the addition, or with it, is to me one and the same. If any difference, the additional words clear up in one point the meaning of the text. I shall therefore retain them, without running it into universal redemption. Thus I have given you the outline of my text. And to begin with my first particular.

1. In the which, I will aim to shew the connexion of the words of my

text with the former; this I conceive will be the proper method for preserving the strength and efficacy of them: and thereby conveying the same throughout the whole. Our text belongs to the former. I will therefore recite the whole. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not: And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* He had been in the former verse, speaking of Christ, as an Advocate with the Father, on the behalf of his sinning people. He had represented Him as a righteous one: He pleading his own righteousness on their behalf. He here speaks of Him as the propitiation for sin: intimating that his plea on the behalf of his people in heaven, was founded on his oblation of Himself in the days of his flesh—that it extended its influence to the whole election of grace. Therefore his plea founded thereon, must be commensurate to their every personal and particular case. The mere recital of the words afresh will be sufficient to confirm this; so that no universal salvation, redemption, or call it by what term you may, as including every single individual can follow on it. The word *we* is a bar to this. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* To remove sin from the persons of the Elect, and out of the sight of law and justice, this was the very end and design of Christ's Death: this is done, and that for ever. He offered up Himself: He made complete satisfaction, so as he never needed to repeat it. In the strength and with all the perfection of it, He entered heaven, where he intercedes for his whole church. Christ's life in heaven is to save each, and every individual for whom he died, by virtue of his Intercession and Advocacy. When the subject is thus expressed, it does not suggest that there is any other salvation than what is contained in our Lord's Death: it is only intended to enlarge our views of the vast importance to us, which is contained in our Lord's life in glory: which is as truly for the benefit of his church here below, as his life and sacrifice were. "Such an high priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Our Lord being all this, "He offered up Himself." He is Jesus the Son of God, an High Priest who liveth after the power of an endless life, in the presence of God for us. He is Intercessor and Advocate for his people. He pleads justice and righteousness. He is, therefore, able to carry every cause in which he is interested. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." An advocate hath place, only in a court of justice. Christ's Advocacy is executed by pleading his own Death, as the one only sacrifice for sin. He is "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And he is the propitiation for our sins. He pleads his own righteousness and blood, on the footing of which, the worst of sinners, belonging to the election of grace, are saved. He so conducts the matter, that justice is as truly on the side of the clients, as mercy. Hence it is the apostle says; *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* The Lord Jesus Christ, the King of heaven—the Lord of Glory—the great and glorious Proprietor of it—even He who has taken up Heaven, and entered it in his own name, and as the Head and Representative of all

his church and people, He it is who is their great High Priest, their Intercessor and Advocate. He, their Saviour and Anointed one, is entered into Heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. He is, what He is here most justly entitled, *the faithful friend at the bar of justice. Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.* By his powerful mediation at the right hand of the Father, the rights of divine justice and of holiness, are most gloriously displayed and maintained. In Him the riches of grace are most gloriously displayed: so that the Father is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. And the Advocate Christ Jesus is just also. *He is a just God, and a Saviour*, in all his pleadings at his Father's bar. It is the everlasting worth of his obedience, and soul travail, he presents on the behalf of all those for whom he intercedes. It is because he bore their sins in his own body on the tree, he appears on their behalf before the Throne. The Person of Christ is the foundation on which all the worth of his intercession and advocacy rests. It should never be forgotten by us, "we have an high priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." And his appearance there is our eternal security. He is there our propitiation, as he also is "the LORD our righteousness." We can never think or say too much of the Dignity, Majesty, Worth, and transcendent Glory of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ; yet I shall add no more, so much having been before expressed on this most important part of our present subject. I therefore proceed,

2. To open what is said of our Lord, in these words before us. *And he is the propitiation for our sins.* He is this, now this moment in the high court of heaven, just as he is the LORD our Righteousness: that is, He is there in the full worth and perfection of his most precious sacrifice.

This was not expressed in the former verse; yet it stands most closely connected with it, as hath been before shewed. Our Lord in the former verse bore the title of *Jesus Christ the righteous*. In this He bears the title of *propitiation*. *He is the propitiation*: or, He is the *atonement*. We have this word but seldom in the New Testament; the first place it occurs is in these words, "Whom God hath set forth, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Rom. iii. 25. And this word occurs twice in the epistle before us: once in the text, and again in the 4th chap. v. 11. We have the word *atonement*, once for all, in the New Testament, introduced thus. "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom. v. 11. The word *propitiation*, and *atonement*, are both derived from the Old Testament, and are one and the same in their meaning. They are most frequently used, in the books of *Exodus* and *Leviticus*. The apostle when he uses the word *propitiation* in the epistle to the *Romans*, refers to the mercy-seat, which was called the Propitiatory, or covering, because it hid what was in the ark, out of sight; and also before it, on the day of atonement, the propitiatory offerings were completed, by bringing the blood of them within the vail, and sprinkling it before the Figures of the Great Ones, the representatives of the Holy Trinity in their covenant engagements. The incense, fumed between the cherubim of glory, or rather before the same, so as the cloud of smoke arising therefrom might cover the mercy-seat, was expressive of the savour and fragrant of our Lord's intercession, as

fully appears from what our apostle relates in the *Revelation*. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." viii. 3, 4. It is in allusion to the golden altar of incense, which was so placed in the Holy place, as to be immediately before the ark, the mercy-seat of which was called the throne of God: as he was represented as enthroned between the Cherubim. The Incense altar was called the Golden altar, to distinguish it from the Brazen altar. The throne alluded to by *John*, was the mercy-seat: of which long before his time, the prophet *Jeremiah* said, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." xvii. 12. The ark was a solemn memorial of the Person of Christ, God-Man, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" or personally. It bears titles suitable to this. It is entitled, *the King of Glory. The Lord of Glory. The ark of the Lord: of the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims*. It was framed of shittim-wood, inclosed with plates of solid gold. It served to be expressive of the divine and human nature, united in the one Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The two tables of the covenant, written with the finger of God, were put into it; which was expressive of the law, written in the heart of Christ, and fulfilled by Him. "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." On it was placed the mercy-seat, which was a solid plate of gold. At the two ends of it were Cherubims of Glory. Their wings were stretched out, and formed an arch; in the midst of which was a cloud of glory, in which the Lord dwelt. On the day of atonement the High Priest appeared here, and presented the typical blood before the Cherubim, or the Faces of the great Ones. The apostle tells us, "in the Holiest of all, was the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat." Heb. ix. 4, 5. All which was a figure for the time then present; and hath all, since, been realized in the Person, and work of our Lord Jesus Christ; who "being come, an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." v. 11, 12. As the mercy-seat was a figure of Christ, and hid the law, so as it could not be seen; so the blood and atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, is such a complete *propitiation*, or atonement, or covering, that it hides all our sins out of the sight of law and justice. The etymology of the word atonement, is by a learned man, said to be derived from a folding door, which folds forwards and backwards; which he applies thus; "our sins were folded back from us, on Christ. His righteousness is folded from Him, on us." This I conceive, to be a very comprehensive idea, to convey the true meaning of this most important doctrine of the atonement which Christ hath made for us by the blood of his cross. He is the propitiatory offering. He is the propitiation for our sins. He is entered into Heaven itself, as our propitiation. I conceive it is not sufficiently considered by

us, that the entrance of the Lord Jesus Christ into Heaven, and his acceptance there by the divine Father, is the one grand testimonial, that salvation is so fully completed, as to afford us the firmest foundation for confidence, and joy. These sacrifices were performed by the High Priest in the outer court, in the sight of the whole congregation, yet it was the bringing in the blood within the veil, and sprinkling it before the mercy-seat, which completed the atonement. Thus Christ entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Heb. ix. 24. There he is as our propitiation. He has washed us from all our sins in his own blood. He therefore is in the Holiest of all, as our true propitiatory. I come,

3. To observe, that the propitiatory offering of Christ, extends to us, and not to us only, but to others also. *And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only.*

The Person of Christ, his holiness, righteousness, sacrifice, and intercession are the security of the whole church of God, and their everlasting perfection. It is their sanctuary to repair unto. They may have recourse to Him, in every time of need. Our apostle says, *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : And he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* The apostle is suiting his discourse to our cases, who though redeemed by Christ, and made pure in his blood, yet are frequently backsliding from him, and falling into sin. He says every thing he can to take off our thoughts from poring on ourselves, sins, and miseries. He would have us to know, Christ is with the Father, and that as our Advocate. He is a righteous one. He is the Lord our Righteousness. He is our Propitiation. His blood speaks on our behalf: it is as full of virtue as when he shed it, and poured it out as the atonement for us. He is now this very moment, our sacrifice before the Throne, as to all the worth and perfection, virtue and efficacy contained in his one offering which perfecteth for ever. The apostle is of the same spirit, with our *John*, who says, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. iv. 15. Both these apostles were full of the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, and felt for the people of God, under their falls, and that which could not but sorely grieve and distress them, in consequence thereof. Our Lord himself, feels for his saints, and beloved ones, on these accounts. He is touched to the very quick on their account. He is therefore most compassionately disposed to relieve them. All the people of the Lord, share in this grace of our Jesus—the virtue of his blood and righteousness—of his advocacy and intercession—of his life in heaven—of his propitiatory blood which hides the transgressions from view; it extends itself, in the blessings and benefits of the same, to all the household and family of faith: yea, to the whole election of grace, be they called, or, be they uncalled. Those uncalled, are in consequence of our Lord's intercession on their behalf, called in the appointed time: those who are called, have a blessed discovery made to them, of Christ's compassions which fail not, but are perpetually exercised towards, and upon them. Of the which there are seasons, when they have most sensible and very particular, personal, and precious evidence thereof. One point which the apostle drives at, in saying the propitiatory offering of Christ extends beyond those whom he wrote this

epistle unto, was to convey this idea unto them—that many saints who were unknown to them, were equally, and alike interested in the same grace of our most gracious Lord Jesus Christ : so as from the proper consideration of the same, a fresh tribute of praise might arise unto Him, whose Name, will for ever and ever be glorious, and exalted above all blessing and praise. The apostle would have it understood, that the office of our Lord Jesus Christ, the virtue of his blood and righteousness, the efficacy of his mediation, had its universal influence, and extended its efficacy to all the saints—“unto all, who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs, and ours.” This is a most comfortable consideration—our Lord hath a most perfect knowledge of all his beloved ones. He fully comprehends them, personally, and individually ; with all their sins, cases, wounds, wants, and miseries. He also knows the whole of his own heart towards them. He views, and reviews their particular circumstances. And there is but one way in which He can make known to them his love, now that He is with the divine Father ; and that is by having them in everlasting remembrance, and giving them in their own souls, real evidence of the truth of this. Here comes in his glorious office in Heaven, as Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate. All which being founded on what He did for his people, in putting away their sins, and bringing in to the high court above, everlasting righteousness ; so he proves his heart is full of love to them, now he is in his kingdom of glory ; as their present sins, and sinfulness, do not take off his eye and heart from them. But if any of them sin, he is their advocate with the Father : and he is the propitiation for their sins, and which is the case regarding all his church. They all sin : it cannot be otherwise with them ; “in many things” says the apostle *James*, “we offend (or sin) all.” This is the antidote—Christ’s blood is our purity. “He hath loved us, and washed us, from our sins in his own blood.” He thus presents us in heaven, before the throne of God. He is our Propitiation there. Whatsoever befalls us, he is our powerful advocate : what he is in his Person and office as Mediator of reconciliation, he is to all his people ; not simply to us, who know him, and by our converse with each other, may be able to prove to each other the reality of our knowing him, and of our communion with him, but he is the same to all others, who are called and brought to the knowledge of Him. *He is the propitiation for our sins : and not for our’s only.* All his members share in the same grace. They are all one in Him : so as to be equally interested in Him—in his Person—in his love—in his suretyship engagements—in his incarnation—in his life—in his propitiatory offering—in his death—in his burial—in his resurrection—in his ascension—in his priesthood in heaven—in the representation which he makes of his whole church in his own Person, before the Father : and in all the blessings and benefits thereof : not one of the Elect is more interested in the whole of Christ, than another. They are all one and the same in Christ their Head : the scriptures of the New Testament lay all the stress, on what Christ is to the church, on what He hath done for his church, and on his priesthood on the behalf of his church, which he exercises in heaven : and also on what the church is in Christ. We neglect this too much : we lay too much stress on our experience of these truths, and conceive of our interest in Christ, and state before the Lord, accordingly : all which is wrong ; it is in a certain sense to neglect Christ : yea, it is no little sin : for which

we need continually the efficacy and virtue of Christ's advocacy. Now to enlarge the spiritual conceptions of the mind, the apostle in carrying on the subject of Christ's being the *propitiation*, says, *and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world*: this brings me to my last particular; which is,

4. To shew the uttermost extent of the virtue of Christ's propitiation; which is thus expressed, *And not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world*. The whole of our text is this, *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world*. These words *the sins of*, are added to the text; yet I conceive they are better retained, than parted with; as they contain an account of what Christ's atonement was for. It was for sins. Sin can have no existence but in a subject. If Christ died for sins, then Christ must have been the subject on whom sin was laid—to whom sin was transferred. He must have been made sin by imputation, or He could not have been the sacrifice for them. If all the sins of the elect were laid by the Father on Christ, as the Surety and representative of the elect, and he bore them in his own body; then his blood must have washed out the whole of them. And the extent of Christ's most perfect and allsufficient oblation, must comprehend the whole election of grace. They must in each, and every one of them, individually, be cleansed from all sin, in the sight of God, by the one propitiatory offering of Christ. So that these words, *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world*, whilst they most fully and freely set forth, the uttermost extent of Christ's death, and the infinite virtue of his blood, and propitiation, yet they do by no means extend this beyond the pale of election. Suppose we leave out the additional words, and read the text thus, *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the whole world*, what do we gain thereby? I think, nothing. We only omit these three words, *the sins of*. Now these words are really and truly explanatory: they only follow what was in the text before. *He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but for the sins of the whole world*. Now it was for sins, Christ died. He also died for particular persons. He substituted himself in the room and stead of these, and their sins were laid on him. He sustained the whole curse due unto them. He was made sin and a curse. He hath by his one offering finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, and his blood, now and evermore, cleanseth from all sin. The virtue and efficacy of which, belong to the whole election of grace. It cannot to any beside: because it goes not beyond the persons, whose sins Christ bore. Therefore the expressions before us, whilst they have an universality in them, yet not such as reaches and extends any part of its virtue and efficacy beyond the church of the living God: which, as it consisted of Jews and Gentiles, might be styled the whole world. Or, it might be in agreement with our Lord's words, who expressed himself thus to *Nicodemus*, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. The word *world* here, is conceived to refer to the Gentile world: to whom the gospel was then to be sent, and by the means of which the elect would be gathered, and drawn to Christ. Some not content with

this, say, the *world* here, means the world of believers. This I cannot subscribe unto: because Christ did not die for believers. He died for sinners. When we were yet sinners Christ died for us: neither does the efficacy of Christ's propitiatory offering, depend on our believing. It is an immutable truth, such as Christ died for, will, in the Lord's time and way, be all brought to hear their Shepherd's voice, and be enabled to believe on him for life everlasting; yet this doth not interest them in Christ and his death; it is only the manifestation thereof. I therefore conclude, the *world* here is best understood of all the persons included in the whole election of grace. Christ is the propitiation for each and every one of these, called or uncalled, he hath put away all their sin. They are sanctified by his one offering, so that all their sins are removed from their persons, as far as the east is from the west. This was the incommunicable work of Christ himself: hence the Psalmist saith, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Ps. ciii. 12. As some express it, there is a world in a world. The apostle speaking concerning some who had profaned the Lord's supper, and of the judgments with which the Lord visited such, and some of the saints also, for the same, says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." 1 Cor. xi. 30, 32. Now here is a world condemned, as in our text we have a world saved. This distinction kept up in the mind, will, I conceive, give us the true sense of these words, *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* Take the whole body of the elect, and all sin and sinfulness have been, and will be found in them: some in one, some in others. No sort of sin which can be committed out of hell, (except the sin unto death, which none of the elect can commit), but will be found amongst them, either before or after their conversion to the Lord. What then must be the virtue and efficacy of Christ's propitiatory offering, to remove for ever the whole imputation of it from them, and purify and cleanse them from all sin, in the sight of God? Surely, I cannot but conclude the apostle here intended to honour the sacrifice of Christ to the utmost extent of its virtue and efficacy, when he said, *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* The great and most truly renowned Dr. Owen, in his book entitled, *The Death of Death in the death of Christ*, proposes this to those who are for universal redemption; "Either," says he, "Christ died for all the sins of all men, or, he died for some sins of all men, or, he died for all the sins of some men. If he died for all the sins of all men, why are not all men saved? You will say, because of their unbelief; but unbelief is either a sin, or it is not: if it be, and Christ died for all their sins, why should unbelief damn them, seeing he died for it, as well as all their other sins? If Christ died for some sins of all men, then there are some sins of these, which Christ died not for: consequently they must perish for them. If Christ died for all the sins of some men, then these must be everlastingly saved: and this," says he, "is our own doctrine." I hope the Lord will be pleased to reflect the glory and grace of his truth on our minds. It is only in his light we

see light. His glory is reflected on the mind, in and by the scriptures of truth. They are all clear in themselves: we need never to start any puzzling questions on them. We should receive them, in all matters of faith, just as they are in themselves. The Holy Ghost is allsufficient to lead and guide us into all truth. It is our blessedness to be kept continually dependant on him, for his unction which teacheth all things. May we be living over the truths which have been set before us, concerning our Lord's advocacy and propitiation. And, seeing the finished work of Christ is the very basis of his mediatorial Throne in Heaven; let us rest wholly, and for all our salvation, on the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ: looking to receive the blessings and benefits of the same from Christ, as the Intercessor and Advocate in heaven; and learn to converse with Christ on his Throne. This will lead us to give him glorious praise; which we never perform more acceptably than by trusting wholly in Him for our everlasting blessedness. The Lord himself bless you with the life-giving knowledge of these life-giving truths, and life-giving communion with Christ, and the Father in Him, through the Spirit. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.—I JOHN II. 3.

THE truths delivered in the former verses are most truly noble and divine. They are suited to relieve the minds of the Lord's people, in the worst cases which can possibly befall them through the journey of life. These words now before us, stand, as I conceive, in close connection with the former: it is quite pleasing to my own mind to view them thus; it being full proof that the true knowledge of the doctrine of God the Father and of his Son Jesus Christ, and real fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ as our atonement, and the belief that *his blood cleanseth us from all sin*, are not unfriendly to the real practice of holiness, but are the very means of increasing the same. Free accesses to the Father, in spiritual apprehensions of his being our Father in Christ Jesus, and in gospel views of his being our advocate and propitiation in heaven, are the right means of keeping us from sin; and also the only way for us to enjoy the peace of God in our consciences, and the love of God in our hearts. So far as these most inestimably precious truths enter into our minds, and in proportion to our minds receiving them, and being brought under the mighty power and authority of the same, we are most blessedly disposed to every good word and work. We must know the truth before we can receive it. We must receive it before we can be influenced by it. We must have the experience of it before we can live in the practice of it. This may well be looked upon as a proper preface to all which remains to be opened and explained, throughout the remainder of this

most excellent epistle; in which we have various subjects: and some very singular expressions; such as are best opened in an expository way: an attempt at which will be aimed at. I shall therefore mention them here, only by way of hint. They are such as these, *He that is born of God sinneth not. He that committeth sin is of the devil. He that is born of God doth not commit sin. There is a sin unto death. It is the last time.* These will be unfolded in their true meaning, as we shall come to them. I only suggest the same to shew the necessity of expounding this epistle: as thereby the true connection of one sentence in it with another agrees, and that the true and right knowledge of the same, is thereby made the more clear and evident. I will here recite the two former verses which preceded our present text, to shew the unity and connection of them. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* The words of my text, as may be most easily perceived, are a closure of the former: in which the apostle is speaking of himself and others, of the knowledge he and they had, in themselves, of their own knowledge of Christ. They had an inward evidence of this: which they gave also an outward evidence of. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* With a view of opening these words, to the real profit and benefit of the spiritual mind, I will aim to set before you the following particulars.

1. What it is to know Christ: from whence it springs, and how this is evidenced to believers.

2. How believers can say from their own inward knowledge of Christ, in their own souls, *and hereby we do know that we know him.*

3. The reason why the apostle puts in the word *if*, and speaks of an outward evidence of our knowing Christ, as he had before of an internal one. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

4. What is comprehended in this, *if we keep his commandments.* These are the subjects which are now before us, to be opened and explained. May the Lord the Spirit be pleased to shine on his truth, and on the renewed minds of his people, that we may see in his own light the true meaning of the scripture before us, and receive the explanation to our profit and advantage: so be it, O Lord. I am

1. To express and set before you, what it is to know Christ: from whence this knowledge comes; and also how this is evidenced to believers: *we do know* (says our apostle,) *that we know him.*

The knowledge of Christ is wholly and altogether spiritual and supernatural. It is beyond all that nature can possibly attain unto. No unregenerate mind can have the least conception of it. All the knowledge of all contained in the whole and utmost circle of science, cannot convey to the most profoundly learned, the least spiritual conception of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nay, the Bible itself, which is full of Christ, the gospel itself which is the revelation of Christ, the ordinances of it, in the which Christ is evidently set forth as crucified, cannot give us the knowledge of Him. It is the Holy Ghost by his own illumination and revelation, who only can convey to our minds that knowledge of Christ

which is life eternal. To know Christ, must include and contain in the same, the knowledge of who he is—of what he is—of his Person—of his love—of his salvation—of his righteousness, and sacrifice—of his fulness—of his offices—of his interest in us, and of his relation to us. Now whilst the gospel of Christ, and the ordinances of Christ, are blessed means for our increasing in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, yet we must know Him, before we can derive the least real benefit from these; for our whole spiritual life is contained in the knowledge of Him, and our everlasting life in heaven, will be perfected in our beholding Him. It is the vision of Him in Glory, will be our eternal perfection. Our Lord said to his divine Father, concerning his church, *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* John xvii. 3. Paul prays thus. *That I may know him.* Phil. iii. 10. He says to Timothy—I know whom I have believed. 2 Epis. i. 12. The knowledge of Christ consists in a spiritual apprehension of Him, formed in the mind, and produced in the understanding—of his Person, from the word, and by the Holy Ghost. Whatsoever conceptions any of us may entertain in our minds, which are not wholly and altogether suitable, and in perfect agreement with the holy scriptures, they are not from the Lord the Holy Spirit; they are, therefore, to be wholly rejected. We receive the knowledge of Christ into our renewed minds, not by having any form wrought up in our imaginations of who He is, or what He is, but by an inexpressible act of the eternal Spirit within us. Who, as he formed the human nature of Christ in the womb of the Virgin; so he forms the true and supernatural knowledge of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in our intellectual faculties: and we know Him in his Person to be the true God and eternal life. We know Him to be coequal, coessential, and coeternal in the self-existing Essence with the Father and the Spirit. We know Him to be God—Man—the Head—Mediator—the medium of union and communion between God and us. We know Him in his love, which is the miracle of heaven. We know Him in his incarnation, obedience, and death. We know Him in the glories of his Mediatorial Person, work, offices; and in his union, and relation to his people. It is in the knowledge of Him, we love Him—we worship Him—we trust in Him for our whole salvation. We cleave to Him with full purpose of heart. We renounce all but Him. We triumph in Him alone. Now this is what I profess concerning the knowledge of Christ, that it is a knowledge of his Person—of his love—of his righteousness—of his blood—of his priesthood in heaven—of his fulness, such as leads to an entire confidence in Him, and centering in Him.

From whence all this springs, is the next consideration. It is wholly from the Holy Ghost. He is the revealer of Jesus. It is his office to give the true knowledge of Him: this he does by taking of the things of Christ, and shewing the same to the renewed mind; as also by bearing his testimony to the same. It is hereby he forms Christ in the understanding, opens the heart to receive Him, lifts up the affections to a fixation on Him, and makes Him supremely All in All. It is thus we receive the knowledge of Christ; and in this our whole spiritual life consists. Our faith in Jesus is the fruit hereof. As all comes from the Spirit, who is the revealer and glorifier of Jesus, so it also springs from, and is agreeable with the revelation made of Christ in

the everlasting gospel : which, as it is the outward and declared testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Father's everlasting love to us in Him, so it is by it the Holy Spirit is most graciously pleased, to lead us more and more into a spiritual and supernatural acquaintance with the Person, work, and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. If I could express my mind fully on this subject, I should say, to know Christ as he is revealed in the scriptures, to receive into our minds, what is set forth in them concerning him, this is to know Christ. We do not want to know any thing of Christ, but what he is pleased to set before us in them. We apprehend Him in them. We see Him in them. We receive Him into our hearts through them. We have communion with Him, as he is testified of by them. If we are favoured with transporting views of Him, it is as the Holy Ghost is pleased to elevate our minds, by giving us, under his life-giving influences, fresh apprehensions of Christ's glory, worth, excellency, and perfections.

I come to shew you how this, concerning the knowledge of Christ, is evidenced to believers. *We do know* (says John) *that we know him. And hereby we do know that we know him.* He is hereby speaking of an inward evidence of the same, which they had in themselves. In the course of this epistle, he hath a great deal to do with evidences : some concern our interest in Christ : some have personal respect to ourselves : some to others : they are all very good and useful in their place ; none of them are designed to take off our eye of faith from Christ : nor to put us on resting our salvation on any grace wrought in us, or produced by the Holy Ghost in our lives and conversations. You need not, therefore, fear, lest I should bring you into bondage ; whilst I am, according to the words before me, to open to you the inward evidence here given in my text, how we may know that we are in Christ, and that, also, by what we know inwardly in our own souls, of and concerning Him : *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* It is not the whole of these words, but only this part of them which comes before me under this first head of this discourse, which has been thus expressed.—To set forth and express, what it is to know Christ : from whence this knowledge comes : and also how this knowledge is evidenced to believers. *And hereby we do know that we know him.* I have set before you what it is to know Christ : also from whence this knowledge comes. I have now to speak concerning this part of the same subject, *how* this is evidenced to believers, so as that they may say, *and hereby we do know that we know him.* Most assuredly the true knowledge of the Person, love, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ contains the greatest reality. Nothing in heaven can be more certain to saints within the veil, than the knowledge of Christ is to the spiritual mind, by faith. Christ is as really present to faith, as he is to sense in glory. Such as know Christ here in our world, know Him as truly, as he is known in Heaven. They enjoy Him, and have as real fellowship with Him, as any saints in heaven. The reality of this is one and the same : the difference here is none. It is in the degree and fulness of this, lies all the difference ; I know Christ as truly, as I ever shall in heaven ; yet not so fully. I have as real communion with Christ now, as I ever shall ; yet not to that fulness and perfection it will be advanced unto in glory. Let this be attended unto : it is of vast importance to the spiritual mind. It opens all contained in our text at once ; and that with the utmost satis-

faction. Christ being made known unto us, we having received Him into our hearts, He is in us : He lives in us : He dwells in us : He enlivens us : He shines within us : He shines upon us : He puts forth his heavenly influences. He gives us a real acquaintance with the virtue and efficacy of his life and death, his blood and righteousness. He holds free and blessed fellowship with us in our own hearts. He admits us to have and hold, free, and most blessed fellowship with Him. It is hereby we have a real, inward, spiritual knowledge of Him : what we thus know of Him, leads us to value Him. We most highly prize Him. In the knowledge which he is pleased to impart to our minds, in inward fellowship with him, in the true apprehensions of his wounds and blood, sacrifice, righteousness and death, we have real fellowship with Him, in the benefits and blessings thereof. In the communications he is pleased to make to us, and in his really imparting the secrets of his mind and will to us, he gives us such undeniable evidences of his love to us, of his delight in us, of the riches of his grace towards us, as constrains us to say, individually for ourselves, and of Him, *my beloved is mine, and I am his*. And *Paul's* high prizings of Christ become our's, in our measure and degree. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith : That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Phil. iii. 8—11. In such spiritual exercises of the mind as these, there is a real outgoing of the heart after Christ, and some real fellowship with Him. Christ and the believer become very familiar. There is mutual communion with each other. The believer can from his own personal knowledge of Christ, and from his real fellowship with Him, say for himself, I know him ! He is my food : my drink : I feed with him : I feed on him. I really experience the truth of what he spake in the days of his flesh : He then said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.—Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father : so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven :—he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." John vi. 51. 54—58. All this the Lord Jesus Christ realizes in the believer, and unto him, as he dwells in his heart by faith : and from hence the believer can speak of Him with certainty and confidence, and say, *hereby I do know that I know him*. Next to the knowledge of Christ, is the knowledge of our personal interest in Him. The one follows on the other, as the fruit and consequent of the same. It is the grand prerogative royal of the Holy Ghost, to reveal Christ—to enthrone Him in the conscience—to crown Him in the heart—to prove to a vessel of mercy that Christ is his. On this follows personal communion

between Christ and the believing mind. This in the substance of it, I have been describing: this produces what our text is here speaking of—*We do know that we know him*: which leads me

2. To shew how believers in Christ may say, from their inward knowledge of Him in their own souls, *And hereby we do know that we know him*.

This knowledge must arise from their real communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. No one can want real and undeniable proof and evidence in his own soul, of his knowing Christ, of his interest in Him, that Christ is in him the hope of glory, who is living on Him, and making continual use of Him. To live in Christ, is to have the mind continually exercised on Him: and those supernatural faculties, wrought in our souls in regeneration to be so engaged on the Lord Jesus, as that thereby we have a real enjoyment of Him, and communion with Him. In this consists the greatest secret of christianity. The mind being inwardly and spiritually exercised on the Lord Jesus Christ, carries its own evidence with it, and enables all true believers to say, *And hereby we do know that we know him*. Living in believing views and apprehensions of the love of the Holy Trinity to us in Christ Jesus, influences the spiritual mind with the love of the Three in Jehovah to us. What we have the inward conceptions of, draws out our love, and fixes our affections on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father in him: all which is from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in us; wherefrom, speaking in an open, experimental confession of the same, we may truly say, *And hereby we do know that we know him*. We who have an inward, intuitive knowledge of Him, have also an inward communion with him: an inward and spiritual relish of his goodness. We know what it is to have our hearts and affections sweetly refreshed and perfumed with the savour and fragrantcy of his Name, Person, sacrifice and salvation. We therefore speak of and from our hearts concerning Him, when we say, *And hereby we do know that we know him*. The whole substance of which amounts to this: we are favoured with a spiritual and supernatural knowledge of the Person and salvation of Christ: we know Him to be our advocate and propitiation; we have communion with Him. The truth of all which is so realized in our own minds, by the indwelling and testimony of the Holy Ghost, that we have the fullest assurance of all this in our own minds. We cannot be more fully assured of the same than we are: it is certified beyond all contradiction unto us. We know that we are Christ's—that we are his—that we are partakers of Christ—that He is in us—that we are in Him—that we really know him; because he dwells in our hearts. He is high in our esteem; we cannot live without Him; we cannot be happy; No; not for one single moment, but as we are engaged in the contemplations of Him: When we speak of Him it is from our hearts; yea, it is with the whole of our hearts; it is also from what we know of Him there. We received the true knowledge of Him, and his great salvation into our minds, that He might dwell in our hearts by faith. The whole is from a spiritual perception of Him, formed in our renewed understanding of Him from the word of the Gospel, which hath so captivated our minds, and ravished our spirits, that he, in the whole of what He is, and in every part and particular of what we know of Him, is our object, our subject, our centre, and our circumference, our one supreme and everlasting All. *John* therefore says, in his own person and that of others, *And hereby*

we do know that we know him. It is herefrom we do profess the same ; the ground work of this is in our own souls : it is from thence we thus speak : it is to confirm you in the reality of this, we thus confidently address you : the truth of which you may rely upon. And the inward views, conceptions, and apprehensions formed in our minds of Christ, we find to be altogether agreeable with the revelation made of Him in the sacred scriptures, and which have been wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, agreeably with the same ; and hereby we know and are fully persuaded that we do know Him. We are fully persuaded all the powers of nature could never have produced that knowledge of Christ which we are possessed of ; nor that enjoyment of Him, which we have in our hearts ; nor that communication of his grace to us, which we have received, and do enjoy in Him ; and which we find ourselves the subjects of : nor that communion with Christ which we enjoy : nor that conformity to his holy image and example, in our lives, and conversations : therefore, as we do not question the truth of our knowledge of Him, so we would attribute all we are, as it respects grace and holiness unto Him. Saying, *And hereby we do know him, if we keep his commandments.* And it is what we know of Him, enhances our value and esteem of Him. It causes us to trample on all beside. We have Him dwelling in our hearts : what He gives us to know of Him in personal communion with Him, into the which He is pleased to admit us, this gives us great boldness in our speaking for Him : we say no more of Him, nor concerning Him, beyond what He hath really taught us : we do know Him : we are fully assured of this : we know Him in the secrets of our own souls. There is no outward object, nor subject more really known, and enjoyed, than this, in ourselves who have the knowledge and enjoyment of the Person, and salvation of Jesus Christ the Son of God. We also know the blessed fruits and effects which this knowledge of Jesus produceth in us. It seems necessary here to say, that it is the true knowledge of Christ, produces faith in him, love to him, and hope in him. The true knowledge of Him, leads into communion with Him : on this follows walking in Him, with Him, and before Him unto all well pleasing. These are all connected with each other, and follow one the other. Our knowledge of Christ is the sole foundation of our faith in Him, which is always commensurate with our knowledge of Him. Our communion with Christ altogether depends on the influx of the Holy Ghost. It is in proportion to his taking of the things of Christ and shewing the same unto us. It is He who opens the renewed minds of the beloved of God in Christ Jesus, to such apprehensions of Him, and the Father's love in Him, as swallow up, at seasons, the whole of our spiritual faculties in fellowship with the Lord. I will afresh remind you of the words of my text, that it may be seen how far on I have proceeded in them. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* It was at the first proposed, to set forth in the two former particulars, *what it is to know Christ : from whence this knowledge springs : and how this is evidenced.* This was our first particular. Then secondly, *how believers can say from their own knowledge of Christ, and hereby we do know that we know him.* These distinct particulars have been treated of, and that to the best of my poor ability. I never aimed yet to be a great preacher. It never became me. All I ever aimed at was, simple truth, so far as the glory of Christ, and the good of his people may be promoted. And now I am going on fast in

the journey of life, being in the seventy-second year of it, what I only aim at, is truth as truth; or, in other words, *the truth as it is in Jesus*. To give the true statement of my text, this now, and at all times, is my one aim: as thereby, the Holy Ghost working with the same, it may clearly appear what is contained therein. I am for truth without mixture. I do not conceive any thing we can, or may be bold to add to the word of inspiration but must spoil it. Having therefore been carried through the two former particulars, as hath been mentioned, I come to my next which is,

3. To shew and set forth the reason why the apostle puts in the word *if*; and speaks of the outward evidence, which follows on the former internal evidence of our knowing Christ. *And hereby we do know him, if we keep his commandments.*

The reason of the *If*, as I conceive, is this—it is used by way of distinguishing, and discriminating of one person from another—one professor of Christ from another. The churches of the saints were in the apostle's time, thus far what they are in our time—they were made up both of such as were the subjects of a new and supernatural birth in their minds, so as that they were new creatures in Christ Jesus; and also of those, who were led to confess the truths of the everlasting gospel, and profess and submit to the ordinances thereof, yet they were not born again of the Spirit: the latter were, therefore, but merely nominal professors. This is most awfully the case, with respect to the visible churches of Christ, of every denomination throughout our land: more professors than possessors. The persons in the churches of Christ in the apostle's days, were all received by one and the same mean into the fellowship of the church. They professed faith in Christ: they were then baptized: then they became members; then they were admitted to the table of the Lord; and had a right to all the immunities and privileges of a church-state. When so received and acknowledged, they could not be easily dismissed: therefore, when the apostles wrote to the churches, as they included the whole bulk of them, as those they wrote unto, hence, as I apprehend, at times they use certain words such as the *If* before us, to give an item that they were in doubt of some of them. This is the reason of the *If* here: you have it in the first chapter of this epistle five times: we have the *If* again in the first verse of this very chapter, *If any man*, or any one of us, who have fellowship with the Father, and the Son, who are cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ in the sight of God, *sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*: so in this text now before us, *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*. It seems our apostle took up these words of Christ himself; who said to him and the other ten apostles who were with their Lord, when he gave out that most excellent sermon contained in the 15th and 16th chapters of John's gospel, (in the which the Lord says,) "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:—If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." xv. 3. 9, 10. Judas the traitor was not present when all this was pronounced. Such as then did know Christ, and such also as did in the apostle's time, did not know Him by keeping his commandments. Those who said, *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*, did by no

means intend to convey the least idea, that their keeping his commandments was that which brought them to the knowledge of Him, or into communion with Him. If not, it may be asked, what is the design, or what is designed by the *If* here? I answer, to prove the reality of their knowledge. The inward evidence which they had in their own souls of Christ, his love, and salvation, of his love for them, of his interest in them, of his dwelling in them, of his delight and rejoicing in and over them to do them good, made an essential difference between them, and others. So that such as were altogether indifferent respecting their walk and conversation, by the same to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and thereby to give an outward evidence to others of the reality of their having an inward knowledge of Jesus, of their knowing and possessing Him as their chief and most supreme portion and inheritance, could not be looked on by real saints, in a comfortable point of view. This epistle abounds with many inward and outward evidences of grace: by the which it may be known, whether we belong to Christ, or not. Our text is the very first, with which our apostle begins this subject. Hence we have the *If* here: to distinguish between one professor of the Lord Jesus Christ, and another. The one knows Christ inwardly, and spiritually: the other does not. The one hath communion with the Lord Jesus Christ in what he knows of, and concerning Him: the other knows nothing of Christ but externally, and therefore cannot have the least fellowship with Him. I hope all this is clear and plain unto you. The word *If* is not always used in a way of doubting. The apostle says, *If there be any consolation in Christ*: there can be no *If* here: He is everlasting consolation. It reminds me of Mr. Romaine's opening this word *If* in the 9th verse of the 8th of the Romans. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.* He said, there was no *If* in the business: we either had the Spirit of Christ, or we had not. He therefore said it should be read thus. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, inasmuch, or inasmuch as the Spirit of Christ dwells in you.* I think this to be a very complete explication of the word *If*, in the text before us, and in divers passages of the scriptures in the which it is used, as it is here. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if, or inasmuch, or inasmuch as we keep his commandments.* I am come to my last particular, which is to set forth,

4. What is comprehended in this part of our text, *If we keep his commandments.*

There can be no communion where there is no union. There can be no fruit where there is no root. Where there is no true knowledge of Christ, there can be no real faith in Christ: so that no one but a real believer in Jesus, can bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of God. The apostle throughout the whole of this epistle, does not call for fruit from any one of us. But he insists on this: that those whom Christ died for, are in the Lord's time renewed in the spirit of their minds by the Holy Ghost; who produces in them, such real graces, fruits, and effects, of their new, spiritual, and supernatural birth, as fully prove to themselves, and also outwardly and visibly to others, that they have been with Jesus—that Christ is in them—that they live in Him—that they live on Him—that they live for Him—that they live unto Him. As saith the apostle, *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not*

I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. This is a most blessed life. It contains the whole sum total of a real christian. The words of my text are but an appendix to it. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if, or insomuch as we keep his commandments.* The words most certainly imply this—that such as do know Christ, truly, inwardly, and spiritually, are concerned to give outward evidence of this to others : especially to those they are connected with in a church state : yea, to give in their whole conduct and conversation with others, realizing evidence hereof. This in the words before us, is expressed, by keeping the commandments of Christ : I thus word it, Christ being He who is immediately and positively referred to and expressed ; the apostle having in the former verses spoken of Him, as the advocate and propitiation of his Church : and he speaks of Him here, as inwardly and personally known by his saints : with whom they were personally and particularly acquainted ; the knowledge of whom so dwelt in their minds, and engaged their spiritual faculties, as filled them with divine content. Hence they could say, *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* We have, say they, an inward evidence in our own minds, that we know, and have the true gospel apprehensions of Christ in our souls : it most blessedly operates within us ; we bless the Lord for it ; we would and desire to give an outward evidence of this, by keeping his commandments, to prove hereby, to all with whom we are concerned, that we have been with Jesus. By Christ's commandments here, I should not confine it to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but to all included in the terms, as extending itself to all the precepts which our Lord hath expressed his holy will by in his word. I should be for taking in all which concerns the whole life of faith, and practical christianity, and this as branched out into its various particulars. I shall not attempt this, here : it will in the substance of it, be more or less expressed in pursuing the explanation of this Epistle. I would therefore conclude this present sermon thus—that the true knowledge of Christ is altogether practical ; such as know, and have communion with Him, will keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. May the Lord grant we may be found of the same blessed and happy number, walking in all the commandments, and ordinances of the Lord blameless. May the Lord bless what hath been delivered unto you at this time, so far as agreeable with his most holy word. Amen.