

Monergism

**ENMITY AND RECONCILIATION**

**B E T W E E N**

**GOD & MAN**

**JOHN HOWE**

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# **Enmity and Reconciliation**

## **Between God and Man**

**by John Howe**

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### **A TWO-FOLD DISCOURSE**

I. OF MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD

II. OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

# DISCOURSE I

## OF MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD

And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.—  
COLOSSIANS 1:21.

IT is a great and wonderful context, whereof these words are a part, which the time will not allow me to look into, but presently to fall on the consideration of the words themselves; which briefly represent to us—the wretched and horrid state of men, yet unconverted and not brought home to God; and the happy state of those that are reduced, and brought home to him. The former in those words, "And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works;"—the latter, in those words, "Yet now hath he reconciled." I shall apply my discourse to the former part of the words, and thence observe,—that men in their unconverted state are alienated from God, and enemies to him by their wicked works. This I shall endeavour,

1. To explain, and show you the meaning of it:
2. Evince, and let you see the truth of it:
3. Apply it.

I. For the meaning of it, it is evident that it is the unconverted state of man that is here reflected upon and referred unto; "You that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works;" they were so, before they were turned to God. He writes to those Colossians as to converts, to them that were saints, and faithful brethren in Christ, (v. 2,) to them that were now believers in Christ, and lovers of the saints, (v. 4,) telling them, they sometime had been

enemies by wicked works. Before conversion, they had (as is elsewhere said) "their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God; walking as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind," (Ephes. 4:18,) compared with the preceding verse. This is the deplorable condition of the unconverted world; they are alienated from, and enemies to God by wicked works. We are to consider what this alienation from God doth import. It signifies estrangement, unacquaintance with God; and that without any inclination towards him, or disposition to seek his acquaintance. The word is emphatical, it signifies people of another country—you were like people of another country. Of such a different language, manners and behaviour, they that are converted were to you, and you to them; you were estranged to their speech, customs, and ways. All that is of God was strange to you; men in their unconverted state are strangers to God. Wicked men do not understand the words of the gospel, (John 8:43.) What relates to the kingdom of God, the unconverted man dislikes. (Job 21:14.) They say to God, "depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Man, who was originally made for the service of God and communion with him, is now so degenerated, that he is become a mere stranger to him.

The next word to be taken notice of is enemies, which may seem to add somewhat to the former word alienated; there is not only no inclination towards God, but there is a disinclination; not only no affection, but a disaffection. The carnal mind is enmity to God, and the effects of this enmity are obvious. This alienation from God is voluntary, affected and chosen: men in their unconverted state, are not only strangers to God, but enemies against God, and that in their minds. A most fearful case, full of astonishment, that the very mind of man, the offspring of God—the paternal mind, as a heathen called him—that this most excellent part or power belonging to the nature of man, should be poisoned with malignity, and envenomed with enmity, against the glorious, ever-blessed God!—that the mind of man, his thinking power, the fountain of thoughts, should be set against God who gave him this power to think! Yet into this reason must every man's unacquaintance with God be resolved; they know

not God, and converse not with him, only because they have no mind to it. That noble faculty in man, that resembles the nature of God, is turned off from him, and set on vain things that cannot profit; as also upon wicked and impure things, that render them more unlike to God, and disaffected to him.

By wicked works; which must have a double reference:—Former wicked works, as done by them; and future wicked works, as resolved on by them. 1. The former wicked works, which they have done, have more and more habituated their souls unto a state of distance from God. The longer they live, the longer they sin; and the longer they sin, the more they are confirmed in their enmity against God. 2. Future wicked work. as resolved on to be done. They purpose to live as they have done, and give themselves the same liberty in sin as before, and will not know God, or be acquainted with him, lest they should be drawn off from their resolved sinful course. For the knowledge of God, and a course of sin, are inconsistent things, 1 Cor. 15:34. "Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God." "This is the condemnation, (John 3:19,) that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." They hate the light, because they will not have their course altered, they resolve to do as they have done; and that light, which brings with it a tendency to the obeying of God, they cannot endure. But then, as this alienation of mind and enmity are against the light that reveals God, they finally terminate on the blessed God himself: as God is the term of reconciliation, so he is the term of this enmity and alienation. Wicked men look on God with enmity of mind, under several notions.

1. As he claims to be their Owner, when he claims a principal propriety in them, when he insists on his right in them as their Creator, as having made them out of nothing. When God owns or claims them as their Lord, that first signifies he is their proprietor, or one to whom they belong; but they say they are their own. If we have to do with God, we must quit claim to ourselves, and look on God as our Owner; but this is fixed in the hearts of men, We will be our own;

we will not consent to the claim which God makes to us. "Our tongues are our own," Ps. 12:4. Wicked men might as well say the same thing of their whole selves;—our bodies, strength, time, parts, &c. are our own, and who is Lord over us?

2. If you consider God under the notion of a Ruler, as well as an Owner. Why should not God rule over and govern his own? But this the spirit of man can by no means comport withal, though it is but reasonable that he who gave men their beings, should give them laws; and that he who gave life should also give the rule of life; but this, man, in his degenerate state, will by no means admit of. There are two things considerable in the will of God, which the mind of man cannot comply withal; the sovereignty and the holiness of it.

The sovereignty of God's will. We must look on God's will as absolutely sovereign; man must look on God's will to be above his will; so as that man must cross his own will, to comport with a higher will than his. But this apostatized man will not do, and therefore he is at enmity with God; he will not submit to the will of God, as superior to his will. And then,

There is the holiness of God's will. His law is a holy law, and the renewed man therefore loves it; but because it is holy, therefore the unregenerate man dislikes it.

3. Lastly. God is considered under the notion of our end, our last end, as he is to be glorified and enjoyed by us. There is a disaffection to God, in the hearts of unregenerate men, in this regard also. The spirit of man is opposite to living to the glory of God; every one sets up for himself;—I will be my own end, it shall be the business of my whole life to please myself. Therefore when God is represented as our end, as in the 1 Cor. 10:31, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God;" and as it is in the 2 Cor. 5:15, "No man is to live to himself," &c.;—the great design of our being delivered from the law, (viz. as a cursing, condemning law) is that we may live to God, (Gal. 2:19,) "I am dead to the law, that I might live to God;"

this the unrenewed heart cannot comport with. The last and great design of all our actions must terminate on God; now self is set up as the great idol in opposition to God all the world over; and the spirits of men grow, by custom, more and more disaffected to God, in this respect. Again, God would be owned by us for our best good. This should be the sense of our souls towards him, so it was with the Psalmist, (Ps. 73:25.) "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" &c. But, says the unregenerate soul, the world is better to me than God. And it is upon this account that when overtures are made of changing this state, the unregenerate mind opposes it. Thus have you this doctrine explained and opened. I come now,

II. To evince the truth of this doctrine, and that by two heads of arguments,—Partly, from ourselves, and partly, from God.

First. From ourselves. It is an alienation, and enmity of mind that keeps men off from God and reconciliation with him; which will plainly appear,

1. If we consider that our minds are capable of knowing God. Such a thing is the mind of man, which was originally made for such an exercise, as to be taken up, principally, with things relating to God. Our minds can apprehend what is meant by the nature of God, as a Being of uncreated perfection, in whom all power, wisdom, and goodness do meet; who fills heaven and earth, and from everlasting was God. Our minds tell us that we have a capacity thus to conceive of God; it is in the capacity of man's nature to mind God, as well as to mind vanity; but doth it not. And whence doth this proceed, but from enmity, an alienation of the mind from God?

2. This appears, in that men are wilfully ignorant of God, and are destitute of the knowledge of him out of choice; ignorant, and are willing to be so. This speaks enmity and alienation of mind more expressly and fully. That they are capable of knowing God, and yet are ignorant of him, leaves no other cause assignable; but their desiring so to be, plainly assigns this cause, (Rom. 1:28,) "They liked



not to retain God in their knowledge." It is not grateful to them; (Job 21:14,) "We desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Men are ignorant willingly of that God who made the world and all things therein, (2 Pet. 3:5,) "For this they were willingly ignorant of," &c. They will not know God, though his visible works "show his invisible power and Godhead," (Rom. 1:19, 20.) Now this can signify nothing but alienation, and enmity of mind. Men are willing and industrious to know other things, and labour after the knowledge of them; but they decline the knowledge of God and his ways, being alienated from God "through the blindness of their hearts," Ephes. 4:18. This heart-blindness is chosen, and voluntary blindness signifies their having no mind or will to things of that nature. But now the voluntariness of this ignorance of God, and the enmity that is consequently in it, appears evidently in two sorts of persons.

(1.) In many that are of the more knowing and inquisitive sort, who do all they can to make themselves notional atheists, to blot or rase the notion of God out of their minds. Of them I shall say little here; they do their utmost, but in vain; it will stick as close to them as their thinking power. But their attempt shows their enmity, for they are content to admit the grossest absurdities into their minds, rather than permit that notion to remain unmolested there: rather imagine such a curious frame of things, as this world is, to have come by chance; than that it had a wise, just, holy, as well as powerful Maker. They would count it an absurdity, even unto madness, to think the exquisite picture of a man, or a tree, to have happened by chance; and can allow themselves to be so absurd, as to think a man himself, or a tree, to be casual productions. Is not this the height of enmity!

(2.) In the unthinking generality; of whom, yet unconverted out of the state of apostacy, it is said they are fools, as is the usual language of scripture, concerning wicked or unconverted men; and that such fools, though they never offer at saying in their minds, much less with their mouths, yet they say in their hearts, "no God;" i. e. not there is none, for there is no is in the Hebrew text: the words may rather go in the optative form, than the indicative, O that there were

none! The notion is let alone while it reaches not their hearts; if it do, they only wish it were otherwise. This speaks their enmity the more, for the notion lays a continual testimony against the bent of their hearts and constant practice, that while they own a God, they never fear, nor love him accordingly: and they grossly misrepresent him, sometimes as all made up of mercy without justice or holiness; and so think they need no reconciliation to him, he and they are well agreed already: sometimes think of him as merciless, and irreconcilable; and therefore, never look after being reconciled to him.

3. It appears hence, that men do seldom think of God, when-as a thought of God may be as soon thought as any other, and would cost us as little. Why not as well on God, as upon any of those vanities, about which they are commonly employed? It is a wonderful thing to consider, how man is capable of forming a thought! how a thought arises in our minds! And how sad is it to consider, that though God hath given to man a thinking power, yet he will not think of him! God has given to man a mind that can think, and think on him, as well as on any thing else. My body cannot think, if my mind and spirit is gone. Though God gave man the power of thought, yet men will not use or employ their thoughts otherwise than about vain or forbidden things. God forms the spirit of man within him, hath put an immortal spirit into him, whence a spring of thoughts might ascend heavenwards. When we have thousands of objects to choose of, we think of any thing rather than God! and not only turn this way or that, besides him, but tend continually downwards in opposition to him. Yea, men cannot endure to be put in mind of God; the serious mention of his name is distasteful. Whence can this proceed, that a thought of God cast in, is thrown out as fire from one's bosom whence is it, but from the enmity of mind that is in man against God?

4. It further appears hence, that men are so little concerned about the favour of God. Whomsoever we love, we naturally value their love; but whether God be a friend, or an enemy, it is all one to the unrenewed soul, if there be no sensible effects of his displeasure. The

men of this world only value its favours, the favour of God they value not; whereas, in his favour is life, in the account of holy and good men, (Ps. 30:5,) yea, they judge his lovingkindness is better than life without it, Ps. 63:3. When men shall go from day to day, without considering whether God hath a favour for them, or not; whether they are accepted, or not, whether they have found grace in his eyes, or not, &c. what doth this declare, but an enmity of mind, and alienation from God? If men had true love for God, it could not be but they would greatly value his love.

5. That men do so little converse and walk with God, doth speak a fixed alienation of mind, and enmity against God. Walking with God includes knowing, and minding him; but it adds all other motions of soul towards him, together with continuance, and approving ourselves to him, therein. Now agreement is required to walking with God. Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" Hos. 3:3. Men walk not with God, because they are not come to an agreement with him; God's agreement with us, and ours with him, is that we may walk together. If we walk not with God, it is because there is no agreement; and what doth that import, but an alienation of mind from God? Says God, I would not have you live in the world at so great a distance from me, I would walk with you, and have you walk with me; and for this end I would come to an agreement with you. But sinners will not come to any agreement with God, and thence it comes to pass that they walk not with God; they begin the day without God, walk all the day long without God, lie down at night without God, and the reason is because there is no agreement, and that denotes enmity; especially considering,

6. That daily converse with God would cost us nothing. To have any man's thoughts full of heaven, and full of holy fear and reverence of God, &c. (which is included in walking with God) what inconvenience is in this? What business will this hinder? When a man goes about his ordinary affairs, will it do any hurt to take God with him? No business will go on the worse for it; it will not detract from the success of our affairs, 1 Cor. 7:24, "Let every man, wherein

he is called, therein abide with God." Let your state be what it will, there can be no business in this world, but what you may do with God as well as without God, and much better.

7. Which makes the matter yet plainer, how uncomfortably do men live in this world, by reason of their distance from God, and unacquaintedness with him, Job 35:10. But no one saith, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" They choose rather to groan under their burdens alone, than cry to God their Maker, as at the 9th verse of that chapter. When men will endure the greatest extremity rather than apply themselves to God, what doth this resolve into but enmity against God?

8. That men do so universally disobey God, bespeaks alienation and enmity of mind. As obedience proceeds from love, so disobedience proceeds from enmity: and for this I shall only instance two great precepts, wherein the mind and will of God is expressed; which I mention, and insist upon (though briefly) as things that concern the constant and daily practice of every Christian:—1. A course of prayer to God, in secret, and—2. Having our conversation in heaven. How express are both of these precepts, in the same chapter; the former Matt. 6:6, the latter, v. 19–21. Now consider, whether our disobedience to these two precepts do not discover great enmity in our hearts against God. What! to refuse to pray and pour out our souls to him in secret; to refuse placing our treasure and our hearts in heaven; what doth this signify, but aversion, and a disaffected heart? Let us consider each of them severally and apart by itself. We are a Christian assembly, how should it startle us to be (any of us) convicted of enmity against God, under the Christian name, in two so plain cases?

(1.) For prayer. It is a charge laid upon all persons considered in their single and personal capacity, Matt. 6:6, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." I fear that most of them who bear the Christian name carry the matter so as if there were no such place

in the bible. When the mind and will of God is made known to us by his Son, who came out of his bosom, that he will be sought unto; and that not only publicly but secretly and daily; that as we are taught by our Lord himself, to pray for our daily bread, and the forgiveness of our daily trespasses, we are also to pray in secret, to him that sees in secret; can such commands be constantly neglected and disobeyed, and not signify the contrary bent of our will; especially when we consider, that it is enjoined us for our own good? It would be profane to say, What profit is it to us to call upon the Almighty? but it is most justly to be said, What profit is it to the Almighty, that we call upon him? It is honourable to him, but very profitable to ourselves. If we know not how to pray in a corner, confessing our sins, and supplicating for mercy, we cannot but live miserable lives. When therefore this is not done, whence is it, but from an enmity of mind? To a friend we can unbosom ourselves, not to an enemy.

I might also enlarge upon family prayer, but if closet prayer were seriously minded, you that have families would not dare to neglect prayer with them too. But if either be performed with coldness and indifferency, it makes the matter worse, or more plainly bad; and shows it is not love, or any lively affection, that puts you upon praying, but a frightened conscience only; and a miserably mistaken deluded one, that makes you think the God you pray to will be mocked or trifled with, or that he cannot perceive whether your heart be with him, or against him. And so instead of worshipping him, or giving him honour in that performance, you reproach and affront him; and all this while how vastly doth the temper of your mind disagree with the mind of God. I would, saith the blessed God, have a course of prayer run through the whole course of your lives, and all this that your hearts may be lifted up from earth to heaven, that your hearts may be in heaven every day, according to Matt. 6:19, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but treasures in heaven. Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also." And so we are led to the other precept mentioned before.

(2.) As to a heavenly conversation. God would not have reasonable creatures, who have intelligent spirits about them, to grovel and crawl like worms in the dust of this lower world, as if they had no nobler sort of objects to converse with than the things of this earth; nothing fitter for the contemplation, exercise, and enjoyment of an immortal mind. The saints are finally designed for an inheritance in light, (Colos. 1:12,) and their thoughts and affections ought to be there beforehand, that they may become meet for that inheritance. Will it do a man any harm to have frequent forethoughts of the everlasting joy, purity, and bliss of the heavenly state! How joyous and pleasant must it be! And why are we called Christians, if he, who is our Lord and Teacher, revealing his mind to us, and expressly charging us to seek first the kingdom of God, to set our affections on the things above, &c. shall not be regarded? Why is not heaven every day in our thoughts? Why will we lose the pleasure of a heavenly life, and exchange it for earthly care and trouble, or vanity at the best? Why is it? no other reason can be given, but only an alienation of our minds from God.

9. Another argument to prove this alienation, and enmity against God, is the unsuccessfulness of the gospel: which can be resolvable into nothing else but such an enmity. The design of the gospel is to bring us into a union with the Son of God, and to believe on him whom the Father hath sent. Christ seeks to gather in souls to God, but they will not be gathered. This is matter of fearful consideration, that when God is calling after men, by his own Son, that there be so few that will come to him. How few are there that say, Give me Christ, or I am lost; none can reconcile me to God, but Christ! You are daily besought, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled, (2 Cor. 5:20,) but in vain! What doth this signify, but obstinate, invincible enmity?

Secondly. Another head of arguments may be taken from several considerations that we may have of God in this matter: whence it will appear, that nothing but enmity, on our parts, keeps us at that distance from God as we generally are at;—and consider to that purpose,

1. That God is the God of all grace, the fountain of goodness, the element of love. Why are men at that distance from him, who is goodness, and grace, and love itself? The reason is not on God's part; 1 John 4:16, "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." What can our so great distance from this God signify—from the most perfect, the most excellent goodness—but the most horrid kind, and the highest pitch, of enmity! Did men apprehend this, what frightful monsters would they appear to themselves! This is not only a plain, but a terrible declaration of a most unaccountable enmity, on our part.

2. God is still pleased to continue our race on earth, a succession of men in this world, from age to age, made after his own image, with minds and spirits that are intelligent, and immortal; which declares a strong propension in God towards such a sort of creatures, the inhabitants of this lower world, though degenerated, and fallen from him. Notwithstanding all their neglect of him, in former ages, yet new generations of men still spring up, capable of knowing, and serving him, Prov. 8:31. In the foreseen height of man's enmity, this was the steady bent of his mind towards them, to rejoice in the habitable parts of this earth, and to have his delights with the sons of men. Thus also in the 2 Chron. 6:18, do we find Solomon in a rapture of admiration, on this account: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on earth?" &c. And the Psalmist, (Ps. 68:18,) that "gifts are given to the rebellious (the most insolent of enemies) that the Lord God might dwell among them," how admirable, and unconceivable, a wonder is this! The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and will he yet dwell with men on earth! And we yet find, notwithstanding God's great condescension, that there is still a distance; whence can this be, but from man's aversion, and enmity of mind against God? Thus are men still requiting God evil for his goodness; God will dwell with men on earth, but men will not dwell with him, nor admit of his dwelling with them; they say to him depart from us. Job 21:14. It is thus, from age to age, and generation to generation, which shows God's goodness on his part, and the enmity on man's part. See to this purpose, Ps. 14 and 53 the beginning of each.

3. Consider the forbearance of God towards you, while you are continually at mercy. With what patience doth he spare you, though your own hearts must tell you that you are offending creatures, and whom he can destroy in a moment! He spares you that neglect him. He is not willing that you should perish, but come to the knowledge of the truth, that you may be saved; by which he calls and leads you to repentance, Rom. 2:4. On God's part, here is a kind intention; but on man's part, nothing but persevering enmity.

4. Consider God's large and wonderful bounty towards the children of men in this world, and the design of it, Acts 17:25, 26, "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, that they might seek after him." Ps. 68:19, "He daily loadeth us with his benefits." "He gives us all things richly to enjoy," Acts 14:17. God leaves not himself without witness that he doth men good. He gives men rain from heaven, when they want it; and, when unseasonable, he withholds it. It is a great thing to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, (Ps. 107:42,) his wonderful works towards the children of men; to understand our mercies and comforts, and what their meaning and design is. By mercies to our outward man, God designs to draw our hearts and minds to himself. Mercies are bestowed on them that have the power of thought, to consider the end of all God's mercies; it is bespeaking, and seeking to win our hearts to himself, Hos. 11:4. It is drawing us with these cords of a man, with bands of love, which plainly shows what the case requires, that the minds and hearts of men are very averse and alienated from him, and therefore need such drawing.

5. And that which is more than all the rest, is God's sending his Son into the world, to procure terms of peace for us, and then to treat with us thereupon; and that in him he is "reconciling the world to himself," 2 Cor. 5:19. Doth not reconciliation suppose enmity, as here, and in the text: you that were enemies in your minds—yet he hath reconciled? As we have noted that on our parts, our withstanding and too commonly frustrating his overtures, speaks enmity and obstinacy therein; so on his part those overtures



themselves speak it too. Here is the greatest kindness and good-will on God's part, that can be conceived; but it supposes what we are evincing, ill-will in us. Christ came to seek and save that which was lost. What a lost state was our state! What! to be engaged in a war against him that made us! "Woe to him that strives with his Maker," Isa. 45:9. Fallen man is little apprehensive of it now; if we continue unreconciled to the last, at death it will be understood what a lost state we are in. Upon this account it will then appear; but this was our state before when it appeared not; in this state Christ pitied us when we had no pity for ourselves. Christ came not into the world to save men only at the hour of their death, from hell; but to raise up to himself a willing people, that may serve and glorify God in their life on earth. He is, for this purpose, intent on this reconciling design; and how earnest, how alluring were his solicitations, in the days of his flesh! "Come to me, all ye that are weary"—"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." How pathological his lamentations for the unreconcilable! "O that thou hadst known the things belonging to thy peace." And his blood was shed at last as the blood of propitiation, of a reconciling sacrifice, to reconcile God's justice to us; and thereupon also, as in this context; "having made peace by the blood of his cross," (v. 20,) to vanquish our enmity, to reconcile us who were "enemies in our minds"—v. 21, 22.

6. Consider Christ sending, and continuing, from age to age, the gospel in the world; the design whereof may be understood by the manifest import and substance of it, and by the titles given to it; as it reveals Christ, the Mediator, the Peacemaker, in his person, natures, offices, acts, sufferings, and performances; as it contains the great commands of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, with the promises of pardon, and eternal life, with whatsoever is requisite to our present good state God-ward, and our final blessedness in him, as also the various enforcements of such precepts, and confirmations of such promises, with copious explications of the one and the other; and as it is called the ministry of reconciliation, (2 Cor. 5:18,) the word wherein peace is preached

by Jesus Christ, (Acts 10:36,) the gospel of peace, and of glad tidings, (Rom. 10:15,) as that very word gospel signifies.

This gospel was, in its clearer manifestation at the fulness of time, introduced with great magnificence and solemnity into the world, as the law had been by the ministry of angels. When the Sun of righteousness, the light of the world, was arising, and dawning upon it; then did a multitude of the heavenly host appear, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men," Luke 2:13, 14. But this gospel is not a more express declaration of God's good-will towards men, than their deportment under it, their continuing to live as without God in the world, is of their ill-will, disaffection, and enmity against God.

7. And lastly, the strivings of the Spirit, in the hearts of ministers preaching the gospel, and with the souls of men to whom it is preached, show that there is a mighty enmity to be overcome.

(1.) God's giving forth his Spirit to ministers, enabling them to strive with sinners, to bring them to Christ, according to the working of that power which works in them mightily, Col. 1:29. What need of such striving, but that there is a great enmity in the minds of people to be conquered and overcome? Sometimes we read of ministers of the gospel weeping over souls, who, for their too intent minding of earthly things, are called enemies to the cross of Christ, Phil. 3:18. Sometimes they are ready to breathe out their own souls towards them among whom they labour, (1 Thess. 2:8;) sometimes represented as travailing in birth with them that are committed to their charge, Gal. 4:19. There are ministers, whose hearts are in pangs and agonies for the souls of sinners, when the things of God are too apparently neglected and not regarded by them; and when they see destruction from the Almighty is not a terror to them; and while they visibly take the way that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death. They would, if possible, save them with fear, and pluck them as firebrands out of the fire—the fire of their own lusts, and fervent enmity against God and godliness—and save

them from his flaming wrath. Is all this unnecessary? and what makes it necessary, but that there is a counter-striving, an enmity working in the hearts of men against the Spirit's striving in the ministry, to be overcome?

(2.) The Spirit also strives immediately with the souls of sinners, and pleads with them, sometimes as a Spirit of conviction, illumination, fear, and dread; sometimes as a Spirit of grace, wooing, and beseeching; and when his motions are not complied with, there are complaints of men's grieving, vexing, quenching, resisting the Spirit; (Acts 7:51,) which resistance implies continual striving. No striving but doth suppose an obstruction and difficulty to be striven withal; there could be no resisting, if there were not counter-striving; and hereby despite is done to the Spirit of grace. O fearful aggravation, that such a Spirit is striven against! It is the Spirit of grace, love, and goodness, the Spirit of all kindness, sweetness, and benignity, which a wicked man doth despite unto, Heb. 10:29. How vile and horrid a thing, to requite grace, love, and sweetness with spite! As if the sinner should say, thou wouldest turn me to God, but I will not be turned! The blessed God says: "Turn at my reproof, I will pour out my Spirit unto you," Prov. 1:23. There are preventive insinuations, upon which, if we essay to turn, plentiful effusions of the Spirit may be hoped to ensue; for he is the Spirit of grace. When we draw back, and resist, or slight those foregoing good motions of that holy Spirit, this is despiting him. And doth not this import enmity in a high degree, that the Spirit needs strive so much that it may be overcome, as with some, at his own pleasure, he doth? with others, in just displeasure, he strives no more, and so it is never overcome!

III. We come now to the application, wherein the subject would admit and require a very abundant enlargement, if we were not within necessary limits. Two things I shall take notice of, as very necessary to be remarked, and most amazingly strange and wonderful, by way of introduction to some further use.

First, That ever the spirit of man, a reasonable, intelligent being, God's own offspring, and whereto he is not only a Maker but a Parent, styled the Father of spirits, should be degenerated into so horrid, so unnatural a monster! What! to be a hater of God! the most excellent and all-comprehending good! and thy own Father! "Hear, O heavens—and earth, saith the Lord, I have nourished, and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," Isa. 1:2. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! and be horribly afraid! be ye very desolate!" As if all the blessed inhabitants of that upper world should rather forsake their glorious mansions, leave heaven empty, and run back into their original nothing, than endure such a sight! An intelligent spirit hating God, is the most frightful prodigy in universal nature! If all men's limbs were distorted, and their whole outer-man transformed into the most hideous shapes, it were a trifle, in comparison with this deformity of the soul.

Secondly, That it should be thus, and they never regret, nor perceive it! What self-loathing creatures would men be could they see themselves! So as never to endure themselves, while they find they do not love God!—but men are generally well pleased with themselves for all this. Though the case is so plain they will not see it; when all the mentioned indications show it, they never charge or suspect themselves of such a thing as this enmity against God! God charges them, and doth he not know them? The pagan world, they are God-haters, (Rom. 1:30,) even with a hellish hatred, as the word there signifies. They that profess his name are apt to admit this true of the Gentiles; but do we think our Lord Jesus did injuriously accuse the Jews too, that they had both seen and hated him and his Father? John 15:24. How remote was it from a Jew, who boasted themselves God's peculiar people, to think himself a hater of God; and what were they of whom he says by the prophet "My soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me," (which is pre-supposed, Zech. 11:8,) and most justly, for can there be a more loathsome thing, than to abhor goodness itself? What! the most perfect benignity! And those Cretians had received the Christian faith, whom the apostle exhorts Titus to rebuke sharply, that they might be sound in it; and of whom

he says, that "professing to know God, in works they denied him, being abominable," Titus 1:16. Hence is our labour lost, in beseeching men to be reconciled to God, while they own no enmity. Since this matter is so evident, that this is the temper of the unconverted world God-ward, that they are alienated from him, and enemies in their minds towards him, by wicked works; it is then beyond all expression strange, that they never observe it in themselves (as the toad is not offended at its own poisonous nature) and are hereupon apt to think that God observes it not, nor is displeased with them for it. It is strange they should not observe it in themselves upon so manifold evidence. Do but recount with yourselves, and run over the several heads of evidence that have been given. Can you deny you have minds capable of knowing God? Cannot you conceive of wisdom, power, goodness, truth, justice, holiness, and that these may be, either more manifest or in more excellent degrees, even among creatures, in some creatures more than in others; but that Being, in which they are in the highest and most absolute perfection, must be God? Can you deny that you have lived in great ignorance of God much of your time? That your ignorance was voluntary, having such means of knowing him as you have had? That you have usually been thoughtless and unmindful of him in your ordinary course? That the thoughts of him have been ungrateful, and very little welcome, or pleasant to you? That you have had little converse with him, little trust, reverence, delight, or expectation placed on him, as the object? That you have not been wont to concern him in your affairs, to consult him, to desire his concurrence? That you have not thought of approving yourself to him in your designs and actions, but lived as without him in the world? That you have not designed the pleasing or obeying of him in the course of your conversation? That the gospel, under which you have lived, hath had little effect upon you, to alter the temper of your spirits towards him? That if his Spirit hath sometimes awakened you, raised some fear, or some desires, now and then in your souls, you have suppressed, and stifled, and striven against such motions? Do not these things, together, discover an enmity against God, and the ways of God? And is it not strange you cannot see this, and perceive a

disaffection to God by all this in yourselves? What is so near a man as himself? Have you not in you a reflecting power? "Know ye not your own selves," as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 13:5. Yea, generally, men never find fault with themselves upon any such account; and consequently think themselves, in such respects, very innocent in the sight of God, and think he finds no fault with them. Now these two things being premised will make way for the following uses. We infer therefore,

1. That whereas it so evidently appears that men are at enmity with God, it cannot but be consequent that God is not well pleased with them. No one is well pleased to have another hate him. God discerns that in the inward temper of men's minds, wherewith he is not well pleased; namely this alienation of mind from him, this wicked enmity that is so generally found in them. They are wont to make light of secret, internal sin; the ill posture of their minds they think a harmless innocent thing. But this he remonstrates against, takes notice of with dislike and displeasure; and is counterworking this spirit of enmity, not only by his word, but by his Spirit of love and power. Though he doth not testify his displeasure by flames and thunderbolts, yet he observes, and approves not the course and current of their thoughts and affections: though he permit them, sometimes without sensible rebuke, to run on long in their contempt of him, yet he declares it to be wickedness: the wicked "have not God in all their thoughts," Ps. 10:4. He expostulates about it: "wherefore do the wicked condemn God?" v. 13, threatens them with hell for their forgetting him, (Ps. 9:17,) yet sinners are apt to conclude, that God doth not see, or disallow, any thing of that kind, Ps. 94:7. How unapt are they to admit any conviction of heart-wickedness, though it is more than intimated to be destructive, Jer. 4:14, "Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved:" q. d. thou art lost if thy heart be not purged; yea, when it is so plain in itself that enmity against God, which hath its seat in the heart, makes a man's soul a very hell, yet they seem to think themselves very innocent creatures, when they are as much devilized as a mind dwelling in flesh can be! This is the common practical error and mistake men lie

under, that they think God takes notice of no evil in them, but what other men can observe, and reproach them for. But he knows the inward bent and inclination of their minds and spirits; why else is he called the heart-searching God? and knows that this is the principal and most horrid wickedness, that is to be found among the children of men, an alienated mind from God, and the root of all the rest. The fountain of wickedness is within a man; Simon Magus' wickedness lay in his thought; it is said to him "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee," Acts 8:22. And when the prophet exhorts (as before, Jer. 4:14,) to wash the heart from wickedness, he adds: "how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" And our Saviour tells us, out of the heart, first, proceed evil thoughts, and then all the other wickednesses after mentioned; murders, adulteries, &c. Mat. 15:19. And that enmity and alienation of mind, that turns off the whole current of a man's thoughts from God, is the original evil; and, by consequence, lets them loose to every thing else that offends him, and ruins themselves. Yet when their very hearts are such a hell of wickedness (as what is more hellish than enmity against God?) they are notwithstanding wont to say, they have good hearts.

2. Hence see the absolute necessity of regeneration. A doctrine at which most men do wonder, which our Saviour intimates, when he says, (John 3:7,) "Marvel not at it, viz. that I said, you must be born again." But who may not now apprehend a necessity of being regenerate? What will become of thee, if thou diest with such a disaffected mind God-ward? Do but suppose your soul going out of the body in this temper, full of disaffection towards the ever-blessed God, before whose bright glory, and flaming majesty (to thee a consuming fire) thou must now appear, though most unwilling, and as full of horror and amazing dread! How will thine heart then meditate terror, and say within thee, "This is the God I could never love! whom I would never know! to whom I was always a willing stranger! whose admirable grace never allured, or won my heart! who in a day of grace, that is now over with me, offered me free pardon, and reconciliation; but I was never at leisure to regard it! the

love of this world, which I might have known to be enmity against God, had otherwise engaged me. It hath been the constant language of my heart to him: Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways; I must now hear from him that just, and terrible voice, even by the mouth of the only Redeemer and Saviour of sinners, 'Depart from me, I know thee not.' And into how horrid society must I now go! The things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, more glorious things than ever entered into the heart, are all prepared for lovers of God. And for whom can everlasting fire be prepared, but for the devil and his angels, and such other accursed God-haters as I have been," Matt. 25:41?—Recollect yourselves: consider the present posture, and temper of your souls, and what your way and course is. You care not to come nigh to God now, but love to live at a distance from him, through enmity against him, from whence proceeds your departing from him and saying to him, 'Depart from us.' But another day, you will have enough of departing from God; a wicked man's life is nothing else but a continual forsaking of God, or departing from him. I appeal to your own hearts, concerning the justice of that mentioned repartee; they say now to God, "Depart from us," Job 21:14; and God will then say to them, "Depart from me," Matt. 25:41. That man's soul must thus perish, that lives and dies at enmity with God. Regeneration slays this enmity, and implants in the soul divine love. Therefore we must be regenerate, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, John 3:3, 5. A man must have a new heart and a new spirit created in him, in which heart and spirit the love of God is the reigning principle. And therefore I repeat to you, the things which eye hath not seen—and a crown of life—are prepared and promised "to them that love him," 1 Cor. 2:9, Jam. 1:12. You may yourselves collect the rest.

3. Hence take notice of the seat and subject of this regeneration and change. It is the mind of man, for you are enemies in your minds by wicked works. "We are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds," (Ephes. 4:23;) to be "transformed, by the renewing of our minds," &c. Rom. 12:2. You that have not considered what regeneration is, I tell you, it is to have your mind altered and changed; that whereas



you did not mind God or Christ, your minds being changed, you savour, and delight in the things of God, Rom. 8:5, 7. "They that are after the flesh savour the things of the flesh.—The carnal mind is enmity against God." It is the mind, therefore, not as speculative merely, but as practical, and active, that must be renewed. Inquire, therefore, what change do you find in your minds? Are you in mind and spirit more holy, spiritual, and serious? And are your minds more delightfully taken up with the things of God than formerly? Till your minds are thus changed, they cannot be towards God; but will be perpetually full of enmity against God. You will only mind earthly things, (Phil. 3:19, 20;) with the neglect of God, and heaven, and heavenly things. If ever the gospel doth us good, it must be by the change of our minds.

4. And in the last place, hence understand the absolute necessity of reconciliation with God, because you have been alienated and enemies against him by wicked works. Regeneration cures in part your enmity, but makes no atonement for your guilt in having been enemies; for this you need a reconciler that could satisfy for you. What will become of the man that is not reconciled to God? If you be God's enemy, can he be your friend? And if God be your enemy, he is the most terrible enemy. How can we lie down in peace, in an unreconciled state; or without knowing whether we are reconciled or not? Let not the sun go down this day, and leave you at enmity with God. If you have fallen out with a man, the sun is not to go down on your wrath; and is your enmity against God a juster, or more tolerable thing? O let not the sun go down before you have made your peace. And for your encouragement, consider that it is the office of the Son of God to reconcile you to him. He is the reconciler, the peace-maker, the maker up of breaches between God and man. He is, if you resist not, ready, by his Spirit, to remove the enmity that lies in your minds against God; and by his blood, he causes divine justice to be at peace with you. If you find the former effect, that assures you of the latter. Bless God that he hath provided, and given you notice of, such a reconciler, 2 Cor. 5:19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Bless God that he hath sent and settled one among

you, on this errand, to "beseech you to be reconciled to God," v. 20. "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven;" and blessed is the man who can say, I was once an enemy, but now am I reconciled; formerly I saw no need of Christ, but now I cannot live without him. How fearful a thing will it be to die unreconciled to God, under a gospel of reconciliation! while the voice of the gospel of grace is calling upon you, Return and live; "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Beware of dying unreconciled, under such a gospel. When you return hence, retire into a corner, and consider what a wicked enmity of mind you have had against God and Christ; and pray that you may be "renewed in the spirit of your mind," Eph. 4:23. Let a holy resolution be taken up at last, (after many neglects) as was by the poor distressed prodigal, after he had long lived a wandering life, (Luke 15:18, and onward;) "I will arise, and go to my Father," &c. and you will find God a merciful Father, ready to receive you, and with joy! O the joyful meeting between a returning soul, and a sin-pardoning God! When once your strangeness and your enmity are overcome, and you are come into a state of amity and friendship with God, then will the rest of your time be pleasantly spent, in a holy, humble walking with God, under the conduct of grace, till you come eternally to enjoy him in glory.

## **DISCOURSE II**

### **OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN**

And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh, through death, &c. COL. 1:21, 22.

WE have, from the former words of this text, shown the fearful, horrid state of unconverted sinners; that, as such, they are alienated and enemies in their mind by wicked works; and come now to show,

from the words that follow, the blessed state of the converted. "You, now hath he reconciled," &c. Here is instance given of the happiest change that ever was made in the case of sinful, wretched creatures; and far above all our expectations, if we had not been told that as far as the heavens are above the earth, so far, in acts of mercy, are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, Isa. 55. Otherwise, when we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion against him, that were alienated, and enemies to him in their minds by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, "Well, and what became of the business? how did it issue? what was the event?"—and would expect to hear, "Why, fire came down from heaven upon them and consumed them in a moment; or, the earth opened, and swallowed them up quick." Yea, and if the matter were so reported to us, if we did hear fire and brimstone, flames and thunderbolts, immediately came down upon them, and destroyed them in a moment, who would not say, So I thought, who could expect other? But that it should be said, such as were alienated from God, and his very enemies in their mind by wicked works, those hath his own Son reconciled! into what a transport of wonder and praises would this cast any considering mind! with what amazement would it make us cry out, O what hath God wrought! What wonders can the power of divine grace bring about! How unexpected, how surprising a thing is this! Especially when we also consider how this was brought to pass; the Son of God effected it in the body of his own flesh through death. He died for it! rather than such impure venomous worms, and that were as weak and defenceless as they were vile and wicked, should at last suffer the dreadful consequences of so desperate and unequal a war against the Almighty, which could not be other than their own ruin, and eternal death, he chose himself to die for them. This is the strange amazing subject we have to consider. And we cannot but confess and consider it as a strange thing, if we were only told it as that which had fallen out in some other country, in any remote part of the world, or in some other world. But when we understand, as for the former part, this is the common case of men on earth, and therefore that it was our own case, to have been alienated from God and enemies to him

in our minds by wicked works; and as to the latter part, that to us the proposal and offer is made of being reconciled in this strange way; in what agonies, in what consternation of spirit should we be, when we can with greatest certainty say the former, if we cannot say the latter! And if we can, in what a transport, in what raptures of admiration, joy, and praise, should we say it, any of us who hath heard, or now reads these words, even me who was alienated, and an enemy in my mind, by wicked works, yet me now hath he reconciled! Can you say so? how should your heart leap and spring within you, at the reciting of these words! and if you cannot as yet say this, with particular application, and it docs not therefore raise a present joy, yet it may beget hope in you; for think with yourself, if with some the matter hath been brought to this blessed issue, why may it not with me? and upon the one account, or the other, now set yourself seriously to consider these latter words. And that you may do so with the more advantage, take distinct notice of these two things, that are to be severally treated of;—1. Of this blessed work itself, brought about by your merciful and glorious Redeemer, reconciliation with God; "You hath he reconciled."—2. The wonderful way wherein he hath effected it; "in the body of his flesh, through death."

1. Consider this reconciliation itself. Which that we may do with just advantage, both to the truth and ourselves, we must take heed of too much narrowing so important a subject; but take it in its due extent and compass, as comprehending all that truly belongs to it; and so it must be understood to be mutual between God and us; and to include both our reconciliation to him, and his reconciliation to us. Thus the proper import of the word, the scope of the apostle's present discourse, and the nature of the thing, lead us to understand it. The word being used when two parties have been at variance, not only signifies the laying down of enmity on the one side, but to be received into grace and favour on the other; as might be shown of the original words, that are wont to be thus rendered, if it were needful, or at this time fit. But it sufficiently appeals in the common use of this way of speaking among ourselves. And if we consider the scope of the apostle's discourse, nothing can be more agreeable to it, which

is manifestly to exalt and magnify Christ, first, as Creator, affirming that all things visible, and invisible were made by him, and for him, as v. 16, and then afterwards, there having been a rupture and breach in the creation, by the apostacy and revolt of some creatures; others also, being in an uncertain and mutable state, liable to a like failure and defection; he is further magnified, as the Reconciler of such as were thought fit to be restored, and the Establisher of such as stood, v. 17. Now the representation of his performance as a Reconciler had been very imperfect, if he had designed therein only to signify a reconciliation, effected by him on the one side, leaving the other unreconciled. And though it be true, that taking this reconciliation in reference to the immediately foregoing words of this verse, "you that were enemies," might seem to limit it to that one sense, as if it meant only reconciliation on our part, consisting in the laying down of our enmity; yet the following words, that show how this reconciliation is brought about, "the body of his flesh through death," signify as much for the extending of it to the other reconciliation also; viz. on God's part towards us: for they plainly mean that this reconciliation is brought about by sacrifice, viz. by our Lord Jesus' offering himself upon the cross for us (as hereafter we shall have occasion more largely to show). Now a sacrifice is offered to God only, not to men, and being for reconciliation, must principally, and in the first place, intend the reconciling of God to us; though it secondarily hath its great use, for the reconciling us to God, also; as hereafter we shall show. And it is in the nature of the thing very evident; reconciliation supposing a difference and displeasure between two parties, as what hath been, it must include the agreement of both, as that which now is. A willingness to be reconciled there may be on one side, when there is none on the other, as it is often and long between God and men; but if there be actual reconciliation, it is always mutual, unless the one party deceive, or impose upon, the other, pretending to be reconciled when he is not: which, in the case between God and us, can never be; for neither can we deceive God, nor will lie deceive us. Therefore we shall treat of both the parts of this reconciliation: of men to God, and of God to them.

First.—Our reconciliation to God. And though that be proposed to be first insisted on, let none think it is therefore looked upon as deserving, or as being any way a cause of, his reconciliation to us. For as our enmity and rebellion against him, cannot do him real hurt, though it does him infinite wrong; so our love and obedience, though they are most due to him, can profit him nothing. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? is it a gain to him, if we be righteous?" Job 22:2, 3. "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 a son of man," Ch. 35:7, 8. But by neither can we do the one or other to him. It should therefore be far from us to imagine we can procure his favour or reconciliation, by any thing we can do. And, know sinner, he is beforehand with thee, in the offer of reconciliation, and in real willingness to be reconciled; for his offer is most sincere. When therefore out of a state of enmity, thou art brought to love him, it is because he loved thee first, 1 John 4:19. But take this aright, that thou mayest not deceive thyself, nor wrong him. Before our reconciliation to him, his gospel truly speaks him reconcilable, and offering us reconciliation; when his offer is accepted and complied with, then his gospel speaks him actually reconciled. His offer of reconciliation shows his compassion, which is love to the miserable; herein he is beforehand with them whom he finally saves; he loves them with this love while they yet hate him, and are full of enmity against him. From this love it is that he is reconcilable to them, willing to forgive all their former enmity and rebellions, if yet they will be reconciled, and turn to him with their whole souls. And this he testifies to them in his gospel; and hereby, his Spirit working in and by this gospel of his grace, he overcomes them, conquers their enmity, and causes them to love him whom before they hated. But this actual reconciliation is always accompanied with delight, which is love to the amiable, such as he hath now made lovely, by transforming them into his own image, "who is love," 1 John 4:16. This is friendly, complacential love, that freely converses, and holds communion with the beloved, so that they "dwell in him, and he in them," as in the same place.

It is profane, therefore, and an insolent presumption for any to say, God is reconciled to me, he delights and takes pleasure in me, while they are unreconciled to him, and have hearts full of wicked enmity against him. They do even weary him with their words, when they say, "Every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them," Mal. 2:17. It is an affront to his excellent majesty, a reproach to his glorious holiness and the purity of his nature, a defiance to the justice of his government, to think him well pleased, when they persist in their rebellions against him; or that he will be reconciled to them, when this is still the temper and posture of their souls towards him. "He is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him; he hates the workers of iniquity," Ps. 5:4, 5. Any such thought he will severely and terribly avenge. If any man bless himself in his heart, and say, "I shall have peace," when he walks in the imagination of his heart, Deut. 29:19, 20, "God will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man." And it is, on the other hand, a wicked, provoking unbelief, a high affront to him, a giving him the lie, if one, really willing to be reconciled, do apprehend him irreconcilable, or say in his heart, God will never show me mercy. It is as much as to say that the word of his grace is nothing but deceit, and his whole gospel is made up of falsehood. Therefore, though our reconciliation to him is no cause of his reconciliation to us, yet (according to the method which he hath settled, as most agreeable to his glorious majesty, to his pure holiness, his hatred of sin, the justice of his government, and the truth of his word) we cannot say he is actually reconciled to us, till we are reconciled to him. It may be said he pities us before, and is upon gospel terms reconcilable to us, not that he delights in us, or is reconciled. And we may the better understand this,—that our reconciliation is no cause of his reconciliation to us though it go before it,—inasmuch as he works both reconciliations, in and by his Christ; so the text speaks of both; "you hath he reconciled"—not we ourselves. And 2 Cor. 5:18, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ;" but in this way, order, and method, that first he overcomes our enmity, changes our hearts, and turns them to him; then he is

reconciled to us, as believing in his Son; and accepts us in him, as the beloved one.

Hereupon therefore we are first to consider, and open to you our reconciliation to God; which we shall consider and speak of, not merely by showing the very point, wherein it lies; but more largely, by letting you see what it comprehends in the compass of it, or what belongs to it, and in what way it is brought about. We are indeed to consider that this, in the text "you hath he reconciled," is an historical passage, signifying somewhat past, a *res gesta*, a great thing effected and done. Whereas therefore some have taken much pains (and not to ill purpose) to write histories of nature, and give account of natural productions; we may call this a history of grace, giving some account how this gracious production is effected, and wrought on the souls of men. And for you that are reconciled, it is but to repeat to you your own story, and show you what God hath done for your soul in this blessed work. We might have carried the same notion backward, and in the former part have considered your case, as the history of a man's unregenerate state; but those days, I believe, you would rather should not be numbered amongst the months. We therefore go on, to consider what will be of a more grateful, as well as most useful remembrance to you; viz. how God hath dealt with you in bringing about this happy change. And doing it, in some sort, in the way of a history, it will be the more suitable to put you in mind, in divers particulars, of the manner how it was wrought; it being usual, in historical relations, not only in short to say that such a thing was done, but more at large to relate how, and in what way, it was done. Though yet we cannot certainly say, that the several things we shall mention were all done in that order wherein we shall set them down; for God's method may vary, or not in every respect be the same, with every one he savingly works upon. But because there are several things to be spoken which cannot all be mentioned at once, or in one breath, and some order or other must be used in reciting them; we shall repeat them, not merely as they occur to our thoughts, but also as they more aptly lie in order to one another; not doubting but if you have been reconciled to God, you



will say, when you hear them, these things have been wrought in you. Or if you have not, I must say, these are things you are to look after, and must at one time find in yourselves, if ever you shall be reconciled. And so this reconciliation hath begun with you, or must begin in,

1. A thorough conviction, with deep and inward sense wrought into your hearts, of your former enmity. There must have been a charging one's self, particularly with this matter of fact, I have been alienated from God, and an enemy to him in my mind; I see it, I confess it, thus it hath been with me, this hath been the temper of my soul, towards the blessed God! Here lies the great difficulty of reconciliation, on our part, that men are so hardly brought to see and own this; because they feel not an enmity boiling in their hearts against God, therefore they will not yield there is any such thing. But they might take notice, they as little feel love burning in their breasts towards him. And they the less apprehend the truth of their case in this respect, because by the same external show and appearance by which they may deceive other men, they endeavour to cheat themselves too; that is, because they sometimes bear a part in the solemnities of God's worship, and sit in an assembly as his people, hear his word, and with their mouth (ore tenus, or in outward appearance) show much love, they therefore think all is well, though their heart run after their covetousness, Ezek. 33:31. But what can be said to that convictive query; "How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me?" When in reference to creatures it is required that love be without dissimulation, and that we love not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth; will an outward appearance, and show of love, be sufficient towards the most amiable and most excellent One, the ever-blessed, heart-searching God? Let this be laid as a ground most firm and stable, that if the subject, thy soul, be capable, and the object, the ever-blessed God, be made known and set in view to the eye of the mind; if then there is not love towards him, there is hatred. What! can a reasonable soul be indifferent towards God, the all-comprehending Being, and with whom all have to do; the first and the continual Author of our life and being, whose

invisible and eternal power are manifest in the visible things which he hath made, so that heaven and earth are full of his glory? Towards some remote foreign prince, multitudes may be void of love and hatred alike, of whom they have no notice, with whom they have no business. Can it be so with us towards God, who is God alone, besides whom there is no other, "in whom all live, and move, and have their being," who is therefore, "not far from any one of us;" and whom all are obliged to take for their God, and must, if they accept him not, be taken for refusers? A thing that carries with it most horrid guilt, and carries in it downright enmity! and the more heinous, when, with any, it is covered with lying lips, with the cloak of a profession, viz. that they have taken him for their God, when such as say that he is their God yet have not known him, as John 8:54, 55. For that ignorance must proceed from enmity, a "not liking to retain God in their knowledge," as Rom. 1:28. Of which ignorance from disaffection, if heathens might be guilty, as they were the apostle there speaks of; much more deeply guilty are they, who being his professing people, yet know him not; as they were, whom our Lord so charges in the forecited John 8:54, 55; for these hide their hatred with lying lips, which is much more an abomination to the Lord, Prov. 10:18. If you never so confidently pretend love to God, and he that knows all things says, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you," as our Saviour tells the Jews, (John 5:42,) who is more likely to be mistaken? And can you be more confident, or more highly boast your relation to God, or your love to him, than they who were so peculiarly his people, chosen out from all nations? If you say you are lovers of God: and the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who searches the hearts and reins (Rev. 2:18,) says, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you;" how must it appal and dismay your hearts, to have his certain, unerring judgment of you thus to control your partial, self-flattering judgment; and if this be indeed the state of the case with any of us, and he know it to be so, it is enough for our condemnation: but for our saving conviction it is necessary that we know it too; therefore let us search our own hearts, and try them impartially, by all the several

evidences, and aggravations of enmity against God, in the foregoing discourse, from p. 409–418.

And to all these, I add here some enlargement, upon what was more lightly touched (as within the narrow limits of time, wherein that discourse was delivered, it could not be otherwise) p. 414; viz. disobedience to that plain, express command of our Lord, to lay up our treasure, not on earth, but in heaven, so as to have our hearts also there, Matt. 6:19, 21. This I choose to insist upon in reference to our present purpose, that, where there is a remaining and a reigning enmity against God, there may be a thorough conviction of it, in order to reconciliation; both because as to this thing, the rule we are to judge by is so very plain in the word of God; and because the temper and bent of our own hearts, in this respect, is so easily discernible, to them that will diligently, and faithfully, observe themselves.

Scripture is most express herein, as in the place last mentioned, that they whose hearts are on earth, and not in heaven, have no treasure in heaven. And what can be a greater evidence of enmity to God, than to have the bent and tendency of your heart and spirit directly contrary to the mind of God concerning you, or to what he would have it be, and it must necessarily be, that you may not be lost, and miserable for ever? The enmity to him, which he so much resents, is not your designing any hurt or prejudice to him; but the contrariety of your temper to his kind and merciful design towards you. Therefore they that mind earthly things, that is, that savour them most, (as the word signifies) and it must be understood as excluding the savour of better things, that is, who only savour them, and taste no pleasure or delight in spiritual or heavenly things; such are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ, i. e. to the design of his dying upon the cross, which was to procure for his redeemed a blessed state in heaven, and to bring them thither, not to plant and settle them here on earth. They are enemies, therefore, because his design and theirs lie contrary, and oppose one another. He is all for having them to heaven, and was so intent upon that design as not to shun dying

upon a cross to effect it; they are all for an earthly felicity, and for a continual abode on earth to enjoy it. This is an opposition full of spite and enmity, to oppose him in a design of love, and upon which his heart was set with so much earnestness! Therefore is the carnal mind said to be "enmity against God," Rom. 8:7, even as it is "death," v. 6, but to whom? not to the blessed God himself, which is impossible, but to us. It is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be; for that is spiritual, Ch. 7:14, and the best on earth find themselves, in too great degree, carnal; and here lies the contrariety much more, when this carnality is total. And this law is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which directly tends to make us free from the law of sin and death, Ch. 8:2, which it doth when the Spirit of God prevails, and gets the victory over this carnality of mind, so that we come to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. In the meantime, they that are after the flesh, do only savour "the things of the flesh;" as they that are after the Spirit, do the "things of the Spirit," v. 5. And they that are after the flesh shall die, but they that by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh shall live, v. 13. Therefore we see the reason why it is above said, "they that are in the flesh," or under a prevailing carnality, "cannot please God;" for he takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he should turn, and live, Ezek. 33:11. You cannot please him, because the bent of your carnal mind lies cross to his saving design; you are enemies in your mind to him, for your mind is most opposite to his mind; he is for saving you, you are for self-destruction; you hate him, as you love death, Prov. 8:36. Therefore also they that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them, 1 John 2:15. He would have them do his will, and abide in a blessed state for ever; but while they love this world, their hearts are set upon a vanishing thing; for the world and the lust thereof must pass away and be gone, v. 17. They cannot love him, while in mind, and will, and design, they so little agree with him. And hereupon is the friendship of this world said to be enmity against God, and he that will be a friend of this world, makes himself an enemy to God, James 4:4. The design of his amity with you is disappointed and lost, therefore he can look upon you no otherwise than as enemies to him.

And now, if this be the temper of your mind and spirit, how easily, by looking into your own hearts, might you discern it? "Know you not your own selves?" 2 Cor. 13:5. As if it were said, it is a reproach to be ignorant or without this knowledge! What is so near you as yourselves? Do you not know your own minds; whether you had rather have your portion for ever on earth, or in heaven, whether you more value a heavenly treasure or the treasures of this earth? If you chiefly mind earthly things, how can you but know it? Do but take an account of yourselves, where are your hearts all the day from morning to night, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year? What thoughts, designs, cares, delights are they that usually fill your souls? Are they not worldly, carnal, earthly? Trace your own hearts: how canst thou say, I am not polluted? see thy way, (Jer. 2:23,) mark thy own footsteps, see what course thou hast held, years together, even under the gospel; and when thou hast been so often warned, even by him who bought thee by his blood, to seek first the kingdom of heaven, to strive to enter in at the strait gate; and told how precious a thing thy soul is, even more worth than all the world; and how fearful a bargain thou wouldst have of it, if thou shouldst gain the whole world, and lose thy soul! And if all the neglects of his warnings and counsels have proceeded from the worldliness, earthliness, and carnality of thy heart and mind, and all this is declared to be enmity against God; then cast thyself down at his foot, and say to him, "Now, Lord, I yield to conviction; I now perceive I have been alienated, and an enemy in my mind by wicked works, though I never suspected any such thing by myself before." And know that till then the gospel of reconciliation will do thee no good; thou wilt never be the better for it, though thou livest under it all thy days; all exhortations to be reconciled to God, and to get this dreadful disease of enmity against God cured, will avail no more than physic, or a physician, to one that counts he is well, and feels himself not at all sick. All thy Redeemer's calls will sound in thine ears, as if he called the righteous, and not a sinner, to repentance. But that such calls might, or may yet, signify the more, know that reconciliation not only comprehends a conviction of the fact that

thou hast been an enemy; but will also contain, in thy case, if ever thou be reconciled,—

2. A clear and lively apprehension, with dread and horror, of the monstrous iniquity and wickedness thereof. This hath been, or must be, wrought in thee. And when thou art convicted in thy conscience of thy being an enemy to the ever-blessed God, how canst thou but see thyself to be a vile and wicked creature, upon this account? This is thy case, and thou must apprehend it accordingly, that thou art an enemy in thy mind, and by wicked works. For what can be wickeder than to hate the God of thy life! even him who is love, and goodness itself in highest perfection? What! to hate the God of all grace, he that is the Lord, the Lord gracious and merciful, abounding in loving-kindness, goodness, and truth! Bethink thyself, make thy reflections, view the face of thy soul in the mirror of that most righteous law; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and might, and mind." And doth it not astonish thee to behold enmity filling up in thy soul the room and place of love? That thou findest thou hast, in thy soul, a power of thinking thoughts, but canst take no pleasure to think of God! Thou hast in thy nature a principle of love, and thou canst love thy friend, thy child, yea, thy money, and (what is worse) thy lust; but canst not love thy God! How fearful a case! that when thou hast a mind and spirit in thee, made up of reason and love, it should against all reason love things less lovely, as earth and vanity; yea, even most hateful, as sin and iniquity; but cannot love its own Father, even him whose offspring it is, and to whom alone the title belongs of "Father of spirits."\* How monstrous a deformity is this! How fearful a transformation of a reasonable, immortal mind and spirit! If thy body were wrested into never so horrid and hideous shapes, there were nothing in point of horror, comparable to this deformedness of thy soul. Nor canst thou ever be reconciled to God, till there be unreconcilableness to thyself, as thou art in this state; and till thou be the most frightful, hateful spectacle to thyself, on this account. Thou wilt never look upon thine own carnal mind, or thy friendliness towards this world, which is declared to be enmity against God, (Rom. 8:7, James 4:4,) with a

kind, self-indulgent eye any more; but as having in them the most amazing wickedness, such whereby a reasonable soul, an understanding mind and spirit, is brought to love a clod of clay, a lump of earth, yea even sin itself, rather than the ever-blessed and most holy God of heaven! Let no man ever think himself in a way of reconciliation to God, till he find in his soul a very deep sense of so hateful an evil as this; and have expressly charged himself with it before the throne of the Most High. If you find there is a difficulty in it, and that your hearts are hardly brought to it, that they fly back and recoil, and will not yield that any thing so bad is to be charged upon them; take so much the more pains, labour and strive with them the more to bring them to it; because the whole business of your peace and reconciliation with God, depends upon it. You can never be reconciled till you see your not being so, or your continuing enmity, is a thing not to be endured; that if thou couldst be truly charged with hating thy own father or mother, or wife or child, or thy prince, or country; none of these, though monstrously bad, are by many degrees so ill things as the hating of thy God.

Therefore since this charge cannot be denied, it must be aggravated upon thy own soul till thou feel the weight and burden of it, and that now at length thou art brought to say, "I cannot endure to dwell with myself, I cannot keep myself company, nor eat, or drink, or sleep, or converse with myself in peace, till my heart be changed, and the case be altered with me in this respect." If thou canst truly say, Christ hath reconciled thee, thus thou hast felt and found it; or thus thou wilt find it, if ever thy reconciliation be brought about.

3. You that are reconciled may reflect and take notice of this, as a further very remarkable thing in your own story, that you have been made deeply sensible of your great sinfulness in other respects. And for others, that are yet to be reconciled, know that this belongs to the reconciliation which you are to endeavour and seek after, a deep sense of sin in the full extent of it. As love is the fulfilling of the law, and is therefore to be considered not in one single duty only, but as the spring and source of all other duty; so enmity is to be looked

upon not as one single sin only, but as the spring and fountain of all other sin. Therefore when you are convinced, and made sensible of your enmity against God, you have been or must be led on, from this fountain, to the several impure streams and rivulets issuing from it; and have a like conviction and sense of your sinfulness, in the larger extent and compass of it; and that in such respects whereof slighter penitents take little notice. As for instance,

(1.) You have had, or must have, a sight and sense of sin as sin. Many apprehend little of it besides the sound of the word, and make a light matter of it. I am a sinner, is soon said, when it is little understood what sin is, or what it is to be a sinner. But you have, or must conceive of sin, as a violation of the holy law of God; an affront to the authority of your Maker and sovereign Lord; a setting of your own will above and against the supreme will of the Most High. Hereupon you must consider, if yet you have not, what a fearful thing it is to be a sinner, and say with yourself, "O what a monstrous, vile wretch am I! that was nothing but the other day, and now being raised up into being a reasonable creature, capable of subjection to a law, to rise up in rebellion against him that gave me breath!" What! to contend against him who is thy life, and the length of thy days, how horrid must this be in thy eyes!

(2.) You must have a thorough conviction and sense of the sinfulness of your nature, as having been sinful from the womb, born in sin, conceived and brought forth in iniquity, Ps. 58:3, Ps. 51:5. Hence you are to bethink yourself, "What a loathsome creature have I been from my original! to have come into the world, with a nature poisoned and envenomed with sin! what a wonder was it that the holy God would suffer me to breathe in the world so long, and feed and sustain me so many days!" Many may have some sense of wicked acts, that have no sense of the impurity of their natures. This should fill thee with confusion and self-abhorrence!

(3.) Of such sinful inclinations and actions as were most directly against God. Many can be convinced of wrong done to a neighbour,



that have no sense of their having wronged the God of their lives, by continual neglects of him, casting him out of their thoughts and hearts, and living as without God in the world; and as if they had been made to please and serve themselves, and not him.

(4.) But there must also be a deep sense too of sins against thy neighbour. For on the other hand, there are too many that are so taken up about the commands of the first table, as to overlook those of the second; that, if they cannot be accused of gross idolatry, or of the neglect of God's external worship, think themselves very innocent, when in the meantime they live, as to their neighbours, in envy, hatred, malice, hateful, and hating one another; make no scruple of cozening, or defrauding a neighbour for their own advantage, or of bearing him a grudge, of harbouring thoughts of revenge against him. Whereas we are plainly told, that if we forgive not our offending brother, neither will God forgive us; and are taught to pray for forgiveness to ourselves, but as we forgive others; and that "he that hates his brother abides in death," 1 John 3:14. Yea, and that when the law of God requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, we are obliged not only not to harm him, but to do him all the good we can, as we have opportunity; and, as we are able, when we see him in distress, to relieve and help him. Especially if we see him go on in a sinful course, to admonish, and reprove him, with prudent friendliness, and not suffer sin upon him: otherwise thy righteous judge will reckon that thou hatest him in thy heart, Lev. 19:17.

(5.) And thou oughtest to be sensible too of sins against thyself. For when God's law requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, it implies there is a love which we owe to ourselves; not that inordinate self-love, which excludes both love to God and our neighbour; but such as is subordinate to the one, and co-ordinate with the other. Consider, therefore, whether thou hast not been guilty of sinning against thyself: against thy body, in gluttony, drunkenness, fulfilling the lusts of it: against thy soul, in neglecting it, in famishing it, letting it pine and waste away in thy iniquities; in ignorance, worldliness,

carnality, estrangedness from God, never looking after a Saviour for it, not using the appointed means of thy salvation. What multitudes live all their days, in sin of this kind, and never accuse or blame themselves for it!

(6.) And you must labour to be sensible of all such sins against your neighbour, and yourselves, as sins, though not immediately or directly, yet principally, against God himself; because he is the supreme Lawgiver, and it is he who by his law hath settled that order in the world, which by such sins you have violated and broken. Therefore doth that great penitent thus accuse himself, in his humble confession to the great God: "against thee, thee only have I sinned," (Ps. 51:4,) reflecting upon the transgression, by which he had highly wronged Uriah, Bathsheba, and his own soul; because there is but one sovereign Lawgiver, (Jam. 2:19,) by whose authority only, either put forth immediately by himself, or derived to his vicegerents, all just laws are made; by which there comes to be any such thing as sin or duty in the world. Therefore you must charge yourself as having offended him, by all the sins that ever you were guilty of; though man was the object, God's law was the rule sinned against.

(7.) You ought therefore to be sensible of secret sins, which he only knows; as well as open, and such as tend to bring reproach upon you amongst men.

(8.) And (amongst them) of the sins of your heart and inward man, evil thoughts, designs, affections, inclinations; as well as of such as have broken forth into outward actions.

(9.) Of sinful omissions, as well as commissions, you must be sensible, not only of the evil which you have done, but the good that you might and ought to have done, which you have not done. The judgment of the great day, as it is represented, Matt. 25 from v. 31 to the end of the chapter, runs, you see, chiefly upon the omissions of the condemned, in opposition to the performances of them that are absolved, and adjudged to life everlasting. And before, in the same

chapter, he that made no use of his one talent, is doomed unto utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth, under the name of an unprofitable servant, v. 30, that is, a wicked, and a slothful servant, as he is called, v. 26. For though, when we have done all we can, we are to count ourselves unprofitable servants, and to God we are so; yet we ought, and are capable, to be profitable to ourselves, and to other men; and to God we ought to be faithful servants, though we cannot be profitable. But will you count him a faithful servant who can only plead for himself to his master: "I have not embezzled your goods, destroyed your cattle, or burnt your house;" when yet he never did him real service? If ever therefore you be reconciled to God, you will be or have been in bitter agonies of spirit before him, in the review of your former fruitless life, and that you have lived so long in the world to so little purpose!

(10.) You must have been, or will yet be, deeply affected with the sense of sins, not only against the holy, righteous law of God, but against the gospel of his Son; not only that you have swerved from the rules which were given you, and neglected the ends you were made for, as you are God's creatures, and the work of his hands, thereby exposing yourselves to his wrath and justice; but that you have slighted the only remedy tendered you in the gospel, neglected the great salvation that was wrought out, and began to be spoken by the Lord himself, Heb. 2:3, 4. Consider, were you never in dread? Did you never cry out, affrighted: "How can I escape, who have neglected such a salvation, such a Saviour?" It must at one time or other cut and wound your souls to think how many serious warnings, earnest invitations, affectionate entreaties, heart-melting allurements, have I withstood! How often have I been besought, in the name of a crucified, dying Redeemer, to resign and surrender myself to him, to submit to his authority, to accept his mercy, and have refused! The heavy yoke and burden of sin and guilt have been more tolerable to me, than his easy yoke and light burden. I have more busied myself to increase my interest and share in this present world, than to gain a part in that fulness of grace, righteousness, spirit, and life which is treasured up in him. Your reconciliation can

never be brought about, but upon a heart-wounding sense of your being so long unreconciled, and your having disregarded the great and merciful Reconciler.

4. If Christ hath brought about in you a thorough reconciliation to God, this further belongs to the story of his dealings with you, as that which he hath given you to experience; or if he have not yet reconciled you, it is that which, if ever you be reconciled, you are yet to expect, viz. a deep inward apprehension and sense both of the dreadful and due nature of divine displeasure towards you, for your former enmity against him, and for all the other wickedness that hath accompanied it.

(1.) Of the dreadful nature of his displeasure. You could no longer make light of it, or eat and drink and sleep in quiet, and give yourself the liberty of mirth and jollity, while you still lay under it. God is said to be "angry with the wicked every day," Ps. 7:11, and to "hate all the workers of iniquity," Ps. 5:5. You will count it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he saith, "vengeance belongs to him, and he will repay it," Heb. 10:30, 31. And when you have reason to apprehend him as lifting up his hand to heaven, and saying, I live for ever; as whetting the glittering sword, and his hand taking hold of vengeance, (Deut. 32:40, 41,) you must have thought, or will yet think with yourself, "Who knows the power of his anger?" Ps. 90:11. And by how much the less you can know it, so much the more you must have dreaded it. For all the while you have been abusing his patience, long-suffering, and forbearance, not considering that the goodness of God did lead you to repentance; so long as you were despising the riches of his goodness, you were "treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment," Rom. 2:4, 5. And to have treasures of unknown wrath, far beyond what you could conceive, laying up in store against you, how amazing must this be to you! Destruction from the Almighty! What a terror must that be to you, Job 31:23. To eat and drink under wrath! to buy and sell, to plough and sow, and all under wrath! and with a curse from God, covering

you as a garment, cleaving to you as a girdle, flowing as oil into your bones, mingling with all your affairs, and all your comforts, with whatsoever you do, and whatsoever you enjoy! And to be, all the while, upon the brink of eternity, and not, for aught you know, to have a hand-breadth, not more than a breath, between you and eternal woes and flames, and none to deliver you from the wrath to come! This cannot have been an easy condition, and the less when you considered,

(2.) The dueness of God's wrath and displeasure unto you, that how terrible soever it is it is all most justly deserved. You must have been made to see and say, "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, did most righteously belong to me, as my most proper portion; to me, an enemy to the God of my life, who gave me breath and being, upon the treasures of whose bounty I have lived all my days; to whom, when he filled my house with good things, yet I often in my heart said, 'Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' Job 21:14, 15. And as the law of love to God, the great original law, had engaged me to keep all his other commandments, so my enmity against him, hath made me break them all; so that I have lived a life of disobedience and rebellion, all my time thus far. And though he hath offered me terms of peace, and I have been often and earnestly besought, by those that have spoken to me in Christ's stead (my bleeding, dying Redeemer and Lord) to be reconciled to God; yet I have hitherto borne toward him an impenitent, implacable heart. If there were ten thousand hells, they were all due to me, I have deserved them all."

5. Such as have been reconciled have been brought, by believing, to apprehend God's reconcileableness to them in and by his own Son. This also belongs to the history of God's dispensation towards them; and may instruct others, by letting them know, what must be wrought in them that they may be reconciled. It is their special advantage that live under the gospel, that therein they behold God "reconciling the world to himself, by Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. 5:18, 19. This is the sum of the gospel, that "God so loved the world, that he

gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believe in him should not perish but have life everlasting," John 3:16. "Hereby they may know and believe the love God hath to them," (1 John 4:16, and that, though they have been alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet he is not irreconcilable. This is the gospel of the grace of God, which he testifies, and they are to believe, unless they will make him a liar, 1 John 5:10) And therefore, notwithstanding the sense they ought to have of their having been enemies, and of the horrid wickedness hereof, and of their sinful temper and course in all other respects, together with the terrors of God's wrath, and their desert of it to the uttermost; they are yet to conjoin therewith, the belief of his willingness to be reconciled. And hereby he melts and breaks their hearts, viz. by this discovery of his good will, believed:—for disbelieved, it can signify nothing, nor have any effect upon them;—the gospel is his power to salvation to every one that believes, (Rom. 1:16,) and works effectually in them that believe, 1 Thess. 2:13. So it is the immediate instrument of their regeneration, after that the love and kindness of God to men appears, i. e. so as that they believe it, he saves them "by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. 3:4, 5. And then he makes them know, it is not by works of righteousness which they have done, but by his mercy, as it is there expressed. They are not (as was formerly said) the objects of his delightful love, before their regeneration; but they may be of his pity, or mercy, his compassionate love;—and this they are to believe, as the general proposal of his gospel declares it; and by the belief hereof, he conquers their enmity, and subdues them into compliance with his good and acceptable will. These glad tidings, that he is truly willing to receive any returning soul, vanquishes their disaffection, and overcomes their hearts; makes them say with themselves, why should I still continue alienated from the God who is so gracious and merciful, abundant in loving-kindness, goodness, and truth, as his name signifies, (Exod. 34:7,) though he will by no means clear the guilty; i. e. the obstinate, impenitent, and implacable. But if this discovery of the grace of God can find no entrance, sinner, into thy soul, if it remain shut up in unbelief, or if, when he tells thee over and over, that he takes no pleasure in the

death of sinners, but that they turn and live, thou wilt not believe him, but still think him implacable, and Cain-like, say thy sin is greater than can be forgiven;—this hardens thy heart in enmity against him, and makes thee say, (as Jer. 2:25,) "There is no hope, I have loved strangers, and after them I will go." Therefore if ever thou hast been, or shalt be, reconciled to God, as thou hast not been left in a stupid insensibleness of thy former wickedness, so thou hast been kept from sinking into an utter despair of God's mercy; thy reconciliation is brought about by thy believing his reconcileableness.

6. Hereupon thou wast brought to entreat his favour with thy whole heart, and that he would be merciful to thee according to his word, Ps. 119:58. When thou sawest, though thy case was very horrid and dismal, yet it was not hopeless, and that there was a ground for prayer in the hope of mercy; then didst thou, or yet wilt, set thyself in good earnest to supplicate, and cry mightily for pardoning and heart-renewing grace. Where is no hope, there can be no prayer; this posture of soul thou hast been wrought up to, or wilt be, if ever thou be reconciled. Hope gives life and breath to prayer; and prayer, to peace and friendship with God. When God promises to take away the stony heart, and give the new one, the heart of flesh; he declares that even for this he "will be inquired of, and sought unto," Ezek. 36:36, 37. Nor doth the soul, when hope of mercy, according to God's word and promise, gives it vent, breathe faint breath in prayer; but the whole heart is engaged; all the powers of the soul are put into a fervent motion. Despair stupifies, hope fills the soul with vigour; the favour of God is sought, not with cold indifferency, but as that wherein stands thy life, (Ps. 30:5,) and which is better than life without it can be, Ps. 63:3. But then, whereas the gospel under which thou livest, informs thee that God cannot be approached by a sinful creature, as men are, and as thou must own thyself to be, but through Christ, the only Mediator between God and men; and that thou canst not approach him in and by Christ, if thou be not in him;

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7. Thou art hereupon led to Christ, and brought to receive him with all thy heart and soul, (John 1:12; Rom. 10:10,) and to resign and give thyself up wholly to him, (2 Cor. 8:5,) not knowing in thy distress what to do with thyself, and he compassionately inviting thee, "O thou weary, heavy laden soul, come unto me, and I will give thee rest," (Matt. 11:28,) and assuring thee, "that whosoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out," John 6:37. Thou thereupon with a humble, thankful, willing heart art brought to comply with his merciful offer, acceptest him and yieldest up thyself, no more to be thy own, but his; and thus believing in his name, thou ownest him in his office, as the great Peace-maker between God and thee.

8. Whereupon thou hast been brought to apply thyself through Christ to the blessed God, and humbly to take hold of his covenant, Isa. 56:2. Thou hast come to "God the judge of all," having come "to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant," (Heb. 12:23, 24,) and been enabled to covenant with him, according to what he himself hath declared to be the purport, and sum and substance of his covenant; that is, if thou art reconciled, thou hast taken him to be thy only God, thy supreme and sovereign good, thy chief and only satisfying portion, (Ps. 16:5, 6,) whom thou art most pleasantly to enjoy, and in whom thou art to take highest delight, above all things in heaven or earth, (Ps. 73:25)—and whom thou art to believe willing, according to this covenant, to do for thee, in outward and temporal respects, what he judges fittest and best; and for thy soul, in his own way and method, all that is requisite for thy present support and future blessedness:—and to be thy supreme and sovereign Ruler and Lord, whom thou art to thy uttermost to please, serve, fear, obey, and glorify above all other;—and to whom thou must reckon it belongs, according to this covenant, to forgive thy iniquities;—and by it, as well as by natural right, to govern and dispose of thee in all thy thoughts, actions, inclinations, and affairs, according to his own holy will. And thou givest up thyself absolutely and entirely to him, to be of his people, to be taught and ruled by him. This is the covenant which in thy baptism thy parents, who had nearest natural relation to thee, entered into for thee, (as children do, in their parents, stand



obliged to the government under which they live) but which, when thou art come to use an understanding of thy own, thou art to enter into with the great God for thyself (as persons come to a certain age of maturity, are called to avow their allegiance to their secular rulers.) And because it is made with sinners—such as had been in rebellion against the majesty of heaven—and therefore by a mediator, and by sacrifice; it is therefore a covenant of reconciliation, and the sacrifice by which it is made, is a propitiation or a reconciling sacrifice. If therefore Christ hath reconciled thee to God, or if ever thou shalt be reconciled, this covenant must pass between him and thee; this is to come into the history of his dealings with thy soul. And it ought to be with thee a great solemnity, and to fill thy soul with a wondering joy, that the great God whom thou hadst so highly offended, should ever vouchsafe to covenant with thee, a sinful worm! But because the manner of this covenanting is so fully set down by Mr. Joseph Alleine, and in a little treatise called "Self-dedication," and in another of "Yielding ourselves to God," I shall not further enlarge upon it here.

9. If thou be reconciled, the frame and bent of thy soul is so far altered and changed, that thy carnal mind is become, in a prevailing degree, spiritual; and thy worldly heart is taken off, in a like measure, from this present world, and set upon God and heaven. For "the carnal mind is enmity against God," and they that "love this world, the love of the Father is not in them;" and he that will be "a friend of this world, is the enemy of God," Rom. 8:7; 1 John 2:15; James 4:4. But canst thou be reconciled, and still be an enemy? And how canst thou not be an enemy, when not in this or that single act only, but in the main bent and frame of thy soul, thou resistest his will, and in thy whole course walkest contrary to him?

10. If thy reconciliation to God have been brought about, there must be suitable walking afterwards, which includes two things:—1. Amity must be continued, that is, there must be a very great care that there may be no new breach:—2. There must be much uneasiness of spirit,

if there have been a new breach, till it be composed and made up again.

(1.) Where there is a thorough reconciliation, amity must be continued, care taken of giving any new offence, or the making any new breach, by not doing what will displease, and by a friendly intercourse continued and kept up. For there may be a new breach, or a new offence may be given again, either of these ways; either by breaking out into any fresh quarrel or contentions, or by breaking off friendly intercourse. As, if there have been a war between two nations, when a firm peace is made, there ensues both a ceasing from hostilities, and free commerce; so if thou hast made peace with God, and hast entered into a league and covenant of reconciliation with him, thou must take great care, to thy uttermost, to sin no more; not deliberately to do anything that thou knowest will displease him. Thou must say, as is said in Job 34:32, "If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." And again, thou must take great heed of growing strange to him, of giving over, or of becoming slack or cold, in thy converse with him; for when he inquires, "can two walk together if they be not agreed?" he thereby intimates, that if they be agreed, it is that they may walk together. And it is to be considered—that in the text the unreconciled state consists, not only in the enmity of the mind by wicked works, but also in being alienated from him, or strange to him; by either whereof thou givest him also cause of just offence, even after reconciliation.

(2.) But if thou findest thou hast made a new breach, either of these ways, by doing any thing that thou didst apprehend to be displeasing to him, or by estranging thyself from him, there must be an uneasiness in thy spirit, and thou must be restless, till it be composed and made up again. This is walking suitably to a reconciled state, to resolve with thyself, upon any new offence, not to give sleep to thy eyes, nor slumber to thy eyelids, till thou have humbled thyself before thy God, and sought his pardon, by faith in the blood of his Son; with a resolution, in dependence on his grace

and Spirit, to walk more carefully, and more closely with him in thy future course, accounting always that in his favour is life.

Such things as these, if thou be reconciled to God, will compose and make up thy story of it. Such a narrative thou couldst give of it thyself, upon recollection; or, at least, when thou readest it thus put down to thy hand, thou canst say, these things thou hast found God hath wrought and done in thee; though perhaps they may not have come into thy mind in the same order wherein they are here set down, which is less material, if thou canst truly say such workings as these thou hast really felt in thine own heart, while God was dealing with thee for the bringing about this reconciliation. But if this work be not yet done, if it is yet to be done, then know such stages as these thou must pass through. And thou art to be restless in thy spirit, while thou canst yet say, such and such of these things are still wanting in me; I have not yet found them, my heart agrees not in such and such points with this narrative; I can give no such account of myself. But wait and strive, in hope that thou shalt yet find them, if thou persist; and do not grow negligent and indifferent, whether any such reconciliation to God be effected in thee or no. And when thou hast found it, then art thou led to consider, in the next place,—

Secondly. God's reconciliation to thee; and inquire what that includes and carries in it. But here now, because his part lies in himself, and may for some time have no discernible effects upon thy soul; therefore the account hereof is not to be carried on in the way of the history, as the other might. It is doctrinally written in his own word, and so is the matter of thy faith, not of thy present sense, as the other is. But as it is indefinitely propounded in his word, so it ought to be firmly believed, and without wavering, as a sure part of the true and faithful sayings of God, who is truth itself, and cannot deceive nor be deceived. And it ought to be believed with particular application to thyself, that thus and thus he bears himself towards thee as thy reconciled God, according as thou findest thy own soul thus truly reconciled to him. For though thy reconciliation to him be

no cause of his reconciliation to thee, yet it is a most certain evidence of it. Otherwise,

1. You would be beforehand with him in love, when, as his word expressly says, he loves us first, 1 John 4:19.

2. It would be true, that he made us love him, having himself no love to us; when as the same word says, "we love him because he first loved us;" viz. with that compassionate love whereof you formerly heard.

3. You would hereupon outdo him in point of love, and be better affected towards him than he is towards you.

4. If any could be reconciled to God, and yet God not be reconciled to them, and they die in that state, it would be possible there might be lovers of God in hell. And what can be more absurd in itself? or more contrary to the plain word of God that hath said, the things which "eye hath not seen are prepared for them that love God," (1 Cor. 2:9,) and that he hath promised the crown of life to them that love him? Jam. 1:12. All which you cannot but apprehend to be intolerable absurdities, and they would all follow, if upon such grounds as have been mentioned, you should apprehend yourself to be reconciled to him, and yet disbelieve his being reconciled to you. Therefore, having so sure a ground upon which to apprehend he is reconciled to you, when you find you are reconciled to him; let it now be considered what his reconciliation to you imports. Wherein, as in all that follows, I shall be very brief; that this part be not too unproportionable in bulk to the former gone out before it. And here two things in the general must be understood to be included in God's being reconciled to us:—1. His forgiving to us all the sins of our former state of enmity against him:—2. His receiving us into a state of amity and friendship with him. How great things are both these! And if you cannot as yet with certainty conclude that you are reconciled to God, as thereupon to have a present assurance of his having thus forgiven, and accepted you; yet you are however to

apprehend both these as most certainly belonging to their state who are reconciled to him, so as to make you most earnestly to covet, and endeavour to get into that state; as perceiving how desirable a thing it is to have the eternal God no longer an enemy to you, but your friend.

(1.) Therefore you must apprehend God's being reconciled to you includes his forgiving you all the sins of your former state, wherein you lived in enmity against him. And of how vast compass and extent is his mercy towards you herein! when you consider what you were doing, and what manner of life you led all that time; always sinning from morning to night, either by acting against him, or by not living with him, and to him! not minding him, not fearing him, standing in no awe of him, never aiming to please, or serve, or glorify him, in any thing you did, as if you were made for yourself, and not for him! And that your disobedience to him, your neglects of him, were all summed up in enmity! And how monstrous a thing it was to be an enemy, a hater of the ever-blessed God! And to have all this forgiven! So his own word plainly speaks: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon," Isa. 55:7.

And here you must understand aright what sort of pardon and forgiveness that is, when God is said to forgive; which you must conceive of by considering what sort of enmity yours was against him. The case is not as between equals, falling out and forgiving one another; but your enmity was that of an offending inferior and subject, rebelling against your sovereign, rightful Lord, who hath both right and power to punish you. And then think how terrible punishment you deserved, and were liable to: even "an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. 1:9. Whereupon consider what it signifies for him to forgive you: and see now whether you do not savour those words, "Blessed is the man," (or whether the sense of your case do not make you cry out, as those words may be read:) "O the blessedness of him,

whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! O the blessedness of him, to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity!" Of how mighty a load must it ease and disburden thy soul to have thy offended Lord say to thee, "Thou hast been sinning against me hitherto all thy days, when I have been all thy days doing thee good; thou hast done evilly against me as thou couldst, slighted my authority, and despised my mercy; I could plead my rebukes against thee with flames of fire; if I should whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold of vengeance, how soon could I ease myself of so feeble an adversary, and avenge myself of so contemptible an enemy? But I forgive thee! Now upon thy repenting and turning to me with thy whole soul, I forgive thy ungodly prayerless life, thy having been alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works. I forgive it to thee all! Thy iniquity is all pardoned, thy sin covered, I no more impute any thing of it to thee." What rock would not this melt? What stony heart would it not dissolve, and break in pieces? And what! Canst thou now be any longer an unreconciled enemy to such a sin-pardoning God? Consider here more particularly,—the properties and consequences of this forgiveness.

[1.] The properties of it, as that,

First, it is most compassionate, an act of tender mercy and pity; so says his own word: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," Heb. 8:12. "In his love and pity he redeemed, and he bare them," Isa. 63:9. "And being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity," Ps. 78:38. "For he remembered they were but flesh," v. 39.

Secondly. It is perfectly free, and of mere grace. "We are justified freely by his grace," Rom. 3:24. He invites sinners to come to him, even "without money and without price," Isa. 55:1. A great price indeed hath been paid, but by another hand, as we shall show when we come to the second head, the way wherein our Lord effects this reconciliation in the body of his flesh through death. But no price is expected from us, he doth it for his own sake, as Isa. 43:25.

Thirdly. It is full and entire. And that both in respect of the object, the sin forgiven; "all manner of sin (that can be repented of) shall be forgiven unto men," Matt. 12:31. "I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me," (Jer. 33:8;) and in respect of the act of forgiving, it shall be so full as to leave no displeasure behind: for (as he speaks) "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy iniquities;" and there is not so much as a remembrance left; "I will not remember thy sins," Isa. 43:25. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," Heb. 8:12.

Fourthly. It is often repeated. He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity—yea, "many a time turned he his anger away," Ps. 78:38.

[2.] The consequences of this forgiveness.

First. Cessation of all acts that have either destruction for their end, or enmity for their principle. In the very covenant of reconciliation, God reserves to himself a liberty of chastening his reconciled ones; yea, the case requiring it, he not only reserves the liberty, but takes upon him an obligation hereunto. For he expressly declares, that "if his children forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments; then he will visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes;" but that, nevertheless, "he will not utterly take away his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor break his covenant," (Ps. 89:31–34,) implying that otherwise his faithfulness would fail, and his covenant were broken on his part. And therefore, when he deals not with a people upon covenant terms, but as cast-aways, and as people given up, he declares: "I will not punish your daughters," Hos. 4:14. And, "Why should they be smitten any more?" Isa. 1:5. And they themselves own, "it was good for them to have been afflicted," (Ps. 119:71,) and that "he had done it in very faithfulness," v. 75. And his correcting them is signified not only to consist with love, but to proceed from it; for it is said; "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," Heb. 12:6. And those afflictions are properly punitive, as they import warning to others; but not

vindictive, as tending to the destruction of themselves; but corrective, as intending their own amendment, besides warning to others, which also those that are destructive might do. But these afflictive strokes upon his own, as they intend warning to others, have the general nature of punishment in them. But they differ in their special kind, as being to themselves corrective only, not destructive, or vindictive. But upon the whole, when once he is reconciled to you, he no longer treats you as enemies; if sometimes he see cause to afflict his own, he smites them not as he smites those that smote them, Isa. 27:7. Your carriage doth not always please him, therefore it is not strange if his dealings do not always please you; but after forgiveness he intends your real and final hurt no more.

A second consequent of God's forgiving you all your sins is his seasonable manifestation hereof to you. He may have forgiven you, and not judge it seasonable suddenly to make it known to you: he may judge it fit to hold you, some time, in suspense. And when by his grace he hath enabled you to exercise repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whereupon you are in a pardoned state; you may yet sometime remain in doubt whether you were sincere herein or no; and he may not on a sudden put you out of doubt, but keep you awhile in a waiting posture; as that which is more suitable to his own majesty and greatness, and to your own infirm and less established condition. He waits to be gracious, and is exalted even in showing mercy, for he is a God of judgment, and doth show mercy judiciously, when he judges it the fittest season; "therefore are they blessed that wait for him," Isa. 30:18. Assurance is the privilege, not of all his children but of them that are come to a more grown stature; but in the meantime he sustains you by hope in his mercy, and lets not your heart sink within you. And when he sees it fit, lets you know he hath accepted the atonement for you, which he hath enabled you to receive; and speaks that peace to you which is the fruit of his lips, and which he only, by speaking it inwardly to your heart, can create; that peace which passes all understanding, (Isa. 57:18, Phil. 4:7,) and which belongs to his kingdom in you; with



joy in the Holy Ghost, when once the foundation is laid in righteousness, Rom. 14:17.

(2) This reconciliation, on God's part, not only includes the forgiveness of your former enmity, with all the sins of that fearful state wherein you then were; but also his receiving you into a state of amity and friendship with himself. And this you are to take for a great addition to the former. A prince may pardon to a malefactor a capital crime, spare his forfeited life and estate, and yet not take him for a favorite and a friend. But when the blessed God forgives his enemies, he also takes them for his friends; though those are distinct things, yet they are most closely conjunct; he always adds this latter to the former.

Abraham was called the friend of God, (Isa. 41:8,) i. e. not only in the active sense, as now bearing a friendly mind towards God; but in the passive sense also, as now God hath a friendly mind towards him. And upon what account? some may think Abraham being a person of eminent sanctity, this may be said of him only upon that peculiar account. But see how the matter must be understood, from what we find, Jam. 2:23; "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God;" this is spoken of him, not as an eminent saint only, but under the common notion of a believer; so that the same thing is truly to be said of every one that believes with a justifying faith. So saith our Saviour to his disciples in common; "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," John 15:14. And, "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you," (v. 15,) which signifies his own friendly mind to them. And now consider what this friendliness towards them includes. It must include,

[1] Love, which is the very soul of friendship. So our Saviour expresses his own friendliness towards them that are his: "As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love," v. 9. And the height of that love, (v. 13,) "Greater love than that hath no

man, that a man should lay down his life for his friends;" though it is elsewhere further heightened, from our having been sinners and enemies, (Rom. 5:8, 10;) though it was then in view to him what he designed to make of them, viz. friends to him too. And so his friendship must signify further, not love merely, but also after reconciliation, there mentioned, v. 10,

[2] A delightful, complacential love. For such is the love of friends, a love of delight, which they take in one another; as if he had said, "Now I have overcome you, and won your hearts, I love you with that pleasantness, that delightful love, which is proper to the state of friendship." So such friends are spoken to, (Cant. 2:14,) "O my dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely;" and that book abounds with expressions of that import, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. How fair is my love!" Ch. 4:7, 9, 10, &c. But besides what this friendship, as such, or as it hath in it the general notion of friendship, includes; consider further some particularities belonging to this friendship, as,

[3] How infinitely condescending it is on God's part. That the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, who hath infinite fulness in himself, and could with delight live alone to all eternity, as he did from all eternity, that he should vouchsafe to take from among his own creatures, such as he would make friends of; how admirable! Much more of such creatures, apostate revolted creatures, impure and vile creatures, such as he hath so much to do upon, to make them kind and holy, that they might be capable of his friendship!

According to the usual measures of friendship, it is with those that are like, yea with equals. How transporting should it be to thy soul, that the great God should entertain and strike such a friendship with thee, so vile, so rebellious, and abject as thou wast! Solomon speaks of it as a wonderful thing, and even exceeding all belief, that God should dwell, (which dwelling signifies friendly society;) saith he, "In very deed will God dwell with men," such creatures as men are now

become! and with men on earth, in this their low and mean state, and on this narrow, little, base spot; when even the bright and spacious "heavens, yea the heaven of heavens cannot contain him?" 2 Chron. 6:18. How wonderful a thing is this! and even surpassing all wonders! Is it after the manner of men? How far, herein, are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts! even "as the heavens are above the earth," Isa. 55:8. Consider,

[4] How beneficial this his friendship to us is! Many friends can only wish well to one another, have neither wisdom, nor power really to befriend them; his friendship is most beneficial to them on whom it is placed, having all-sufficient fulness in himself to counsel, to support, to relieve, to supply them, as the matter shall require.

[5] How conversable he is with these his friends, being—

First. Always present. One may have a wise and potent friend, but perhaps he is far off when there is greatest need of him. Second. Being intimately present with our minds and spirits. "The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit," 2 Tim. 4:22. He can be always so. The most inward friends, among men, can have no immediate access to one another's spirits; but this is the peculiar advantage of this friend, that he can enter into our very souls; nothing is shut up from him.

[6] How constant is God's friendship! He loves "with an everlasting love," and to the end, (Jer. 31:3, Isa. 54:8, John 13:1,) when other friendships are, upon slight grounds, easily and often broken off. Thus far we have seen what this mutual reconciliation imports, on our part, towards God; and on God's part, towards us.

We now come to consider,

II. The way wherein our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and us, brings about this reconciliation; viz. "In the body of his flesh through death." The same thing is expressed in the 20th verse, by his making peace by the blood of his cross, or his shedding his blood on the cross. The meaning of both expressions is, that he

brought about this reconciliation, by suffering death for us, upon the cross. Now because this reconciliation, as you have heard, includes both God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God; and that both are effected by his dying upon the cross for us; we are to show how each of these is brought about this way.

First. How God's reconciliation to us is wrought by Christ dying for us. You may say, why was this the means of reconciling God to us? for you may think with yourselves, if God had a mind to be reconciled to sinners, could he not have been so, without letting his Son die for it? There are indeed difficulties in this matter, which are not fit to be brought into such a discourse as this; but I shall here say nothing about it, but what is plain, and easy to be understood.

1. You can easily apprehend that God saw it was necessary his Son should die, in order to the saving of sinners; for who can think he would ever have consented to the death of his most beloved Son, if he had not seen it necessary? Therefore you must conclude it was necessary, whether you discern the reasons upon which it was so, or no.

2. You can easily apprehend that the sins of men deserved eternal death, and that God threatened them with eternal death accordingly; for what death, but eternal death, can that be, which is opposed to eternal or everlasting life? (Rom. 5:21, Rom. 6:23,) and which is executed upon all that are not reconciled, according to the sentence of the last judgment, Matt. 25:46.

3. You cannot but know that there were sacrifices under the law of Moses, appointed to make atonement for sin, and that "without shedding of blood there could be no remission," Heb. 9:22.

4. It is easy to be understood, that "the blood of those sacrifices could not take away sin," as is expressly said, (Heb. 10:4,) and therefore that they could not otherwise signify any thing to the taking it away, than as they were types and shadows of that great sacrifice that once

for all was to be offered up for that purpose. "Once in, or towards, the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. 9:26.

5. You can understand that as this could never have been without the consent of the Father, and the Son; so by their consent it might be, that the innocent might suffer for the guilty: as one may be bound, body for body, for another.

6. And it is plain they did consent. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believe on him might not perish, but have life everlasting," John 3:16. And our Lord Jesus Christ himself says: No man could take his life from him, i. e. against his will, for he could have had twelve legions of angels to defend it, but he did lay it down, (John 10:18,) and gave "his life a ransom for many," Mat. 20:28.

7. So it came to pass that our Lord Jesus "suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," 1 Pet. 3:18. And "he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him."

8. And hereupon when God is reconciled to sinners, he doth not only forgive them, but he justifies them, there being an equal recompence made to him; but of his own providing; and therefore to us it is most free, though it was very costly to Christ. So both these expressions of the same thing are put together: "We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins; that God might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus," Rom. 3:25.

9. Thus God becomes reconciled to sinful men (not to every one, but to them that sincerely repent, and believe) in a just, regular and orderly way, most becoming his excellent Majesty. For though he forgive sinners that had affronted him and rebelled against him, yet

it is not without a sacrifice, and that of his own Son, a sacrifice of infinite value; most becoming his grace and mercy, for that sacrifice was of his own providing; most becoming his justice, for though sin be forgiven, it is punished too; forgiven to us, but punished on his own Son, who consented to "bear our sins in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. 2:24; most becoming the truth of his word, for as that said, "without shedding of blood there could be no remission;" the most precious blood was shed, that ever was, in order to our remission; most becoming his infinite wisdom, that found out this way of answering all purposes; that both he might be glorified in the highest degree, and yet sinners be saved. Grace hath herein abounded in all wisdom and prudence, Eph. 1:6, 7, 8.

Secondly. We come now (having thus far seen, how Christ's dying on the cross works God's reconciliation to us) to show also how it brings about our reconciliation to God. And here you may observe, we changed the method of speaking to this twofold reconciliation, considered in itself, and as the effect of Christ's death. For though God is not actually reconciled to us before he hath disposed our hearts to a reconciliation unto him; yet the foundation of his being reconciled to us is first laid in the death of his Son, or in the prospect and foresight of it; before there can be any disposition, on our parts, to such a reconciliation. And that being done, and it being thereby seen what this great sacrifice signifies to his being reconciled, whensoever that shall be; it comes in the proper order, next to be considered which way it works to bring about our reconciliation also. And it works, in order hereto, these two ways.

1. By preparing the ground of preaching the gospel of reconciliation, or of Christ crucified; which must first be, or have been resolved on before there could be any gospel to reveal it. In this gospel, Christ is "set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood," Rom. 3:25. And this is the proper and most apt means to work upon thy heart, sinner, to persuade thee to be reconciled to God. Looking upon him whom thou hast pierced, is that thou mayest mourn over him, Zech. 12:10. What should so melt and overcome thy heart, and make thee

yield to the terms of reconciliation? But he must be represented, that he may be looked upon; and therefore is the preaching of Christ crucified, "unto them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God," (1 Cor. 1:23, 24,) the most powerful, and the wisest method; and which God hath thought fittest to win souls, and reconcile them to himself. Therefore it is reckoned no less than a witchery, if they obey not the gospel, who have "Christ set forth before their eyes as crucified among them," (Gal. 3:1,) which setting forth could not be otherwise than in the gospel representation. For you know Christ was not actually crucified in Galatia, but at Jerusalem; therefore saith our Lord himself, "But I, if I be lifted up from earth, will draw all men unto me," (John 12:32.) This was said, (as follows) signifying what death he should die, i. e. by being crucified. And this, supposing a due representation of him in the gospel, was in point of means to draw all men. But it could only be sufficient, as a means; when yet it could not be a means sufficient, if there were not an Agent able to use it to that purpose. Therefore,

2. Our Redeemer's dying upon the cross did work towards our reconciliation, by procuring the Spirit to be given, in order to the making this most apt means effectual to this end. And if this sacrifice of Christ on the cross, was necessary to the obtaining forgiveness of sins; it was, at least, equally necessary to obtain the giving of the Spirit, without which all the rest were in vain. When Christ had died to reconcile both, (i. e. Jew and Gentile) in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and thereupon preached peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh; yet it was still necessary that by one Spirit both should have access to the Father; otherwise they would never come at him; they would still, with implacable hearts, have kept at a distance. Therefore looking upon a crucified Christ would never have had this effect, to make them mourn over him whom they had pierced, if the Spirit of grace and supplication were not poured forth, Zech. 12:10. They would with hard hearts have gazed long enough on this doleful spectacle, far enough from mourning, if the Spirit of Christ were not poured forth, as well as his blood.

And do we think that holy and pure Spirit would ever have been poured forth, on so impure and unholy souls; if the precious blood of that invaluable sacrifice had not been poured forth to procure it? Those words of the apostle make this plain, (Gal. 3:13; 14,) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree), that the blessing of Abraham might reach further—come upon the Gentiles, that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith;" or in their being made to believe, the ever blessed One was so far made a curse that you might be capable of this blessing, and by it have your own enmity overcome, and your reconciliation brought about. Therefore doth our Lord direct us to pray for the Spirit, assuring us our heavenly Father will give that Holy Spirit to them that ask him, (Luke 11:13,) as well knowing his pouring forth his blood had deserved it should not any longer be an enclosed blessing; but which might be communicated to Jew and Gentile, and in his way and season be poured out on all flesh. Thus doth our Lord, "in the body of his flesh through death," work out this two-fold reconciliation both of God to you, and of you to God.

III. And now the use follows, which must have reference both,—1. To the mutual reconciliation itself; "You hath he now reconciled;" and—2. To the way wherein our Lord Jesus brings it about; "in the body of his flesh through death." The use we shall make of the former, will be twofold (according as this reconciliation itself is twofold, viz. God's reconciliation to us, and our reconciliation to God,) viz. to persuade us, from sundry considerations,—

1. To believe God's reconcileableness to us; 2. to be willing, hereupon, to be actually, and speedily, reconciled to him. And the use which is only now intended to be made of the latter, is to draw from it divers additional considerations, by which to enforce, and give further strength to both those mentioned exhortations.

First. For the use of the former, the doctrine of this reconciliation itself. Inasmuch as we have shown that it contains reconciliation, on



God's part towards us, and on our part, towards God, we must understand,

1. That God's reconciliation is asserted here, to the persons whom the apostle now mentions; and whom he had before described as converts, saints, faithful in Christ, (Ch. 1:1,) that Christ had reconciled them, i. e. restored them into a state of grace, favour, and acceptance, though they had been alienated, and enemies in their minds. Therefore, if when they become saints, faithful, &c. God was reconciled to them; while they were yet in their state of enmity, he was reconcileable. The plain use to be made of this, is—that we be persuaded to believe God's reconcileableness to sinners, offending creatures, such as had been strangers to him, and enemies; whatsoever bar was in the way is so far removed (as we shall show from the second head) that he can be reconciled to such enemies, and will actually be so, whensoever they turn to him. This, sinner, is the sum of the gospel, which thou art to believe upon sundry considerations, which have their ground here; as,

(1.) This gospel could never be intended for these only to whom the apostle now writes. Can we think there was one gospel meant for Colossians, and another, or none at all, for Englishmen? Yea, when the apostle himself was converted and obtained mercy, it was for "a pattern to them that should hereafter believe," 1 Tim. 1:16. You have the same warrant to believe, that turning to God and believing on his Son, God will be reconciled to you as he was to them.

(2.) This is the gospel which God hath ever declared to the world, without excepting any person, wheresoever his written word hath come, (Isa. 55) "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, even he that hath no money, come without money, and without price," v. 1. "Incline your ear, and come to me, hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you," v. 3. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy; to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. For my ways are not as your ways," v.

7, 8. So the tenor of his word hath always run, "turn to me, and I will turn to you," 2 Chron. 30:6, Jer. 3:12, Zech. 1:3, Mal. 3:7. And is it not to be believed?

(3.) It is the gospel which he hath confirmed, by his own solemn oath, (as I live, saith the Lord) having plainly propounded it, Ezek. 18:21, 22, 23, 31, 32. He swears to it, Ch. 33:11, and wilt thou not yet believe him?

(4.) When, after the fulness of time, it was more expressly revealed that there could be no turning to God, but through Christ; this was the gospel which he himself preached, (Mark 1:14, 15,) and which, when he was leaving the world, he required should be preached "to all the world," Mark 16:15, 16.

(5.) It is given as the sum of all the counsel of God, Acts 20:21.

(6.) It is the everlasting gospel, which is to continue through all ages, as the stated means of regenerating and renewing souls, 1 Pet. 1:23, 24, 25.

(7.) It is this gospel which God blesses, and makes effectual to this purpose. When, herein, "the love and kindness of God to men appear, then (not by works of righteousness, which they have done, but) of his mercy he saves them, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. 3:4, 5. His mercy revealed, softens and changes their hearts; so that by the exceeding great and precious promises, contained in this gospel, they are made "partakers of a divine nature," 2 Pet. 1:4.

(8.) But it is by believing it becomes effectual to any blessed purpose. "It is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believes," (Rom. 1:16,) but to them that believe it not, it is without power, and effects nothing. It works effectually on every one that believes, (1 Thes. 2:13,) but hath no efficacy when it is not believed. "Much people, believing, were turned to the Lord," (Acts 11:24,) but where there is no believing, there is no turning.

(9.) Where it is not believed, it hardens. We are therefore warned to "take heed of the evil heart of unbelief, lest we be hardened," (Heb. 3:12, 13,) and are told those hardened ones that fell in the wilderness were such as believed not, and that could not enter into Canaan (the type of heaven) "because of unbelief," (v. 18, 19,) and that the gospel could not profit them because it was not mixed with faith, Ch. 4:2.

(10.) It is in the same context mentioned, as a most provoking wickedness, to disbelieve this gospel of his. That sin was therefore said to be the provocation, (Heb. 3:15,) and referring to the same time, the great God says; "How long will this people provoke? How long ere they believe me?" (Numb. 14:11,) when their not believing his willingness to do better for them, than only to bestow upon them an earthly Canaan, was their most provoking wickedness.

(11.) The not believing of this gospel of his, is understood to be giving God the lie, (1 John 5:10,) as believing it, is setting our seal that he is true, John 3:33. But what inducement is it possible he can have to lie to his own creatures, who is himself all-sufficient, and who hath them absolutely in his power? Or what man would lie for lying sake, having no inducement? It is therefore impossible for God to lie, as being inconsistent with the universal perfections of his nature; and therefore to impute falsehood to him, is highest blasphemy. And after all this, sinner, darest thou disbelieve God's reconcileableness to thee upon his own declared terms; when here the whole business sticks, of reconciliation between him and thee? But there are yet other considerations to this purpose to persuade thy belief of God's reconcileableness to thee, from the—

Second Head of discourse, the way of our Lord's bringing about this reconciliation, viz. "in the body of his flesh through death." And here his reconcileableness must be understood to signify two things:—the possibility of God's being reconciled to sinners—his willingness to be reconciled. And the death of his Son upon the cross, in order hereto, affords considerations to evince both.

1. The possibility of the thing; which this sacrifice proves to be possible, because it makes it so. When the apostle asserts that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin," (Heb. 9:22,) and that "it was impossible the blood of bulls and of goats should take it away," (Ch. 10:4,) and that therefore our Lord came to take it away, in that body prepared for him, (v. 5, 6,) he therein implies it to be impossible to be otherwise taken away, than by this blood shed upon the cross; nothing indeed being possible to God, which becomes him not. And it became him not otherwise to effect this design, and bring many sons to glory, but by the sufferings of this his Son. It was therefore not possible upon other terms, (Heb. 2:10,) but in this way it was possible, upon the account of these several things concurring:

(1.) The rich and infinite value, and fulness of this sacrifice. The blood that was herein shed, and the life that was laid down, though of a man, yet were the blood and life of such a man as was also God, (Acts 20:28; 1 John 3:16,) a man that was God's own fellow, Zech. 13:7. As it was God that was offended, so it was God that did satisfy for the offence.

(2.) He was nearly allied to us, as a Redeemer ought to be. "Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part with us of the same:" (Heb. 2:14, 15,) therefore as man did offend, man suffered for it.

(3.) He freely consented hereto, both to become man, and to suffer for man, Phil. 2:6, 7, 8; John 10:18.

(4.) He had no sin of his own to suffer for, 2 Cor. 5:21, and as many other scriptures speak.

(5.) He was, by a special, divine law, commissioned hereunto. Therefore his laying down his life, was in itself no illegal act. He had power to lay down his life, having received a commandment for it

from the Father, John 10:18. He came, having God's law, to this purpose, in his heart, Psal. 40:6, 7, 8.

(6.) He was fully accepted herein above, his sacrifice having a sweet smelling odour with it unto God; because satisfying his justice, it made way for the free exercise of his grace and love. Eph. 5:2. Therefore, sinner, canst thou disbelieve or doubt the very possibility of God's being reconciled to thee upon his own declared terms; when so extraordinary a course was taken that he might be reconciled?

2. And thou hast as great reason to believe his willingness to be reconciled, considering that this was consented to on purpose. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believe in him, might not perish," John 3:16. Now consider, was his own Son given for what he was not willing of? His only begotten Son? His very image? (Heb. 1:2.) The Son of his delights, always dear to him? (Prov. 8:30,) and who was specially dear to him, for this very reason? John 10:17. Yea, and that it was the very cry of his blood from the cross: "O forgive, forgive this repenting, believing sinner; be reconciled to him, O Father, for the sake of thy dying Son!" and yet was he unwilling? What could induce him who is love itself, to give up such a Son to so bitter, bloody, and ignominious sufferings, but his willingness to be reconciled to sinners? It were a blasphemy against the ever-blessed nature and being of God, to imagine he would have his most beloved Son suffer for suffering's sake! And for what other end could it be? And there is little reason to doubt the issue, but that, "being an enemy thou wast reconciled by the death of his Son; being reconciled, thou shalt be saved by his life," Rom. 5:10. It therefore remains to press the

2. Exhortation, which you may take in the apostle's words, (2 Cor. 5:20,) "We, the ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, do pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Now that is put out of doubt, that God justly and honourably can be reconciled to you, (without which it had been impossible) and that he is most unquestionably willing; are you yet unwilling to be reconciled

to him? Consider both this reconciliation itself, brought about with some, "You hath he reconciled;" and the way of it, "in the body of his flesh, through death."

(1.) Some have been reconciled that have been alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works. Whereupon bethink yourselves—

[1.] Have you any greater reason to be implacable towards the blessed God, than those Colossians? Why should you be more wicked enemies?

[2.] Can you better maintain your cause against God? Are you more able to stand against all the power of his wrath, which you so little know? Ps. 90:11.

[3.] Can you better bear the loss and want of the comforts of his love, while you live? To have the great God for your friend? To whom you have free recourse, and may pour out your souls daily? Upon whom you may cast all your cares? With whom you may walk in friendly love, and may converse with him every day?

[4.] Can you less need his supports in a dying hour? Will it be easy to you to die unreconciled? And afterwards to appear convicted, unreconcilable enemies before the tribunal of your Judge? And then to have no advocate, no intercessor to plead for you? When he himself must be your condemning Judge, and shall only say, "O that thou hadst known, in the day of thy visitation, the things that did belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thy eyes," Luke 19:42, 44.

(2.) But we are further to persuade this reconciliation to God, from the way wherein our Lord effects it: "in the body of his flesh, through death," or by dying a sacrifice upon the cross. And now you know this, will ye not yet be reconciled to him? Consider,

[1.] You will herein frustrate, and make insignificant to yourself, the highest demonstration that could be given of God's good-will towards you. "God so loved the world," &c. John 3:16. And what could our Lord himself have done more to testify his own love? "For greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his friends," John 15:13. Yea, for those that were not so before, but wicked enemies; only that thereby they might be made friends, Rom 5:8. And what could it signify to you, to represent the divine love to you by so costly a demonstration, if it do not gain your love?

[2.] And what could be so apt a means, sinner, to break thy heart, and conquer all thy former enmity, as to behold thy Redeemer dying upon the cross for thee? "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn," Zech. 12:10. "And I, if I be lift up, will draw all men to me;" which our Lord said, signifying what death he should die, by being lift up on the cross, John 12:32, 33. Now what dost thou think of thyself, if such a sight will not move thee? An earthly, carnal, worldly mind, is declared over and over to be enmity against God, Rom. 8:7. James 4:4. But how remarkable is it, that such a temper of mind should be so peculiarly signified to import enmity to the cross of Christ! Phil. 3:18, 19. I tell you of such, weeping, saith the apostle, that do even continue their enmity even in the face of the cross! And who even by that itself are not overcome!

[3.] If thou wilt not be reconciled, Christ did, as to thee, die in vain; thou canst be nothing the better. Think what it must come to, that so precious blood, (infinitely exceeding the value of all corruptible things; silver and gold, &c. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19,) should be shed, to redeem and save such as thou, and yet do thee no good?

[4.] If thou continue to the last unreconciled, it not only doth thee no good, but it must cry, and plead, most terribly against thee. Blood guiltiness is a fearful thing! What must it be, to be guilty of such blood! If thou wert guilty of the blood of thy father, thy child, or of the wife of thy bosom, how would it astonish thee! But to be guilty of the blood of the Son of God! How canst thou live under it? If thou

wert guilty of all the innocent blood that ever was shed since the creation of the world, it were not comparable to the guilt of this blood!

[5.] But if thou come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel, as a reconciled believing penitent; thou wilt also come and be adjoined to "the general assembly, to the church of the first born written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. 12:22, 23, 24. O the joy in heaven, that will be concerning thee! And O the fulness of thy own joy, into which thou shalt enter at last: for consider,

[6.] And in the last place, what follows in the latter part of this verse, that is, that thou wilt be presented, by thy Redeemer, holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable in the sight of God, as if thou hadst never offended, and never been an enemy. All thy former transgressions, that have overwhelmed thee with just sorrow, shall all be overwhelmed in that kind, paternal joy, as for the returning prodigal; "This my son was lost, and is found." And thy having been so long alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works, will all be forgotten and swallowed up in the embraces of infinite, everlasting love!

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