

EXPOSITION OF
PHILIPPIANS
CHAPTER 3



RICHARD SIBBES

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by Richard Sibbes

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Introduction

AN EXPOSITION OF THE THIRD CHAPTER OF THE EPISTLE OF ST PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.—PHILIP. 3:1.

THIS chapter contains a general exhortation to several duties. In this verse you have the manner of doing them—all must be done in rejoicing. From thence he proceeds to back other particular exhortations, with reasons and examples of himself, which we will

speak of particularly when we come at them. Now in this verse I will speak first of the compellation, 'brethren;' then of the exhortation, 'rejoice;' and lastly, of the limitation, 'in the Lord.'

1. The appellation, 'brethren.' By this loving compellation he labours to enter into their hearts and affections; well knowing that exhortations are of the more force, being directed to those that are persuaded of the good affection of the speaker. If exhortation comes from the pride of a man, the pride of a man in the hearers will beat it back, and give entertainment thereunto.

But why are Christians brethren?

First, They have the same beginning of life from the same Father: as also they have the same common brother, that is, Christ. They have the same womb, the church; the same food, the word of God. They have the same promises; they are all heirs, all born to an inheritance.

Furthermore, the word brother is a word of equality and of dignity: of equality—though in personal callings one is superior to other, yet this takes not away the common brotherhood. This should fill up the valleys of men's hearts dejected here, in regard of their mean estates; as also pull down the mountains of the proud hearts of men, lifted up through these outward things. Kings must not lift up themselves in disdain of others, because all these personal respects end in death; we carry them not to heaven. And in those respects that we agree in here, as in grace and goodness, we shall continue united for ever. And yet must we honour such as are in eminency, and acknowledge them as men worthy of all respect, and give them dignity according to their places.

But further, this is a name of dignity. It argues that we are not basely born, that we are sons of God and heirs of heaven. Christ after his resurrection, the first term he gives his disciples, 'Tell my brethren,' saith he, 'I go to my Father and their Father.'

This word is also a word of love; and therewith the apostle insinuates the affections of the Philippians. Examine therefore thy affections towards the sons of God. If we love and respect them as our own brethren, good is our estate; if we hate them, our estate cannot be good.

And in the second place, Let not this word be appropriated to some, and not to others, which are notwithstanding of the same number. For one brother cannot make another no brother; for it is one and the same Father that makes brethren. So long therefore as thou seest anything of Christ in any, break not off thy affection, and disdain not the name of brother to such; for where the Spirit is, it works in us a resemblance of God; and where it stamps his image, it makes them brethren.

2. Exhortation, 'rejoice.' It is not only an affection, but a duty that we are enjoined. Wherein first observe,

(1.) It is a Christian's duty to rejoice. It is commanded here. Ministers are enjoined to speak comfort to such, Isa. 40:1, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people;' and Christ came to 'bind up the broken in heart,' Isa. 61:1, and the ministers sent to shew men their unrighteousness, Job 33:23. The spirit that is in such is the spirit of joy; and therefore joy is reckoned as a fruit of the spirit, Gal. 5:22.

And why should not Christians rejoice? They are free from the spiritual Egypt, from greatest miseries. Nay, why should not we sing as the Israelites did after their deliverance? Our enemies and deliverance is far greater than theirs. And we have the greatest prerogatives. We have here an assured hope of eternal perfect happiness hereafter; we have 'peace with God,' Rom. 5:1. We have free access in all our wants to the throne of grace; and we have a God ready to hear all our prayers, and to help us. We have many gifts already received. Christ is already given us. We are in a state of regeneration. And for the time to come, we have promises from God, the God of truth, that nothing shall separate us from Christ.

Surely these are great causes of joy in us; and having such things as these, we dishonour them, the giver of them, and ourselves and our profession, if we rejoice not in them.

(2.) In the second place observe, that it belongs only to Christians to rejoice. Others have neither cause of joy, nor commandment to rejoice. The ministers and prophets are bidden to bid such howl and lament, to shew them their miserable estate.* And indeed what ground can a condemned person have of joy? For the wicked, till they have remission of sins, they are in a damned estate; and though they will snatch this to themselves and say that they are sure to be saved, yet is salvation not their portion. They joy indeed, but it is in sin; in seeing or doing evil to others. Or if sometimes they joy in the gospel (for a wicked man may do so), it is but a forced joy, and much like hot waters to a cold fit of an ague. It brings heat and expulses cold for the present, but it burns them after. So this joy seems to comfort them now, but when trial comes it fails him, and makes him more disconsolate to see himself thus beguiled. Fitter it were for such to be first humbled and brought to the sight of their estate, than to administer comfort to them. To speak peace where none belongs is to undo men. It is the broken that must be healed, and the weary that must come to Christ.

(3.) Limitation. In the third place, observe the limitation of this joy: it must be 'in the Lord;' that is, in Christ, who in the New Testament is often called Lord. And he is our Lord: first, by gift; God hath given us all to Christ. Secondly, by conquest; he hath gotten victory of Satan. And thirdly, by marriage; and therefore we may well call him Lord, and rejoice in him, because he is our Lord; for by him we come to conquer all our enemies; by him we have peace, Rom. 5:1. He makes Us kings and priests, and brings us to heaven.

Now, for the practice of this duty of rejoicing in the Lord, that we may be encouraged, let us consider how it is a means not only of adherence to God, but also of obedience to his laws.

[1.] Adherence to God. Joy, if it be found,* knits us firm to God, so as we rest contented in him as our only and sufficient joy, seeking for no other joy in any other thing. To us Christ is made 'all in all' that we should solace ourselves in his fulness, which if we truly do, we will count all other things as despised, assuring ourselves they cannot minister or add any jot of sound comfort at all; and therefore will not endure any thought of mixture of other things with Christ, thereby to make him more sufficient and complete for our joys to rest on.

[2.] Obedience to his laws: for joy stirs up cheerfulness to every duty, and makes all duties acceptable to God and man. For the want hereof many are dead and dull in good duties; and where a large portion of this joy is, it will remove all lets and delays to duty. It doth not only enable us to, but in, duty. Can no doubt came cheerfully to a good duty, to sacrifice; but for want of this cheerful and joyful spirit, what was his behaviour in the performance thereof? 'His countenance was cast down,' Gen. 4:6. This God espies suddenly, and so he doth in all our dull performances. For he looks things should be done cheerfully, and reason too, for he hath left us a treasure of excellent promises to encourage us. We see it in men. They love when a thing is done cheerfully; they know it betokens love in the party that doth it: and can we then think it strange that God requires it? Again, if we can fashion ourselves to this duty, God hath promised to increase our joy more abundantly. And he performed it to Hezekiah, 2 Chron. 29:36. He will give delight as a reward to him that delighteth in his work. And therefore we ought to labour to bring ourselves to this duty; to the obtaining of which observe these directions.

Means to get joy. First, Consider that joy comes from faith. For it is the sense of our reconciliation with Christ that makes us rejoice, Rom. 5:2, and 1 Pet. 1:6. Now, therefore, whatsoever strengthens faith, strengthens also our joy; and contrarily what weakens the one, must of necessity weaken the other.

Furthermore, joy comes from peace. Whatsoever, therefore, disturbs our peace, must needs disturb our joy. Therefore Satan, to despoil us of our joy, he spoils our faith through our sins; and by them he weakens our hope and our comfort. What is to be done then? Surely repair to the fountain of health, the well of joy, the word of God, Isa. 12:3. And from thence must we draw all our comfort. Use, therefore, the ordinances of God, but use them in the Lord, in obedience to his commandment, and expect the issue with patience. Many there are that use the means, but take no joy at all in them. Why? They do it not as in obedience to God's command, but they rest in the deed done, and they think God is bound to give them joy. God justly denies such that which they presume of.

In the second place: Pray that your joy may be full. See this in most of David's psalms. At the first he complains for the want of God's presence, of God's wrath and anger, but comes off with a large portion of comfort. 'Depart from me, ye wicked, for the Lord hath heard my prayer,' Ps. 6:8. In the use of all means, therefore, join prayer: pray for faith, for hope, and such graces as may bring joy. Though at first thou findest thyself to be cold, to have little or no comfort at all, yet give not over; thou shalt at length find plenty thereof. Remember the woman of Canaan: at the first despised and called dog, but what did her constancy gain? A gracious answer, 'O woman, great is thy faith: be it to thee as thou desirest,' Mat. 15:28.

In the third place: Remember former times, as David did, Ps. 77:6. He was so oppressed, his 'sore ran in the night, and ceased not,' as he saith. But then, 'I remembered the days of old,' &c. Consider thou also in thy deepest affliction, times were once when thou hadst the clear and comfortable light of God's Spirit present with thee. He will not leave thee, his nature is unchangeable, &c.

In the fourth place: Have society with the saints, and keep company with those that are good. And as the two disciples' hearts did burn when they talked with Christ, so verily thou shalt find this heat of comfort by little and little to increase. For God blesses the

communion of saints, and such as are discerning Christians can tell us more, and opportunely bring things to mind which thou thyself rememberest not, and can inform our judgments when they are blinded with grief and melancholy. Use, therefore, the company of the good, when thou findest doubts arise, and make thy griefs known to some wise and judicious Christian. For the devil is too strong for any one alone. He will prevail against thee. Thou wilt be too weak to wrestle with him hand to hand. It is no wonder, therefore, that melancholy persons are so destitute of comfort.

Quest. It will be asked, May we not rejoice in friends' society, deliverance from dangers, and the like good things of this world?

Ans. I answer, Yes; and yet joy in the Lord also; for whenas whatsoever we have, we receive it as a token of God's particular love to us in Christ, who both gives us our daily bread and the word of life; comforts both heavenly and earthly; these outward things then, I say, do strengthen the faith of a Christian, and thereby our joy is strengthened. Wherefore we may thus joy in them, nay, it is our duty to do it. The wicked they indeed receive them, but only as from God's care of the general good of the world, or the race of mankind; and therefore can take no joy truly from them as the child of God doth: who in the right use of them, first rejoiceth that he is the child of God, and is reconciled to him in Christ: that Christ is his; and then that he having the field, hath also the pearl, Mat. 13:45, seq. All blessings belonging to this life and a better are in Christ made his, and he so rejoices in them, as he refers the comfort and strength that he receiveth from them to the honour of God. God's children receiving good things from him, are threatened for not rejoicing in them, Deut. 28:47. In the 45th verse he saith, 'The curses shall be upon thee, for that thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.' And it is expressly commanded, Deut. 26:11, 'Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given thee, and thine house.'

Quest. But it may be questioned, Why, if this be true, are God's children so disconsolate? none are so much troubled in conscience as they? I answer,

1. Their sorrow proceeds not from their good estate, in that they are Christians, but from the want of the perfections to make them absolute Christians indeed.

2. They either do not know themselves, or if they do, because they glorify not God, nor adorn their profession, God justly suffers his joy to be hid, by hiding the comfortable presence of his Spirit.

3. God's children's joy, though it be great, yet is not discerned of the world. It is a hidden joy. The feast is kept in the conscience. It is not seen of the world, which discerns all things carnally. Carnal joy is always outward, and easy to express.

4. While God's children live here, they have ever a mixture of the two affections of joy and grief, to temper one another; for fulness of joy is only in heaven. This life will not endure perfect joy; but ever when there is cause given of joy, we have something to humble us, and to keep us from being exalted above measure. As Paul had some base temptation, which he calls the 'prick of the flesh,' who therefore bids us to fear and tremble, that we lose not the sense of God's Spirit by the prevailing of our corruptions.

Obj. But it will be objected, that the Christian is fuller of sorrow than joy. To which I answer,

Ans. It arises either from ignorance of the grounds of comfort, or from want of application of them. When a man is a young Christian, newly begun, he knows not nor understands what grounds he hath of joy. They are as children, that know not their inheritance at the first, nor their father's love; especially if he correct them, they think he loves them not. Even those that are grown Christians fail too often in this, either by misapplying the grounds, and misjudging of their estate; or sometimes through the distemper of their body,

through melancholy. These judge of grace by the measure, when they should judge by the truth of it, be it never so little. For it is not the measure that is the evidence of the child of God, but truth of grace. For there are degrees of grace: in some more, in some less, and in one more in one time than in another. Take, therefore, a Christian in his right estate, one that is a grown Christian, whom neither melancholy nor temptation doth trouble; take him, I say, as he should be, he doth rejoice more soundly, with true joy and hearty, than any one can, being an ungodly man, be he never so merry. However, this we may be sure of, a Christian hath the greatest cause to rejoice, and, as I said before, he ought to stir it up in him by all means. And therefore, however indisposed he be thereto, he ought to search what good things God hath wrought in him. If he doth not know his estate, he cannot praise God as he should. He must meditate also of the vanity of all worldly things. They vanish, and they that put their trust in them ever failed of any true joy. It never comes to the heart of a man. They are not deep enough to comfort men that meet with afflictions. They only touch the fancy, as the fancy of a beast may be delighted.

Let him also compare all discomforts that can come, with this joy in the Lord, and he shall find that it countervails a world of sorrow. This has no end; they are momentary, they last but for a night. This is in the Lord, in whom is fulness of joy. This made the saints of God so resolute, that they set light by all afflictions whatsoever; and therefore, in their greatest afflictions they have the sweetest joy and greatest comforts. And let him also consider, that by this he avoids the reproach of religion, and shews the force and efficacy thereof to be such as is formerly declared.

And let him take heed of the hindrances of this joy. As first of all, of sin committed and not repented. Let him repent betimes, else it keeps a man dead, and dull, and backward. So long as this Achan is unfound, it will keep him in discomfort, 1 Chron. 2:7. Let him take heed of secret purposes, either to sin or to favour himself in any one sin, how small soever, for time to come. This will rob him utterly of

comfort, for joy cannot lodge in such a heart. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me,' saith David, Ps. 66:18.

Furthermore, Let him take heed of negligence in good duties. For it is not enough to do them, but he ought to stir up the graces of God in him to do them thoroughly; and he must strive against his corruptions. For Christians have never so much joy, as when they have laboured with their endeavours to overcome their imperfections in good actions.

Lastly, Let him take heed of casting himself into dull or dead acquaintance. It is true we cannot avoid conversing with them, but we must have no secret and inward acquaintance but with the best. A companion of fools shall be beaten, and the wise with the wise will learn wisdom. We are all travellers to heaven; let us therefore choose such company as may, as it were, be a chariot to carry us thither, with their good example and discourses. And with the prophet David, think it a great grief when we have not such society as may do us good. 'Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell in the tents of Meshech,' Ps. 120:5. And therefore, if heretofore any of us have been faulty, let us take warning of this hereafter.

VERSE 1

To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

Although the apostle had formerly bidden them to rejoice, in the former chapter, 18th and 28th verses, yet notwithstanding he bids them 'rejoice' again, saying that it is safe for them to hear the same things often, and it is not grievous to him to write the same things twice. Besides, he doth also bid them to beware of such as may hinder their joy, as dogs and those of the concision, preventing* thereby secret objections which they might make against repeating the same things. Whence we may in general observe,

Doct. 1. The wisdom of the word and Spirit of God, to know secret objections that might be made, and to prevent them; turning away thereby whatsoever might hinder the force of the word.

Doct. 2. And in the second place, it teaches us that it is the duty of those that mean to prevail by instruction, to know the secret dispositions of those they deal withal. For when their minds are not quieted or cleared from doubts and hindrances, they are not fit to entertain any good counsel at all.

Doct. 3. And thirdly (for I cannot stand on these things), it shews our dispositions by nature, to count repetition of the same things to be tedious and irksome. For since the fall of man, we wander in our thoughts, affections, and intentions; and it is a part of our loss, to lose our constancy and settled disposition. Wherefore, we find it noted of the Israelites, that they were weary of one kind of food, although it is called 'angels' food,' Numb. 11:6.

Doct. 4. In the fourth place (which I intend more to stand upon), observe with me, that dwelling on the same things is necessary, even for the best Christians. And the reasons are,

Reason 1. First, Because truth is supernatural, and our minds are carnal; and that which must change these our minds must be assiduous, or else our minds will sink into their first estate. We are naturally changeable, and therefore had need to have the truth, as at the first to change us, even so to be continually presented to our souls, to keep us perpetually in this spiritual change. And a

Reason 2. Second reason may be, because we often regard not the truth at the first, second, or third time urged and taught unto us. Wherefore, Job 33:14, it is said, 'God speaketh once or twice, yet man perceives not.' Therefore, if the caution and point be necessary, the reception must needs be necessary also.

Reason 3. In the third place, there is such a breadth and depth in the points delivered out of the word of God, that although we hear often

the same thing, yet we never come to understand the full extent of them. Our souls are narrow. We cannot at the first so soundly and deeply consider of them, neither can we understand so many particulars as otherwise we should; for in every Christian truth there is milk for children and strong meat, which requires digestion and likewise repetition.

Reason 4. A fourth reason may be, because our corruptions daily increase and grow upon us, and variety of occasion and worldly business being natural to us, and therefore more delightful, are too powerful, and do thrust out the consideration of divine truths, which are commonly against the hair. And we cannot have variety of two things in our minds at the same time in strength. Whence it comes to pass that the better is ever more subject to be thrust out, and therefore had need to be hammered in with often repetition and insisting upon again and again.

Reason 5. A fifth reason may be, Because we work as well as understand, weakly or strongly. When we work well, we must have things present strongly in the understanding; as when we tell men of God's justice, omnipresence, of the day of judgment, of death, and the like. The lively and present remembrance of these things keeps the mind of man so in frame as it cannot will any evil, no more than a lewd person will offend in the presence of the judge. And this lively remembrance of things is wrought chiefly by repetition and often enforcing the same things, and it makes the mind to be wholly taken up therewith. And therefore it is a good way, when we would do any good action well, to be taken up with reading or hearing of good, by way of preparation thereunto. And the want of the presence of good things in our mind lays us open and makes us fit for all companies and occasions of sin.

Reason 6. In the next and last place, our memories are very weak to remember and to retain anything that is good. Since the fall they are broken, and good things sink through them as water through a sieve, and therefore hath great need of remembrancers. And after

this manner hath God dealt with man, as in the promise of the blessed seed. How often is it reiterated and typified; and to Abraham it is renewed seven times.* So God to David often renewed his promise concerning the kingdom, as also the promise concerning the deliverance of the people of Israel from captivity in Isaiah is often repeated. This also did Christ, the great doctor[†] of his church, in his parables. In one chapter [he] argueth one principal matter with four parables one after another,* although with some variety, teaching ministers thereby to do the like to avoid tediousness. Repetition in Scripture serves to divers ends; sometimes for the stronger averring of the certainty thereof. Wherefore it was that Pharaoh's dream was doubled. Sometime for emphasis sake, as Christ did often, 'Amen, amen,' and 'in dying thou shalt die,' (a) and the like phrases. But the main end is, to stir up us and our affections, and to keep them in life and action when they are stirred up. Therefore, 2 Peter 1:12, because they knew they could not be over sure of salvation, nor grow too much in grace, he says, 'So long as he lives he will put them in mind of such things.'

Use 1. Let it not therefore be grievous to ministers to do what is for the safety of God's children. They must do it till they see practice come to perfection, and they must cast and cast again. Peter he cast often and got nothing, yet at Christ's word he cast again. So must ministers. God that blesseth not every cast, may bless the last cast to the catching of many; and therefore a minister had need of a fatherlike affection to his hearers, as St Paul had, 1 Thes. 2:11.

Use. 2. A second use may be for ourselves: if we hear the same things repeated, hear them as an impression which may carry force, and work upon our hearts more strongly than before. And know that God may work on us by one means at one time which he did not at another; as a dart pierces deeper being cast by one than by another. And therefore let us not be weary of attendance on God's ordinances, for our corruptions daily increase as our age doth. Our minding of things is but slight, and our memory very brittle. And we must know that the word teaches doing and practising, as well as

knowing. And therefore to conceive a necessity of a continual ministry to perfect a church as well as to begin it. The sacraments are necessary; receive them often. The primitive church had them every Lord's day (b). Till we come to the holy land of that heavenly Canaan, let us submit ourselves to this manna. It is angels' food, and they desire to look into these mysteries, 1 Peter 1:12. And therefore take heed of fulness or loathing; for when we come to that pass that we must have novum or nihil, God takes away this manna thus loathed. Thus did he with the Greek churches, Rev. 1 and 2. They gave themselves not to the plain, sincere truth, but man's inventions, whereby God gave them over to strange opinions. And indeed it is a rule: none absents himself from God's word, but he is given over, and that justly, to believe toys; † to attribute all praise and delight to this or that idle author, which it may be is heathenish or popish. The Greek churches, affecting novelties, were justly given over to Mahomet. But to a true Christian heart there cannot be more delight than in the experimental knowledge of Christ's death and office, of perseverance in grace. There are standing dishes in this Christian banquet. It is a sign God means to plague that person or nation that is delighted in such ill sauces. He will make them come out of our nostrils. We shall have our fill of them, and never hunger after the sincere milk of the word.

VERSE 2

Beware of dogs.

Doct. 1. In this general exhortation, consider first the persons to whom it is directed, to all the Philippians; not only to the pastor, but even to the common Christians. 'They must beware of false teachers.' Is it so? Then surely they ought to take notice of them, and to know them; and therefore they ought to have rules to discern them by. Christ's sheep they discern between a wolf and a shepherd, John 10:4, 5. His sheep discern an heretic or false teacher from those that are true shepherds in the main points of Christian

religion. And therefore, 1 John 4:1, he bids all in general 'to try the spirits;' and the apostle, 1 Thes. 5:21, bids them 'prove all things, and hold fast the good.' If they were then all of them bound to try and prove, they were no doubt bound to know the rules by which they were to try, which rules are only laid down in the word of God.

Quest. But some popish heart may ask, How common people should know the word to be the word of God?

Ans. For answer, I would ask such an one, how they know the pope's canons, or any book of his constitutions, to be the pope's? They will say, their teachers brings them in the pope's name, and they believe their teachers. So say we: we believe our teachers and ministers, who tell us this is the word of God.

Obj. But they object and say, that we make every one a judge.

Ans. I answer, there is a threefold manner of judging. First, a judging whereby we discern of anything; and this every Christian must have, so as it cannot be any plea to him at the day of judgment, to say, my teacher did mislead me. No. Both the leader and he that is led, if they be blind, shall fall into the ditch, Mat. 15:14. Then there is a second kind of judging, which is by way of direction. This is required principally in the pastor, to direct his flock. And there is a third kind: that is, of jurisdiction. This belongs to the church and the magistrate; yet every one must have a judgment to discern the good from the bad. For he that knows not his master's will shall be beaten.

In the second place, not only the young ordinary Christians, but even the best settled Christians had need to beware also. The Philippians were a church established in the truth. Eve was seduced, being in her innocent estate. But I need not stand on this at this time. I proceed to the duty, which is to 'beware.' Which word signifies: first, to discern of, then to avoid. And because those that are aware of evil, by nature will avoid it; therefore 'beware' here,

intends both discerning and avoiding of evil. For the church of God in this world is ever subject to danger. And God suffers it to be so: first, to try who be true, and who false; and secondly, to try them that are good, and to be as an evidence to them of their own estates, so as where such trial and danger is, it is true, ingeniosum est esse Christianum.

But concerning the words 'dogs, concision, evil workers,' they all signify the same thing; and he repeats the word 'beware' thrice, to shew the necessity thereof. Take heed of them that urge works of the law with doctrines of faith, especially of pastors. Nay, take heed of these, for so the word in the original is, 'these dogs' (c). By 'concision,' he means those that urged circumcision, when it was out of date, and when it was dangerous to be admitted of. But observe the term the Holy Ghost calls these 'dogs,' a strange term, and such an one as I should not have dared to have given them, had not the Holy Spirit led the way thereunto. And therefore since it is so, let us not be more modest than he is; but boldly affirm that wicked men are dogs. Now, wicked men are either without the church or within. Without the church, all are dogs: Mat. 15:26, 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.' Of this number are all Turks and Jews, who were filii, children, but are canes, dogs. We were canes, but now through God's mercy are come to be filii. All, therefore, that are without the church are dogs. But there are also dogs within the church; and therefore the Philippians were bidden beware of them, which St Paul needed not to have done if they had not been troubled with them. And those dogs he describes, in that they join works of the law and Christ together, in matter of salvation. These are in St Paul's esteem dogs. And the reason hereof may be grounded on God's esteem, on their behaviour towards other men, and in regard of themselves. For God's esteem, we may see it in Isa. 66:3; he detests them as dogs. For their behaviour towards men, whom they go about to seduce, they fawn on them, and use all manner of enticing, flattering, and false alluring words, Rom. 16:18. See the picture of a Jesuited papist, a pleasing, humane, fawning nature. They creep into houses; and

when these dogs cannot prevail by flattery, then they snarl and bark against them, by false calumnies, and slanders, and railings, and bitter scoffs, and the like; and this they do when they cannot bite. But having gotten power in their hand, they persecute with fire and sword, and the most exquisite torments that they can devise. In regard of themselves also they are dogs, rotten in nature, corrupt in life, filthy in their own courts, devouring their own vomit; and God justly punishing them, by suffering of them to heap up wrath in store, 2 Peter. 2:22, and to return with the sow that was washed to wallow in the mire of corrupt courses. Hence we may observe and see, what a man is now brought to by sin. He that would be like to God is justly compared to the beasts that perish. Now all by nature are no better than dogs, who are all for their bellies, for present contentments, an envious and currish disposition against any that shall endeavour to cross them in their unlawful lusts; and that rule of reason which should overrule him and amend him, he so abuses it, as thereby he is made more like a devil than a dog.* Would we be then changed? Let us attend on that word, that is able of lions to make lambs. It can cleanse us throughout, John 15:3. It sanctifies and alters us. Moral precepts may restrain and alter outward practices. The word that alters the condition and nature of men, it is the word of him that works all with his Spirit. And therefore take heed of them, and deal not more with them than thou must needs. They will fawn; they will not be dogged at the first: but till religion altereth him, assuredly he hath a currish nature. But to proceed. He saith not only, 'beware of dogs' in general, but beware of these dogs of the concision. And these also ought we to beware of, for there is a perpetual litter of them. Though those that the apostle spake of are gone, yet the same spirit is now-a-days in many. Fawners they are and flatterers, yet do they bark at Protestants; and of this sort are our Jesuited papists and seminaries. Our fathers were troubled with them. Let these take heed; for were these men dogs that press circumcision with Christ? and shall not such be also, that press merits with Christ, saints with Christ, and equal traditions with the word of God? The dogs in St Paul's time had some excuse. Circumcision they urged, but it was first founded by God. But these

men out of their own brain endeavour to establish fancies; and where they cannot prevail by conference, they by scattering of books seek to accomplish their intents. Magistrates therefore in their place ought to look to them; and every private person look to their own salvation. We ought also to take heed of neuters, such as are or would be mediators, and will be of every religion, or rather of none; who jumble religions, mixing truth and falsehood, light and darkness together. But he that made distinction between the 'seed of the woman' and the 'seed of the serpent,' made also eternal distinction between religion and irreligion. Though Judas thought he might keep fair quarter with the Pharisees and his Master, yet his fawning kiss could not keep him, but desperation overtook him. So these neuters: let them fawn never so much, let them halt between two opinions never so long, they shall at length know that they have betrayed their religion; and desperation shall at length assuredly overtake them, as it overtook Spira (d). Take heed of them. There hath been a continual brood of them. In the emperors' time the Jews had some liberty granted to them, because their ceremonies carried a show of a reverend antiquity. The Christians they were ludibrium humani generis;* there were even then, as St Paul found, such Christians as, finding they were scorned, because they would be scorned of neither, took part with neither.†

Quest. But some will say, What a great matter do you make of this! Is it not policy and wisdom for us thus to avoid reproach, and to get the good will of all?

Ans. Remember what Christ says, 'He that denies me before men, I will deny him before my Father,' Mat. 10:33. True, say they, 'I yet may inwardly be sound in my heart; I may honour Christ, though outwardly I may please others.' What place is left for profession? 'With the mouth man confesses to salvation,' Rom. 10:10; and such as are ashamed to confess Christ before men, Christ may justly deny to acknowledge them in that fearful day of judgment. For shall we try all things to be sure of our temporal estate, and shall not we

much more seek to assure our spiritual and eternal estate unto us? God forbid.

In the next place, let us not be discouraged or hindered in a good course. Though these dogs bark never so much, yet they are but like the dogs who bark against the moon. Though we meet with many changes, let us keep our course still constantly, without turning aside. For thou must look to be barked at beforehand. Thou art or shouldst be a stranger to this world, and then assuredly the dogs will take notice of thee. And comfort thyself, thou shalt be admitted into thine own country, when these dogs shall be kept out, as it is in the last of the Revelations, Rev. 22:15. And though we cannot have too harsh a conceit of them in regard of their estate, yet are we to respect the image of God they carry about with them, and to esteem of them as of such as may become lambs. And thus did St Paul respect and reverence Agrippa. Yet see how sharp he is, not to those that are heathen, but to those that, making a profession of Christianity, did add circumcision to Christ, wherein we may observe his zeal for Christ's honour.

Beware of evil workers

Beware of such as in general were bad; and in this particular especially they were 'evil workers,' thereby seducing men from Christ. Seducers therefore are evil workers, and magistrates ought to look to them. They are the keepers of the two tables, and are to look to the souls of men as well as to their bodies. Let also private members look to themselves, lest they be seduced by them. Neither is it likely that these were only seducers by false doctrine, but were also ill men and wicked livers; for God justly gives such up to wickedness in life that are seduced in judgment. And thus dealt he with the scribes and Pharisees: 'Do not after their works,' saith Christ, Mat. 23:3. Some think if they so live as none can lay any gross sin to their charge, they are good enough. It is no matter what the heart is, how ignorant, how dark; God will bear with them. Alas! poor ignorant men, is not the understanding God's, as well as the

outward parts? 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind,' Mat. 22:37. The understanding is sponsa veritatis.* And know God looks to purity of judgment. He cannot endure his children should be ignorant; for it is a dishonour to God for his children to conceit of things, in religion especially, otherwise than is fitting, yea, otherwise than they are.

Beware of the concision

That is, as I formerly said, circumcision, called here by the name of concision, because it tended to cut and make a division and sect in the church, with a natural and proper elegance, not affected, describing and naming it by the effect. It is God's use to call things from the event and effect of them. 'Why will you perish?' Jer. 27:13. That is, Why will you do those things that will lead you to destruction? The end of them is death; and those that neglect wisdom hate themselves. As it was also said to the Jews that neglected the gospel, 'They judged themselves unworthy of salvation,' Acts 13:46; because in effect they hated themselves and deprived themselves of salvation. Circumcision formerly had been an honourable ceremony, serving for a partition between Jew and Gentile, and for a seal of the covenant of grace. But the ceremony was to cease, it not having a continual promise. It was to last till Christ came, and when he died, it and all other died also. St Paul, and Christ, and Timothy, were circumcised. But after the time came that Christ had broken down the partition wall by his suffering, they did not only die, but were also deadly to all such as would maintain the observancy of them. The use of them was prejudicial to Christ's honour, and therefore Paul bids us 'beware of them.' And now-a-days this instruction by proportion is of good use. For are there not those that teach concision, and that urge merits, as the papists do? Take heed of them. They say we are the concision; we have cut ourselves from the true mother church of Rome.

I answer, We have suffered a concision; we have made none. And again, we acknowledge we have separated from these Romans, not

from those that were in Paul's time. It is they that have made a concision, and cut themselves from the mother church. But to pass from these: we have a concision among us, and that in a contrary extreme, that think every ceremony and thing that suits not with their opinion to be antichristian and concision; not considering that there be many things urged as fitting for order, being no parts of God's worship. Yet even for these things they make a concision, cutting themselves off from our church, and unchurching us. It is dangerous for such; for when the member is cut from the body, it must necessarily die; and how can we receive grace from Christ as our head, but by union of ourselves to the body, whereof Christ is the head.

It must be our duty to beware of all manner of seducers; and to this end let us,

Remedy 1. First, Get fundamental truths into our heart; affect and love truth: for want hereof the eastern churches were given up to Mahomet; and antichrist ruled over many in these western churches, because they loved not the truth, 2 Thes. 2:10. For none are seduced that are not cold in love.

Remedy 2. Secondly, Let us labour to practise that we know, and God will give us a fuller measure of knowledge, whereby we shall learn to find and know seducers. John 7:17, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know.'

Remedy 3. Thirdly, Pray to God for wisdom to discern of schisms, and heresies, and ill-disposed persons. God hath promised us anything that is necessary for our strengthening, and bringing us to heaven. God will not deny us so necessary an aid as this is.

Remedy 4. Fourthly, Let us look that we keep in us an holy fear and reverence of God: Ps. 25:12, 'What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way he shall choose.' And those things are we duly to observe, the rather because we shall ever find seducers.

It will ever be a hard matter for men to find the way to heaven. And though the doctrine and profession of religion be not ever in all places opposed, yet shall we ever find the practisers thereof maligned; as it is in these days, where none are accounted of to be protestants that are not loose libertines. And thus instead of concision from religion, they join that with it which is quite contrary to the power thereof. Beware also of such, for their courses of life are as pernicious as fundamental errors; for none shall be saved for his knowledge.

VERSE 3

For we are the circumcision.

In these words, and those that follow, our apostle describes who are truly circumcised. 'We are the true Israel, the circumcised sons of Abraham, who are members of Christ.' The Philippians they were not circumcised outwardly, yet were they truly circumcised, they had the truth of it; even as they that were under the cloud and in the sea were said 'to be truly baptized in the cloud and in the sea,' 1 Cor. 10:2. The sacraments therefore, before and after Christ, were in substance all one. As the church was one and the same, they may be said to be baptized as we, and we circumcised as they. The difference was only in the outward ceremony and show, which the church being then young had need of. It is the same religion clothed diversely. Bellarmine saith that their government was carnal, and the promises to them were carnal, but it is carnally spoken of him (e), Heb. 11:2. The fathers before Christ had respect to the recompence of reward; and in ver. 35 they 'accepted not deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection.' Are these carnal promises? The anabaptists they press rebaptizing, not considering that the same covenant was before Christ and after, in substance; so as every true Christian is spiritually circumcised, being once regenerate. Before, indeed, he is uncircumcised, and a spiritual leprosy overspreads all his frame of body and mind, which must be

washed, pared, and cut off. We must part with uncircumcised hearts, ears, and lips; that is, such ears as do delight themselves to hear corrupt lewd discourse; such a tongue and lips as delight to utter and let out words savouring of a rotten and uncircumcised heart; such eyes as do delight themselves in the beholding of lustful and sinful objects, whereby the heart is kindled into vain desires. I say, a Christian must circumcise himself, his heart, and those parts that are uncircumcised, before he can ever think to go to heaven, whither nothing that is corrupt or unclean entereth. Religion therefore is no easy thing, circumcision is painful and bloody. Mortification is very hard. Corruption it must be cut off though the blood follow, else it will kill thee at length. Wherefore we are also to labour for circumcised hearts to understand God's truth, his will, and commandments. Cut off all extravagant desires, which* by little and little take away comfort and communion with God. It is no mercy therefore to spare them. Circumcise thy eyes; pray with David, 'Turn away mine eyes from regarding vanity,' Ps. 119:37. Stop thy ears at the charming of such objects as may infect thy soul. We can never enjoy that beatifical vision hereafter, if we wean not ourselves from the liking of these things. And though we cannot, while we are in this house of clay, come to that perfection we should, yet endeavour to it earnestly, and God will accept our very endeavours, and will further them; yea, we shall get the victory at length. If sin begins to fall it shall surely fall; the house of David in us shall grow stronger, and the house of Saul shall daily be weakened. The means to this duty are,

1. First, Know thy sin, and thy particular sin, by thy checks of conscience and by the checks we receive from our enemies, who shall spy what they can in us thereby to scandalise us. As also observe what thy thoughts work most upon, what is the main thing that generally takes up your cogitations.

2. When thou hast found out thy sin, make it as odious as thou canst. For circumcision implies a thing that is odious and superfluous. Now all sins that be cherished in us may well be odious

to us, for that it hinders us from all good and clothes us with all evil, and makes all outward things evil to us; which* otherwise are no further ill than as they strengthen our corruptions. It hinders us from all good duties. Pride of heart and corruption do dog us. This made Paul cry, not of temporal bonds, but of the bonds of sin and of death. 'Who shall deliver me, wretched man that I am?' saith he, Rom. 7:23, 24.

3. Thirdly, Having found out thy sins, and the abominableness of them, complain of them to God, as Hezekiah did of the blasphemous letter that Sennacherib wrote, and challenge the fruit of God's promise. For he that bids us circumcise, Deut. 10:16, promised that he himself will do it, Deut. 30:6. Faith in the promises is an effectual means to attain to them. Men come with doubtings. They see a great deal of corruption. They think their labour is vain. They cannot be relieved against them. They are deceived. Touch but thou the hem of Christ's garment. Fly to God in his name, and thou shalt find this 'issue' of sin, though not wholly dried up, yet much abated. And here is the excellency of faith that assures us of all the promises concerning sanctification here, as concerning glory hereafter.

Which worship God

The apostle places circumcision before worship; for unless there be a cutting off, we cannot bring our corruption to perform duties of God's worship aright.

The words contain a description of a Christian by his proper act, worship; and by the proper object thereof, God; and by his most proper part, in spirit. And the word 'worship' is taken for the inward worship of God, commanded in the first commandment; also comprehending our fear, love of God, and joy in him, issuing from the knowledge of the true God. All our obedience issuing herefrom is worship of God, including our duties to man, in obedience and relation to God's commandment. The ground of this obedience and

worship is the relation between God and the reasonable creature, being the image of God. Now this image being lost in the fall of our first parents, we must worship him not only as our creator and maker, but as 'reconciled to us in Christ,' as he hath made us anew.

Secondly, We are to worship him as the well-spring of all grace, goodness, excellency, and greatness.

Thirdly, As he doth communicate all unto us. He is ours. Christ is ours. All is ours. This should carry our souls to love him, be his as he is ours; especially to be his in spirit, by which is meant the reasonable soul, understanding, will, and affections. And, secondly, with sanctified understanding, sanctified will, and sanctified affections. Thirdly, With all our strength, spirit, life, and cheerful readiness. Wherefore God is the proper object of spiritual worship. Trust on him, love him, joy in him, invoke and pray to him and to him only; not to the Virgin Mary, saints, or images, as the papists do: Mat. 4:10, 'Him only shalt thou serve,' as Christ saith, because our commandment is only from him and extends only to him. The promises are only from him. He only is present in all places; he only supplies our wants; and he only knows what our wants are and how to help. Saints are not present in all places. They cannot hear many at once; nay, they cannot hear our prayers unless they be present. They are finite creatures, they have no infinite properties. Christ he bids us, invites us, to come to him, he hath promised to hear us and to ease us.

And further, God knows the secret wants, which the saints cannot know. We ourselves know them not. And therefore are we to go only to God in all our necessities, because it is most gainful for us to go to him that can help us; nay, we owe him this honour by going to him, to acknowledge his omnipresence, his willingness and ability to do good.

In spirit

The apostle in these words shews the manner of true worship, by the most proper and fit part of a Christian; to wit, his spirit; that is, a soul truly sanctified; lively, and cheerfully, with a willing and ready mind, fitly disposed, contrary to outward, false, and hypocritical worship.

1. And the reason is, 'Because God is a Spirit, and therefore must be worshipped in spirit,' John 4:24.

2. Secondly, It is the best part of a man; and God who challenges all, and that justly, looks especially that he hath the best part.

3. Thirdly, The spirit hath a being of itself, and praiseth, loveth and rejoiceth in God when it is out of the body; and the body is stirred up to this duty only by the spirit, being of itself senseless as a block; and outward worship without inward is but the carcase of worship. The prayer of a wicked man is abominable, because he regards iniquity in his heart, Ps. 66:18. And this spirit of ours, without the Spirit of God, cannot worship him; and therefore every one that is not changed makes God an idol.

Use. This may deprive all such of comfort as care not for this spiritual worship, thinking they have done enough if they have mumbled a few idle words over. God accepts it no more than if they had sacrificed a dog's head, as he saith, Isa. 66:3. And verily, what other is popery, but a body without a soul, when they worship in blind sacrifices, in a strange language? Is this a spiritual worship, when they neither know what they do nor say? Let us show that we are not of their number. Come we with love, and with the intension* of all our affections; and this will sway the whole man, body and soul; and so shall we worship him in truth, and not in hypocrisy, as many do, that bring their idols with them. Their minds are on their pleasures and riches, though their body be present before God. And it hath ever been an error in the world, this limiting and tying God's worship to outward worship of the body, with a kind of ceremonious gesture; and it is very much liked for such like reasons as these are.

First, The outward gesture: as holding up hands, bending the knee, casting up the eyes, they are things that may easily be done.

Secondly, They make a glorious show in the eyes of the world. It is a commendable and good quality to be religious, especially if they be observed so to be.

Thirdly, It is beneficial to men, whenas hereby they are known to be no atheists, and therefore not that way incapable of preferment or the like.

Fourthly, Outward worship satisfies conscience a little. Men know they must worship God, and go to church, that these are means to save men, and they think that in doing so they stop the cries of their consciences. Alas! alas! these sleepy, blinded consciences of theirs will at length awake, and will accuse them, for the outward ceremonious hypocritical worship of him that requires the Spirit to worship him with.

Obj. But some men say, How shall we know whether we serve God in spirit or no?

Ans. I answer, Observe these properties.

First, Whether thou lamentest thy defects in the best actions thou dost, and are not puffed up with conceit of the sufficiency of thy performances. Paul found this in him; for although he lived, being a Pharisee, as concerning the law unrebukable, yet when he was converted he saw much corruption which before he knew not, and laments and bewails it, Rom. 7:23, 24.

Secondly, Examine thyself, whether thou makest conscience of private closet duties. Of prayer in thy study when none sees thee. Of thy very thoughts. Dost thou serve God with thy affections and thy very soul? Dost thou weep in secret for sins, yea, for thy secret sins? Dost not thou do good duties to be seen of men, as the Pharisees did? Contrariwise, wilt thou omit no place nor time, but always and

in all places thou wilt worship God? This must be done; for God is always and for ever God; and he is in all places, in private as well as public; and therefore a Christian's heart must be the sanctum sanctorum, † where God must remain present continually. And therefore he makes conscience of, and is humbled for, the least sins, yea, those that the world esteems not of, and counts them as niceties; and that in as great a measure as ordinarily men are for the greatest sins they commit.

Thirdly, Canst thou endure the search of thyself and thy infirmities by all means? By thyself, by others, by the word, by private friends? Nay, canst thou desire this search, that thou mayest know thy sin more and more, for this end, that thou mayest truly hate it with a more perfect hatred? Canst thou truly appeal to God, as Peter did to Christ, 'Thou knowest that I love and prefer thee above all'? John 21:15. It is a sure sign of thy sincerity which the world cannot have; and therefore when they see their sins laid open, they spurn at the ordinances, and spite the minister and their true friends, that put them in mind of their faults, accounting them as their only enemies. Surely they shall never be able to endure the search of God hereafter; and the last day when he shall lay them open, they shall be overcome with shame.

A fourth sign is, That at the hour of thy death this spiritual worshipping of God will give thee content, when nothing else can. Thou mayest say with comfort, as Hezekiah did, 'Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in sincerity,' Isa. 38:2, 3. When downright affliction comes, outward verbal profession vanisheth, with all the comforts thereof; then perisheth the hope of the hypocrite. Two things upheld Job in comfort, in his great extremity. He was first assured that his Redeemer lived; and secondly, he knew his innocency in those things that his friends charged him with. And such times will fall on us all, either at the time of death or before, when nothing but innocency and sincerity shall be able to uphold us.

Labour therefore for sincerity and spiritual worship. 'Worship God in spirit,' but let it be done outwardly also. But first, bring thy heart and intention to what thou dost, and that will stir up the outward man to its duty. And for the performance hereof follow these directions.

First, Learn to know God aright. For worship is answerable to knowledge; for how can we reverence God aright, when we know neither his goodness nor his greatness? How can we trust on God when we see not his truth in the performance of his promises, in the Scriptures, and in our own experience? Those that do not these know not God. For as the heart affects according to knowledge, so also it is true in divinity; as we know his justice we shall fear, as we know his mercy we shall love him, as we know his truth we shall trust on him. Ps. 9:10, 'They that know thy name shall trust in thee;' and in other places of the said psalm, the Lord is known in the judgment he executeth, ver. 16.

Secondly, Know God to be the first mover and cause of all. Men ordinarily fear the creature, attributing that to it which belongs to the Creator. But God he is the giver of all, and Christians look on the secondary means as to* the first author and ground of all the rest. They behold the magistrate as in God, fear them no otherwise but in the Lord. Atheists they will not stick at any sin whatsoever, to get the love of those that may bring them any worldly commodity. A Christian, he pleases and seeks the love of him that can make enemies friends when he lists, and when it is for our good. He knows 'in him we live, move, and have our being.'

Thirdly, Make much of spiritual means. God he works by means, by his word; attend to it. It works love, fear, joy, and reverence in us; and therefore no marvel if those that neglect those means are not acquainted with these graces of God's Spirit.

Fourthly, Lift up thy heart to Christ, the quickening Spirit, 1 Cor. 15:36, seq. Our hearts naturally are dead; Christ is our life. When

thou art most especially called to love, to fear, to humility, pray to him to move thee, and yield thyself to him, and then shalt thou pray in spirit; as it is said in Jude 20, 'Hear in spirit, do all in spirit;' do outward works of thy calling in spirit; for a true worshipper will out of spiritual grounds do all outward works of his particular calling, as well as the works of his general Christian vocation. Let us therefore do all things from our hearts to God and to our neighbour, else will not God accept of our works. It is the Jew inwardly who shall have praise of God. The want of this sincerity hath extinguished the light of many a glorious professor, and thereby hath brought a great scandal upon the true worshippers of God in spirit.

And rejoice in Christ

The word 'rejoice' implies a boasting or glorying of the heart, manifesting itself in outward countenance and gesture, as also in speech. It also implies a resting on and contenting in the thing we glory in, proceeding from an assurance that we glory in a thing worthy of glory, for they are fools that delight in baubles. Observe hence, therefore,

Doct. 1 That those that will worship Christ aright must glory in him. For the worship of Christ is a thing that requires encouragement, and nothing can work this encouragement like the glorying in Christ. And therefore Paul, in the first part of his epistle to the Romans, having shewed that God had elected them freely, and had begun the work of sanctification in their hearts, he comes in the 12th chapter, ver. 1, 'I beseech you,' saith he, 'present yourselves as a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice to God.' And in Titus 2:11, 'The grace of God teacheth,' by encouraging us 'to deny ungodliness, and to walk unblameably, soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' And therefore, whensoever we grow dull or dead, think of the great benefits that we have by Christ, and it will quicken us and all our performances.

Doct. 2. In the next place observe, That Christ is the matter and subject of true glory and rejoicing, and only Christ, for they well go together, a full and large affection with a full and large object. Boasting is a full affection, the object is every way as full.

Reason 1. First, As he is God and man. He is God full of all things; he is man full of all grace and void of all sin. He is Christ anointed to perform all his offices; he is a prophet all-sufficient in all wisdom. In him are the treasures of wisdom. He teaches us not only how to do, but he teaches the very deed. He is our high priest. He is the sacrifice, the altar, and the priest, and he is our eternal priest in heaven and on earth: on earth as suffering for us, in heaven as mediating for our peace. 'Who shall condemn us? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,' Rom. 8:34. He is also our King. He is King of all, King of kings, and Lord of lords; a king for ever and at all times, subduing all rebellions within us, and all enemies without us; and he is all these so as none is like him, and therefore is worthy of our glory.

Reason 2. Secondly, Christ is communicative in all these. He is prophet, priest, king, for us; he is God-man; he is Christ for us. He sought not his own. It was his communicative goodness that drew him from heaven to take our nature.

Reason 3. Thirdly, He is present and ready to do all good for us; he is present with us to the end of the world; nay,

Reason 4. Fourthly, We are his members. He is in us. We are his wife; nay, we are him. 'Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Acts 9:4. 1 Cor. 12:12, seq., 'We are all one body with Christ.'

Reason 5. Fifthly, We are even whiles we are here glorified with Christ. He is our husband. If he be honoured, we his spouse also are advanced. If he be our king, we are his queen. If the head be crowned, the body is honoured; and,

Reason 6. Sixthly, All this is from God, and freely comes from him. Christ is anointed by the Spirit and sent from the Father. 1 Cor. 1:30, 'He is made of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption to us.' And John 6:44, 'No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him;' and it is further said that God 'sealed him,' John 6:27. So that we may rejoice in Christ, because that thereby we come to joy in God, for he reconciles us to God who called him to this office, which was witnessed at his baptism, whenas the whole Trinity bare witness thereof.

Quest. But it may be questioned, What! may we not joy in any other thing else but in Christ?

Ans. I answer, There may be two causes of our joy. One principal, the other less principal. We must only rejoice in Christ as the main and principal cause of our happiness. But we may rejoice in creatures so far forth as they are testimonies of Christ's love, and in peace of conscience as coming from Christ, and in the word of God as it is the gospel of the revelation of Christ to us.

Use 1. For use. We may observe this doctrine as a ground of the necessity of particular faith. For none can boast, but the boasting must arise from a particular faith, which only is the true ground of every man's particular assurance.

Use 2. Secondly, Let it serve as a direction to every Christian that will rejoice; let him go out of himself and rejoice in Christ, his king, his priest, and his prophet. Let him observe what he hath done for him, and what he will do for him, and thereby see himself perfectly happy; and,

Use 3. In the third place, Let us first boast that we have Christ, and then in his benefits and blessings that follow him. First, rejoice that we have the field, then rejoice in the pearl. And therefore the apostle says not rejoice in faith or in obedience, but 'in Christ,' who being once mine, how shall I not have all things with him?

Use 4. Those that are burdened with sorrow for their sin, let them consider. Why do they grieve? Do their sins trouble them? Christ he came to die for sin, he is their high priest, he came to save sinners. Doth the devil accuse them? Let them know Christ chose them, he pleads for them. Who can lay anything to their charge? Christ he is dead, risen; nay, he is ascended into heaven. Are they troubled with crosses? That is the best time to rejoice in Christ. 'We joy in tribulation,' Rom. 5:3. When nothing comforts us, then hath Christ sweetest communion with our hearts. St Stephen, when the stones flew about him, and Paul in the dungeon, had the most sweet consolation and comfortable presence of God's Spirit that upheld them. Nay, in death we may glory most of all. It lets us into that state, into that sweet society with our Saviour and the saints, the very hope whereof doth now sustain us and cause us to glory here, as in Rom. 5:2. And death now is but a drone,* the sting is gone, all enemies are conquered.

Use 5. In the fifth place, See wherein the glory of a man, of a nation, of a kingdom consists. It is in Christ, and that which exhibits Christ. What made the Jews rejoice? Mark the prerogatives they had, Rom. 9:3, 4: adoption, covenant, promises, and Christ. What made the house of Judah so famous? and Mary so bless herself? 'All generations shall call me blessed,' Luke 1:48: Christ, that vouchsafed to proceed out of her loins and from that stock. 'Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day,' John 8:56, though he saw it afar off by the eye of faith. And what should we glory in above the Jews, above other nations, but in this? The veil is taken away: Christ shines, and we have the gospel in its purity. This the apostle looks for in the Corinthians, 2 Cor. 2:3, 'Having confidence that my joy is the joy of you all.' Now, what was Paul's joy? 'God forbid,' saith he, 'that I should rejoice, but in the cross of Christ,' Gal. 6:14. Let us not, therefore, rejoice in peace or plenty, fortified places, or the like. No. If we had not Christ to rejoice in, we were no better than Turks. 'Happy is the people whose God is the Lord,' Ps. 146:5; for in him shall we have fulness of joy and comfort. Make use of this in time of temptation. When the devil would rob us of our joy, fly to Christ:

oppose him against all; oppose the 'second Adam' against the first: he came to do whatever the other did undo. Learn to see the subtlety of the devil and thine own heart; and fill thy heart with the Scriptures and with meditations of the promises, and they will cause our love to be so fervent, as all our service of God will seem to be easy to us; as the time that Jacob served seemed nothing, for the love he bare to Rachel, Gen. 29:20.

But how shall, we know whether we rejoice in Christ or not?

Ans. I answer, By these signs:

1. First, When we glory, see the ground whence it arises, whether from God reconciled to us or not. If otherwise, remember that of Jer. 9:23: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength;' all such rejoicing is evil; 'but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord.'

2. Secondly, If we glory in the Lord, it will stir us up to thanks. What we joy in we will praise. If we joy in Christ, we shall, like the spouse in Canticles, ever be setting forth the praises of our beloved. Thus did Paul, Eph. 1:3, and Peter, 1 Pet. 1:3; and therefore, where deadness and dulness is, it shews no true Christian joy.

3. Thirdly, Our glorying will be seen in duty. Delight ever implies the intention to do any good work, and diligence.

4. Fourthly, If we glory in Christ aright, we shall not endure any addition to Christ; and therefore, we shall abhor that popish tenent* which puts so many additions to Christ in the meritorious work of our salvation. A true rejoicer in Christ sees such all-sufficiency in Christ's merits and work, that he abhors purgatory and such trash; and so much the more, by how much his glorying in Christ is the more fervent and sincere. Christ is our husband, we are his spouse; if we cleave to any other than to Christ, we are adulterers. No; let him kiss us with the kisses of his mouth, and none but he, Cant. 1:2.

5. Fifthly, This joy, where it is, it will breed content in all estates. Paul could want and abound, and so can a true rejoicer: in Christ he hath all. He cares not for earthly wants, so he wants no heavenly comfort. If he be poor, he is rich in heaven; nay, what he most complains of, are good for him: life or death, all is one with him. Christ is his, and in him all things.

Quest. But it may be said, There are many Christians are not in this happy condition.

Ans. I answer, It is their own fault, to yield to the devil's policy; and their own weakness, that will not labour to break through these clouds, and challenge the promises.

And have no confidence in the flesh

These words are in truth included in the former, for he that glories in Christ 'will have no confidence in the flesh.' But the apostle notes this as a plain demonstration and evidence of the glorying in Christ. For by the copulative enjoining of them, it is all one as if he had said, What a man trusts to he glories in, and what he glories in he trusts to, and is confident of. If in wit his glorying be, he trusts to it, though it be to his ruin, as it fell out with Ahithophel, 2 Sam. 17:23. If in eloquence of speech, he trusts to it, and it brings shame, as it did to Herod, Acts 12:23. If in honour, he trusts to it, and brings himself to dishonour, as Haman did, Esther 7:10.

By 'flesh' is meant outward things, as prerogatives, privileges, actions of a man's own doing, and particularly, he aims at circumcision, which he calls 'outward, and that of the flesh,' Rom. 2:28. So as the observation that we may gather is, that confidence in Christ takes away confidence in outward things. The reason is, if Christ be fully all-sufficient, what need is there of any outward thing to put confidence in? For these are two opposite things, and one overthrows the other.

Doct. The second instruction is, that naturally men have confidence in outward things; for having not hearts filled with grace, they relish not Christ, but fly to ceremonious outward actions as their refuge. Nay, in the church, till we be converted, we naturally fly to outward fleshly confidence. We have the word taught to us; we come to hear it twice on the Lord's day. Alas! what is this, if thou be not transformed, and inwardly and outwardly conformed in obedience! Hast thou the sacraments? dost thou uncover thy head, or bow the knee? These are good, and they seem fair; but where is the heart? how is that prepared? hast thou an earnest desire to leave off thy course of sinning, and dost thou resolve hereafter to amend thy life? Oh, here is the hard spiritual work! So, in outward fasting and abstinence, it is an easy matter. The Pharisees did it often. But this is the fast that God hath commanded, to loose the bands of wickedness, to fast from sin, Isa. 58:6. The suffering of the flesh, if it be separated from spiritual use, and alms, they profit nothing, 1 Cor. 13:3. All Paul's prerogatives, which were many, 2 Cor. 11th and 12th chapters, yet they were in his account but 'dross and dung,' in comparison of Christ. Most men are like Ephraim, Hosea 10:11, as heifers, who serve to tread out corn and to plough. Ephraim loved to tread corn, where he might eat his bellyful; for by the law of Moses, the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn was not to be muzzled. Men they are delighted in the performance of slight duties; but to put their neck under the yoke, to plough, it is a hard work; who can bear it?

Obj. But some will say, Oh, what! do you condemn outward duties and use of them?

Ans. I answer, We may consider religious duties two ways. First, as they are outward means to salvation, for so they are. Secondly, as they are expressions of inward truth; and so out of a sincere, entire affection we bear to them, and out of a desire to be wrought upon by them, we do them. Thus they are commended that use them. But let them want but an inch of this, all is abominable, all is 'flesh.' The Jews they boasted in the name of 'holy people,' in their law, 'in the

temple,' in the 'Holy Land;' yet for all these, saith God, you shall go into captivity. Against such Christ preached: 'Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees! you tithe mint, but let pass justice and judgment,' Mat. 23:23. And Paul, 'Be not high-minded, but fear,' Rom. 11:20. And the reasons why men are taken up with this fleshly confidence are,

Reason 1. First, Outward things are easy, and men cannot bend themselves to perform the hard matters of the law.

Reason 2. Secondly, They are glorious, and men desire to be observed.

Reason 3. Thirdly, Men have a foolish conceit that God is delighted with the outward act, when the inward sincerity is wanting.

Reason 4. Fourthly, Men want knowledge of themselves, want the inward change, want sense of their own unworthiness and Christ's worthiness.

Reason 5. Fifthly, God followeth such with prosperity in this world. Thereby they think God is well pleased with them, till the hour of death come, and then they find all but froth.

Quest. How shall we know whether our confidence is fleshly or not?

Ans. I answer, Where this fleshly confidence is, there is bitterness of spirit against sincerity. The Pharisees, the doctors of the law, sat in Moses' chair, yet who more opposed Christ than they? Mat. 23:2. Nay, they wholly and only in their whole course sought to persecute him, and made it their trade.

2. Secondly, Where this fleshly confidence is, there is also a secret blessing of ourselves in our performance of good duties, without humiliation for our defects. Hypocrites think that God is beholden to them, and therefore do bless themselves in the deed done.

In the fourth verse he comes to an argument, taken from himself, against those of the concision.

VERSE 4

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more

As if he had said, If any other man may glory in the flesh, then may I much more. But I do not think that I have cause sufficient to glory in the flesh; therefore have not they, or may not they, glory in the flesh. And the reason or ground of this proposition is taken from his many prerogatives he had, which he comes to in the 5th and 6th verses following.

First. Circumcision was the first prerogative before conversion; and it was not before the eighth day, to the end that the child might gather some strength to bear and endure the ceremony, for it was of itself grievous, and a bloody ceremony; wherefore it was that Moses his wife called him a bloody husband, Exod. 4:25. And this ceremony was not to be respited above eight days, that the parents might not be delayed in their comfort. Whence we may gather, that dying before baptism is no necessary impediment to the salvation of the child, for the same covenant is annexed to circumcision that is to baptism; and the papists, that hold that the death of children before baptism hindereth the salvation of the infant, may as well hold that all the children that died before the eighth day, being the day of circumcision, were damned. Secondly, Observe this, that children, though infants, may, nay, must, be baptized, if it may be with conveniency; for children were circumcised, nay, they were enjoined circumcision, on the eighth day. Now, seeing the covenant is the same, and given to children, now as then, why may not the seal thereof be now given in their infancy as then?

VERSE 5

Of the stock of Israel

Jacob had his name changed of his wrestling with the angel, and prevailed. St Paul says he was of that stock of Israel that prevailed with God.

Of the tribe of Benjamin

There were two tribes of especial credit, Judah and Benjamin. They were kingly tribes. Benjamin was honoured with the first king, Saul the son of Kish, who though he were a castaway, yet it is a matter of great joy in the flesh to have great men, personages and learned men, of their lineage.

An Hebrew of the Hebrews

More ancient than an Israelite, for Abraham was an Hebrew before Jacob was an Israelite. And he was an Hebrew born, no proselyte or converted Jew.

As touching the law, a Pharisee

Before Christ's time there were divers sects among the Jews, as Pharisees, Scribes, Herodians, and Essæi.* But the Pharisees were the greatest sect of all; and as the word signifies, so they did separate themselves as better than other Jews whatsoever. And St Paul lays down this as one especial carnal thing, wherein he might glory. He was no common Jew, but a zealous Jew. So as thence we may observe, that there is a fire and zeal that is not kindled by heaven; but, as St James saith of the tongue, 'is set on fire of hell,' 3:6, out of ignorance. Blind zeal therefore is a ground of destruction. We are therefore to take heed; for unless our zeal have an eye, nothing is more tempestuous and troublesome than that man is whom it possesses.

VERSE 6

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church

Where zeal is, if it be meant in the largest sense, it is very hot against all opposites. It hath the name from fire, separating heterogenies, and gathering things homogeneous. Our apostle was none of those drowsy professors that would be content to mingle religions, so as where there is no opposition there is no zeal. And therefore those that would reconcile religions, false and true, they have not a spark of zeal, but are key-cold. Again, Paul well joins persecution and a Pharisee together, for there was never hypocrite but he was a persecutor. For he, making and grounding his profession on pride and a desire to be counted holy, when a downright person esteems him not, but by his integrity, puts the other's outward profession out of countenance, presently he falleth a persecuting, especially if his hypocrisy brings any profit or gain, as it was with Demetrius in the Acts, 19:24, 38; and as it is now with the Romish Church, whose chief end is profit, as appears by their purgatory, indulgences, pardons, dispensations, and the like. You shall have as much mass as you will, and as little preaching. We may observe further, that carnal zeal is persecuting zeal, and the persecuting church is the false church. Christ's flock never persecutes wolves. It will not indeed endure to be near them, but it is not cruel against them. The papists indeed they speak much of their mildness and meekness, but what is the reason? Their hands are bound. Solve leonem et senties leonem, loose the lion and then you shall find he is a lion.

Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless

This was a great prerogative.

Obj. But how can he be said to be blameless as concerning the law, when he was without the law? Rom. 7:9.

I answer, It is true he was without the law in respect of the inward man, in respect of sanctified knowledge, love, and fear; but in regard of his outward course of life, no man could blame him. Let this be observed by carnal civil men; they may be blameless as concerning outward conversation, and yet without the law.

Quest. But if he was blameless as concerning the law, how could he blame himself so as he did? Rom. 7:15.

Ans. I answer, St Paul then had a new esteem and judgment; he had a new light which shewed him much corruption, where before he saw none. This meets with weak Christians, that think themselves unconverted and castaways, because they see a great deal of sin in them. Paul was without blame; now 'miserable man, who shall deliver me?' Rom. 7:24. Christians therefore are to be comforted; and to know that they are not the worse because they see themselves sinful daily more and more, but that they are better, as to whom God does daily bestow the light of his Holy Spirit, to make them see more clearly into their estates. We know that we see only the motes where the sun shineth; yet cannot we deny but all the air is as full as that part which the sun enlighteneth.

Let not such therefore be discouraged, but let them know where there is any opposition, there is spirit as well as flesh; and that at length the spirit will have the victory.

VERSE 7

But what things were gain to me, those I count loss for Christ

1. Those things and privileges that formerly he counted gain, now he counts them loss.
2. It is good therefore to teach by example; as St Paul does here enforce rules by his own experience and example.

It is also expedient sometimes to speak of prerogatives and privileges that a man hath in himself; and it is not universal that we must not speak of anything that might concern our own praise. For we may do it as St Paul does here, to beat down the pride of others that are vain-glorious; or we may, as Paul does, lift up ourselves to abase and beat down ourselves the lower.

3. In the third place, when God vouchsafes his children any outward privileges, he doth it for the good and help of others, though we see it not at the first. Paul had these privileges, that he might beat down the pride of the Jews more powerfully. And Solomon had all abundance of wisdom, riches, and the like. Why? But only that he might without control judge of all, as of 'vanity and vexation of spirit;' and make it to be believed more firmly. For had an ordinary man said it, men would have thought it easy for him to say so; but if he had tried them, he would have been otherwise minded. In these later times, our best teachers were at the first papists, and of the more zealous sort; as Bucer (f) and Luther (g), being also learned men; as also Peter Martyr (h) and Zanchius (i), was brought up in Italy, and all this, that they seeing once their blindness, might be the more able to confound them, as being not a whit inferior to them in any outward respect whatsoever, when they were of their belief.

4. In the fourth place, God (having to deal with men of a desperate condition) suffers great and famous men to be in ignorance, nay, to be persecutors, that after their conversion they might comfort weak Christians; and therefore let them comfort themselves. Do they find that their sins are many and great? Paul was a Pharisee, a persecuting Pharisee, and continued so a long while. Nay, after his conversion, he complains of a body of sin, and yet found mercy; and therefore do not despair.

But to proceed. We see what St Paul was, and what now he is, how his judgment is quite contrary to that it was; for where grace is, it makes men opposite to themselves; and therefore this re-creation is

called a new creature: Paul quite contrary to Saul, and yet both one person. Out of which we may gather,

First, That a man before conversion hath ever that which is his gain; for we are prone to think too highly of natural things, and our esteem shall be grounded upon probabilities, rather than we will lose our esteem of them. For we know this outward gain is easily gotten, the duties are easily performed, fair outwardly; and will procure praise from men, which is all we naturally look for.

Secondly, Observe hence that that which we before conversion thought gain, is indeed loss and unprofitable, nay, it is dangerous; for things may in use be good, but in abuse dangerous. Riches are good in use, but in abuse 'mammon' and 'thorns,' as Christ terms them. Circumcision and sacrifices and baptism in themselves were good, and many things are still good; yet when we trust in them, and neglect inward graces, sacrifice is no more acceptable than a dog's head, Isa. 66:3. Good works are in their proper nature good; yet if we rely on them, they stop the way to Christ. So as it is our wicked and abusing affections that hath brought an ill report on the good creatures of God, so as to us they are dross and dung, nay, loss. These terms doth the Holy Spirit give to alienate our affections from these earthly things; an outward, civil, and conformable life [those things which] are, by our high esteem of them, stops,* staying many from heaven; for while they tell themselves they live honestly and justly, doing no wrong, they suppose themselves to be very saints, and look no further. But every true Christian knows his infirmity, and the more he is enlightened, the more he sees his darkness; he knows these things cannot be gain to him.

For, first, he knows they are meaner than the soul. These are earthly, the soul is from heaven; these are outward, the soul is spiritual, and therefore is only satisfied with spiritual and heavenly comforts.

Secondly, A Christian sees these things are fading, arising of nothing, and tending to nothing; contrarily, he knows his soul is eternal, and requires comforts that may last with it for ever. For those that joy in these outward things, when they leave him or he leave them, as of necessity he must, it is true they vanish to nothing; but he cannot, but must continue comfortless for ever, and undergo the just wrath of God. Furthermore, a Christian doth not only know these things to be no gain, but he also knows them to be loss. For that is loss which a man finds by experience to be loss, when his understanding is awakened. But all things outward, whatever they be, whether that a man is a Christian by profession, or that he is a preacher, who hath good utterance and is embraced of the people and approved of, or what privilege else soever, when the conscience is awakened they breed more horror, at the hour of death, when we are to give an account of them, and they set us further off from Christ. A profane person is nearer conversion than a proud Pharisee; as Christ saith, 'The publican and harlots go before you into the kingdom of God,' Mat 21:31. The reason is, because they that are thus outwardly affected sing peace to their souls; whenas the profane man hath no starting-holes of excuse, his vileness being more manifest.

Secondly, God detests such boasters more than those that are outwardly profane, and therefore Christ inveighs against such ever, 'Woe to you pharisees, hypocrites,' Mat. 23:13, and often threatens such with the punishment that is provided for hypocrites, as if those were the men which his soul abhorred, and for which only hell was prepared.

But how shall we be qualified, that outward things may not be hinderers of us?

First, Look to the foundation of all conversion; consider the nature of God and his law. By them we shall see a further degree of holiness than the best of us can attain to. The excellency of God's nature is such as God's children have been ashamed to be in his

presence. As Job when God spake 'abhorred himself,' Job 42:6. Peter when he saw the power of Christ said, 'Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man,' Luke 5:8. We are, therefore, to think often of the presence of God, before whom ere long we must all appear.

Secondly, Bring thyself to the spiritual meaning of the law, as Paul did, Rom. 7. See into thy thoughts, and behold the uncleanness of thy heart.

Thirdly, Converse with those that are better than thyself, and compare thyself with them. Not as the Pharisees, who compared themselves with the publicans; and herein are many deceived, and by undervaluing others they overvalue themselves. For things compared with less they seem somewhat, but with bigger seem nothing. It ought not to be so with us. Let us compare ourselves to that rule that we live by, and to such examples as we are to follow. Compare we ourselves with Christ, our righteousness with his, and then shall we see our wants.

Fourthly, Practise that which Christ so much beats on; that is, self-denial. Hate father, mother, world, nay, thyself, or never think to come to Christ. They will be loss to thee unless thou account them loss. The young rich man's wealth made him a loser. The love of the praise of men kept the Pharisees that they could not believe. Whosoever nourisheth any lust, it will rule him and his affections, that he shall make it his gain, be it never so vile in itself. But St Paul, being guided by another spirit, casts away all; and so must we. If we will not lose Christ and suffer shipwreck, cast away these commodities that load us and hinder us in our course. Neither is it meant here of an actual casting away of our goods, thereby to establish the foolish vow of poverty. But herein is meant a judicious discerning of the true worth of these things in comparison of Christ, and from thence a preparation, and a resolved mind to part with all that may hinder us from the enjoyment of peace of conscience and the love of Christ. For a man may have a weaned soul in the midst of abundance; and he may live in the world, though not to the

world, which is a duty easily spoken of, yet not easily performed; neither was it easily wrought in our apostle, who, being a persecutor of the church, was powerfully altered and changed from heaven. And thus doth God deal with his children, whom he doth first cast down and afflict, that they may find by experience that these outward things can stand us in no stead. It may be he suffers them to fall into some grievous scandalous sin, that they might see the 'body of sin' that lies in them, and seeing no good nor help in themselves, their desires are stirred up to the embracing of some better thing wherein they may find comfort. Then doth God reveal Christ to us, to whom he will have us to fly, and say, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' So as this power of changing ourselves is not in ourselves, but it is an almighty power.

If we think, therefore, that we are self-lovers, go to God, present thyself in the means, and then our eyes shall be opened to see and discern good and evil. For God hath promised to annex his Spirit to the use of the means, if that we in obedience submit ourselves to them.

VERSE 8

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss

The words contain a kind of correction, as if in few words he had said, All things whatsoever I formerly boasted in, nay, my very privileges, I count them not only 'dung,' but I do count them to be 'loss' to me; nay, I have suffered the loss of them all in comparison and for Christ my Lord. Yea, I desire to express the earnest intension* of my affections by my desire to win him, to know him, to be found in him, and to be conformable; to his death.

In general observe

1. The apostle's resolution and zeal, his assured certainty, his large heart being not able to express his affection, but by many words, viz., his love of Christ and hate of all outward things whatsoever. Therefore we also in main fundamental points must be resolute, carrying a full sail. As in the truth of the thing there is a certainty, so in us there must be an assured persuasion thereof. For even from these uncertain irresolute hearts comes apostasy. Men being not grounded are carried about with every 'wind of doctrine,' and hence also comes different measures of grace in Christians. Some say with Paul, 'doubtless;' others are of doubting hearts. But the end of the word is 'to settle us,' Eph. 4:13. And though it be never so true, yet if we [do] not believe it: though the foundation be sure, yet if we [do] not build on it, the truth and force of it is not good unto us.

2. In the second place, from the apostle's example, we are to learn in fundamental truths to be zealous. The apostle speaking of anything that seeks competition with Christ for value, how doth he vilify it, that he hath not words sufficient to press his fervent hatred thereof? For zeal is such an affection as causes a constant hatred against anything that opposes that which we entirely love, even such a hatred as will cause us not to endure to hear of it. And God therefore promiseth Ephraim he shall so abhor idols, as he shall not have to do with them, Hosea 14:8.[†] And indeed a jealous God and a zealous heart do well agree. When we have to do with any one that opposes God in his truth, we are not to be cold, but to be zealously affected.

3. In the third place, we are to learn to be large hearted in expressing our affection we bear to the truth; and therefore we are to be ashamed of our shortness of breath in speaking or meditating of God's honour and glory and his truth. But particularly from our apostle's esteem we may learn that God's children have sanctified and regenerate thoughts and esteems. For with new souls, they have new eyes, new senses, new affections and judgments; what they saw before to be gain, they see now to be loss. Beasts we know conceive not of men's matters, neither do weak simple men of State matters.

That which weak silly men admire, the apostle scorns and condemns. Moses accounted of the afflictions with the children of God more than of the pleasure of Egypt. We may observe this as a mark to know our estates by, What is high in thy esteem? Is honour, riches, pleasure, or the like? Thou are not yet thoroughly sanctified; for if thou wert, thou wouldst have a sanctified judgment.

But some may say, did Paul esteem all things to be loss, yea, his good works?

1. I answer, Good works in their own nature are good: but weighing them with Christ, as Paul did, they are also dross and dung.

2. Secondly, It teaches us, that we are not righteous, or justified, by any works ceremonial or moral, either before or after our conversion. The papists allege works as meritorious; we contrarily do disclaim them. As to that purpose: ay, say they, you mean ceremonial works; we say no, we mean also moral. For Paul was unblameable as concerning the works of the law, and yet counts them dung. Oh, say they, St Paul meant those works before his conversion, and not those after his conversion. I answer, Yes; all things in respect of Christ. I do now account them dross and loss. To prove them the fuller: If nothing after conversion be perfect, then cannot they entitle us to heaven, but all our best works in state of regeneration are imperfect. To prove this, see the examples of David, a man after God's own heart, Ps. 143:2: 'None righteous in thy sight, and who can say his heart is clean?' and Isa. 64:6: 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness as filthy rags.'

Oh, but Bellarmine says (j), the prophet speaks this in the person of the wicked. I hope he will not put the prophet into that number; for he saith, 'we,' and 'our;' and 'our righteousness,' not our ill deeds; and 'all our righteousness.' Nay, of himself in particular, Isaiah saith as much in Isa. 6:5. And besides, the wicked do not use to pray, as the whole chapter is to that end. And Daniel also includes himself in

his confession, Dan. 9:20. And to prove this by reason: we know that weak and corrupt principles must needs produce imperfect effects. Now the principles of all our motions are evilly affected; our understandings, memories, affections, all are corrupt and weak. Corruptions make combats in all parts of the soul and body: in whatsoever therefore we do, there is flesh and spirit; and their own authors agree hereunto: as Ferus (k), and Catharen, a cardinal of their own, says there is donata justitia, and inhœrens (l). When the question is what we must lean to, it must be only on Christ and his righteousness, wherewith from him we are endowed. And a pope of theirs, Adrian the Fourth (m), saith that all our righteousness is as the reed of Egypt, which will not only fail us if we rest on it, but will pierce our sides. St Cyprian saith also, that he is either superbus or stultus, that says or thinks he is perfect (n). And good reason, for that which shines in the eyes of man, in God's esteem is base. 'In thy sight shall no flesh be justified,' Rom. 3:20. Now there are divers degrees of judgments. In God's judgment none shall be justified; nor in judgment of law, for in many things we offend all: and for the judgment of the world, what is it if it clear us? Can that acquit us, if God and the law condemns us? and for the judgment of our own consciences, if they be cleared they will condemn us. Yea, the papists are not satisfied in their own consciences for this point. For if there may be a perfect fulfilling of the law in this life, by a man's own inherent righteousness, why do they teach the doctrine of doubting as necessary to salvation? But however they may brabble* in schools to maintain this their assertion, yet when death comes, they must fly those shifts, and lay hold only on God's love (o).

Some will say, What are the graces of God's Spirit? Are the sacrifices, the sweet odours, and ornaments of the spouse, are these dung?

I answer, Things admit of one esteem simply considered, and of another comparatively. Stars in the day are not seen, yet in the night are great lights. So works in regard of Christ's works are not visible, are nothing, but in themselves are good.

Secondly, I say there are two courts: one of justification, another of sanctification. In the court of justification merits are nothing worth, insufficient; but in the court of sanctification, as they are ensigns of a sanctified course, so they are jewels and ornaments.

Obj. But the ignorant papist objects against us, saying that we discourage men from good works, because we do so basely esteem of them.

Ans. I answer, A sick man cannot eat meat, but it breeds humours that strengthens the disease. Shall he therefore forbear all manner of meats? No. For meat strengthens nature, and makes it able to overcome the power of the disease. So by reason of our corruption we have within us, we halt in every good work we put our hand to. Shall we not therefore work at all? Yes. For notwithstanding our weakness, though we merit not any good, yet God, he overlooks the illness of our works, and accepts and rewards the good that is in them, giving us comfort and assurance of our justification, by the sanctified fruits, which, though imperfect, yet are true. To conclude: seeing we cannot have Christ, putting any confidence in outward things, let us labour to get an esteem of the weakness and imperfections that are in them, as also in our persons and actions, that we may hunger after Christ. To this end, daily renew we our repentance and examination of our hearts; and when we do any good, examine what weakness, want of zeal, want of affection or attention hath possessed us in our performances (of praying, hearing, reading the word, and the like), and want of watchfulness in our courses; and then shall we be of St Paul's mind, all will be naught. And take heed of spiritual pride and conceit of any good in us; for it hinders spiritual comfort from us. Let us meditate of the greatness of God's love to us, and the infinite reward; and it will make us ashamed of our weak requittance of God's love to us. Consider the multitude of our sins before the time we were called; and consider of our proneness to spiritual pride; let us by all means abase ourselves. For those that God loves, he will have them vile in their own esteem: for it is his method, first, to beat down, then to

raise up. And therefore John, he comes thundering, 'Hypocrites, generation of vipers!' Mat. 3:7. Then comes Christ, 'Blessed are the poor, those that hunger and thirst after righteousness,' Mat. 5:6; as if only they were blessed that feel their wants. We must disdain any other titles to any good, but only in God's mercy, and accordingly give the glory of all to him. Thus did the church militant, 'Not unto us, not unto us, Lord, but to thy name,' Ps. 115:1; and thus do the church triumphant, Rev. 7:12, 'Honour, glory, and power be to the Lamb.' These that do not thus are no members of the church.

Last of all, Let us take heed of extenuating sin. The papists tell us of divers sins that are venial. Such are surreptitious thoughts, taking of pins, stealing of points,[†] and the like; these they call venial. But we must know (to admit that sin, as a sin, to be venial, is a contradiction, though God do pardon it; for that is out of his free mercy), these surreptitious stealing motions, that unawares do creep into us, though the Papists do make them of small account, God may punish with his fierce indignation. Moses his anger kept him out of Canaan. Adam his apple cast him out of paradise. Every sin is a breach of the law. The least sin soils us. We must give account of idle words. And the wages of any sin, though never so small, is death, Rom. 6:23.

For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus

That is, either all things are loss to me, that hinder me from the knowledge of Christ Jesus; or, all things are loss in comparison of Christ Jesus. Wherefore, before we can know Christ as we ought, we must know all other things to be loss; for when we learn to know Christ aright, we then cast those things out of our affections, which would else keep Christ out of our heart. Wherefore it is no wonder that great scholars should be erroneous in many points of religion; for look to their lives, and we shall see them envious and ambitious; they maintain idols in their hearts, they account not those things loss which must be loss, or else they must account Christ loss. Secondly, This knowledge of Christ is an excellent knowledge, better

than the Jews', who had all their knowledge shadowed out in ceremonies; but this is unveiled, and therefore Christ said, 'Blessed are the eyes that see those things that you see,' Luke 10:23. And as the estate of the church grows more excellent now than before Christ's coming, and shall be most excellent hereafter in heaven, even so our knowledge doth, and shall grow in its excellent perfection. It is better also than human arts and sciences; not in regard of the author, for all knowledge is from God; but,

First, In regard of the manner of revealing thereof; for whereas we come to the other by the light of nature and reason, this is inspired into us by the Spirit.

Secondly, In regard of the matter of this knowledge, which is far beyond the other, for this teaches the natures and person of Christ, God and man in one person, which may swallow up the thoughts of man. 'Great is the mystery of godliness,' 1 Tim. 3:16. In the next place, it teaches us his offices, that he is a king to rule over us and deliver us; a priest to make us acceptable to God; a prophet to teach and instruct us. And thirdly, it teaches us the benefit of his offices; exercising them in his state of humiliation and exaltation. Fourthly, it teaches us to know our duties, to entertain him, rest on him, glory in him only, and that all other things are loss in comparison of him.

Thirdly, This knowledge is better than other knowledge, in the effects it hath, it being a transforming knowledge, 2 Cor 3:18. It makes glorious, happy, full of comfort, carrying the Spirit with it, which changes us into his similitude, and therefore it is called the 'word of the Spirit.'

Fourthly, In the fourth place, it is better than other knowledge, in regard of the depth of the knowledge; and therefore called 'The manifold wisdom of God,' Eph. 3:10. That a virgin is a mother; God is become man: this is far above natural reach; and therefore Christ may well be called 'Wonderful,' Isa. 9:6, who being God should be also man, die, rise, and ascend far above all power.

Fifthly, This knowledge is a sweet knowledge, and therefore excellent. It tells us who were miserable and lost; it tells us also of redemption, of a kingdom, of a Saviour. 'How sweet are thy testimonies to my mouth, Ps. 119:103. And if the promises here be so sweet to us, what shall then the accomplishment of them be to us hereafter!

Sixthly, This knowledge, furthermore, is excellent in regard of the continuance thereof. The knowledge of other things dies with the things; the world must perish, and what use is there then of our skill in the nature thereof? Only this knowledge abideth for ever, working grace, love, heavenly-mindedness, and brings us to glory.

In the seventh place, This knowledge of Christ teacheth us to know God aright; his justice in punishing sin, his wisdom and mercy in reconciling us to him, and in willing that Christ should become man and die for us. Neither could we know these things, but by knowing Christ, who is the engraved image of his father.

Eighth, Furthermore, it teaches us to know ourselves, our filthiness, our ignorance, in esteeming triflingly of sins, counting them venial. But great surely must the sore be, that necessarily requires such a salve and such a physician as Christ, and his blood to be shed for the curing thereof.

Ninth, In the next place, this knowledge is altogether sufficient in itself, without all other knowledge; and none without this to make a man wise to salvation, both of soul and body; and all men without this are but fools.

Use 1. For use hereof. This improves the shallow conceit men have of divinity; that the knowledge is but shallow; that every man may know it, and that any man may soon have enough thereof. But, alas! St Paul had a large heart, and had more insight into the deep mysteries of this knowledge than such, however they boast; and yet he desires more, and could not pierce the depth thereof; for none

ever could do it but Christ Jesus only. Nay, the very angels they desire to pry and look into, and to know more of these deep mysteries, 1 Peter 1:12. It is therefore no shallow knowledge.

Use 2. In the second place, This ought to put us in mind to put apart times, to meditate of the excellency of this knowledge; and to this end we are to empty ourselves of whatsoever fills us. Especially, we are to empty us of sin, and of care for the world and the vanities thereof, and the knowledge of them; because both it and they shall all perish; make no excuses of venturing displeasure, or suffering discommodity; true love pretends no delays, nor will endure them. 'Behold, Lord, half of my goods I do give to the poor, and I do restore to every man his own,' said Zaccheus, Luke 19:8.

Use 3. In the next place, We must call upon God to open our eyes, that we may see and know his nature, his offices, his benefits, and our duties; to know more distinctly, effectually, and settledly; to see the wonders of his law; that we may be even ravished, when we behold his fulness.

Use 4. We, in the fourth place, are to frequent places where we shall have a fuller knowledge of Christ; such places where the commerce is between Christ and the church. In Cant. 5:1, Christ had more love to his church, and wooed her by his gracious promises. She, in the second to the eighth verse, being drowsy, pretends excuses. Hereupon Christ goes away, but leaves a gracious scent of his quickening Spirit, enough to stir her up to seek after her well-beloved that was gone, who, asking after her well-beloved, those whom she inquired of, inquired of her who he was? and upon her description of him, are enamoured with him, and stirred up to seek him also (where by the way mark the benefit of conference), Cant. 6:1, and are told that he is gone into his garden to the beds of spices; that is, into the congregation and assembly of his saints. If we will know Christ therefore, we must go into these gardens, where he is ever present, and there will he teach us.*

Use 5. And then shall we be stirred up to magnify God's goodness and mercy, that hath reserved us to these times of knowledge, and this marvellous light, wherein we are more blessed than John, who was the greatest of those born of women. We see more than he saw, Christ our Saviour, already ascended to be our eternal high priest.

My Lord

This is the end of all our knowledge, to know Christ to be our Lord, for else the devils knew Christ. 'Paul I know, and Christ I know,' said he to those conjurors, but he could not know Christ to be his Lord. 'My Lord.' Not only for his title that he hath in me, but 'my Lord,' for the title I have in him. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' Cant. 2:16. Mine he is, for he made himself mine, by redeeming me and paying the price for me. My head, from whom I receive force and vigour; my husband, my head of eminency. Briefly, 'my Lord,' making me his and stirring up in me a love and desire to make him mine, and to rest upon him by faith. In the covenant of grace therefore, there is a mutual consent between God and us. He is ours; we are his by faith to trust on him, and by love to embrace him, which stirs up the whole man to obedience. We may not think that this proceeded from a spiritual pride in the apostle, as though he thought himself the only darling of Christ. No. They are the words of a particular faith and love in the apostle; not excluding others from the like; for every Christian must labour for this faith, that we may know Christ to be our Jesus, our Saviour, which we shall be assured of; for if he makes us his, he will make us to love him, and to say from our hearts, 'my Lord,' and my head. His love of us is the cause of our love to him. We love him because he loved us first. His knowledge is the cause of ours; he chose us, and therefore we choose him; and if he loved me when I hated him, surely now I love him, he must needs love me. Again, we shall know that we are Christ's; for then there will be a likeness of Christ wrought in our hearts. For that Spirit that stirs us up to own Christ, doth ever work the image of Christ in our souls; as a seal it imprints on our soul the image of Christ, in all graces, of love, meekness, heavenly-

mindfulness, and goodness. If we be the spouse of Christ, we shall represent and shew forth his glory, 'for the woman is the glory of the man,' 1 Cor. 11:7. Else whate'er we boast, we are therein but hypocrites. We must forsake all in regard of Christ.

For whom I have suffered the loss of all things

Here St Paul confirms his resolution and judgment of the value of Christ above all other things; first, he said he accounted him gain, and all other things loss. Lest men should think these were but brags, he infers* he had suffered the loss of all for him, and therefore did so highly esteem of him; and then it was he was for Christ's sake stripped of all. He was in want, hungry, naked, went in danger of his death often, nay, he willingly suffered the loss of his privileges. He was an apostle, yet not worthy of the name, as he says; and for his care in his office, though he were very diligent, yet by it did he not look to merit. He suffered the loss of all willingly. He wrought this on his heart, to lose all for Christ; which is the duty that a Christian must learn, not to be only patient, but willingly to lose, to part with all. And therefore we are bidden to examine ourselves, to judge and condemn ourselves. And though the Lord hath not called us to the loss of all, yet win thus much of thy mind, as to be prepared for to lose all when we shall be called thereunto, and that in regard thereof, we may say we have parted with all; for in that we part with them in our affections, God beholds it and takes notice thereof, and likes it, and looks for it; and therefore he bids us leave all and follow him; and if we forsake not all, honour, credit, yea, our lives, we cannot be his disciples.

And do count them but dung

Shewing his loathing of them, and that he could not endure the thought of them, but did abhor it as dogs' vomit, or dogs' meat, accounting it fit meat for none but such dogs as he spake before of. If therefore we love Christ, there will be a detestation of those things that cross the power of Christ's merits, in the same degree

that we love Christ, and we will express our degree of love of him, by expressing the degree of hatred we bear to other things in comparison of him.

Quest. But why doth the apostle so often inculcate these words?

Ans. To shew the expression of the largeness of his own heart; and thereby to work an impression thereof in the hearts of the Philippians.

2. Secondly, To shew the power of the Spirit, that where it once leads, it leads further and further to a higher degree of love of Christ; that the longer he is loved, the greater will love grow and more fervent, so as the spirit constrains the person where it rules, that he cannot but speak, Acts 4:20.

3. Thirdly, To shew the excellency of the subject. He dwells upon it, that we should think highly of it. Also,

4. Fourthly, To shew the necessity thereof; without which we cannot look for salvation.

5. Fifthly, To shew the difficulty of coming to this esteem of Christ; and to subdue our proud imaginations of our own selves, which, however, it will prove a hard and difficult matter.

6. Lastly, In regard of the Philippians, he knew it would be a difficult matter for them, and therefore he sought out fit words to express the nature of the subject and the truth of his esteem. Thus did the wise man, Eccles. 12:10, 11, who knew that the words of the wise man are as goads. It is our duty to take notice hereof therefore, and to learn in what respect these outward things are good, and to rank them in their right places.

That I may win Christ

To win Christ, in this place, is to get a more near communion with Christ; a fuller assurance of him, and a larger portion in him. For St Paul had Christ already; and that made him desire a fuller enjoyment of him. Though his heart was not large enough to entertain all Christ, yet he desired to be satisfied with his fulness.

1. First, then, it is here to be granted that Christ is gain, else why should the apostle desire to win him? He is gain, I say, both in himself considered, and having respect to us. In himself considered; for no jewel is comparable, to God-man, to a Mediator. He was enriched with all graces that the manhood was capable of. But much more in regard of us; for, first, he is our 'ransom' from the wrath of God. Now we know a ransom must be a gainful thing, and of no small price that must satisfy God's wrath.

2. Secondly, He is not only our ransom, but our purchase; purchasing God's favour and heaven to us.

3. Thirdly, He is our treasure; for all things for this present life, as also for a better; in him are the treasures of heavenly wisdom; and of his fulness we all receive grace for grace. He is our comfort in trouble, and direction in all our perplexities.

4. Fourthly, He is of that precious virtue, as he turns all to gold; all things are sanctified to us, death, grave, crosses, all which, though we be not freed from, yet he turns them all to work our good.

5. Fifthly, By him we are made heirs, and have title to all things. He is our Lord; and he that hath given Christ to us, how shall he not with him give us all things, Rom. 8:32, so as in all our wants we may boldly come to the throne of grace.

6. Sixthly, We by Christ gain such offices as he himself had. We are kings; we are priests; we are over the greatest of our enemies. No more thralls to lust, or to the world. We may freely offer sacrifice for ourselves and others, in the name of this our high priest.

7. Seventhly, We have communion with all that are good—the angels, the saints, the ministers. They are all ours to defend and pray for us. Had the young rich man this spirit of St Paul, he would have thought it the best bargain that ever he made, though he had parted with all, if he had gotten Christ.

Obj. But it may be said, True, Christ is gain; but what hope is there for us to attain hereunto? It may be as paradise in itself, yet kept from us by a flaming sword.

Ans. 1. I answer, No. This gain may be gotten; which is the thing I propound to speak of. Christ is a treasure in a field. If any one will seek, he may find. We had a Saviour before we were born. He was elected thereunto, and we to gain heaven through him; and he was manifested in the flesh in the fulness of time to encourage us. And Christ our gain calls us to buy 'without money,' and invites us that are laden with sin to come to him, Isa. 55:1; 2 Cor. 5:20. To this end he appoints men to lay open his riches to allure us.

2. Secondly, We have the Spirit, by which we lay hold on this gain. If we depend on God by prayer for his Spirit, and when we have gotten but a little portion of this gain, it makes our gains increase. To this end he gives us the word and sacraments; and this condemns those that live in the field where this pearl is, and have the ministry to shew them it; and yet they do neglect this so great a jewel. And this ought to stir us up to magnify God's goodness to us, who hath recovered us, that were the lost sons of a lost father, and keeps us from returning back into our former natural estate.

3. Thirdly, This gain is not to be gotten but at a price. It must be gotten by parting with all outward things, so far as to make them gain to us.

Quest. Ah, but is God thus hard to us, that he will not allow us the enjoyment of the comforts of this life, but we must for them lose Christ?

Ans. I answer, God denies us not our worldly comforts; for Paul had them. But when they come in competition with Christ, for excellency and superiority in esteem, as also when thou art called forth for the confession of the truth, then be at a point to count all, yea, thy life, dross and dung. We must therefore resolve and forecast the worst; and leave not till thou workest this mind within thee, to endure the worst rather than lose peace of conscience.

And therefore we may well conclude from hence, that confidence in Christ and in outward things cannot stand together. We cannot love God and mammon; and therefore, if we part not with the world, look to part with Christ, which we may note against the politicians of our times, that think themselves the only wise men. In their esteem Paul was but a weak man, and knew not how to esteem things. They can trust in God, they hope, and yet provide against the worst. The time will come when they will find they have been made fools indeed; when God will say he knows them not, and their riches shall take their wings and leave them without hope of comfort.

And therefore let us acquaint ourselves with Christ's value, with the vanity of outward things, and meditate hereon; and at length thou shalt find the same mind in thee that was in St Paul.

In the last place, we may hence observe who they be that have not gained Christ; for are there not many that will not part with a sin, no, though it be a sin that brings no profit or pleasure at all with it, as swearing and blaspheming God's name? Nay, are there not those that, Judas-like, sell Christ for thirty pieces of money, nay, it may be for less? A goodly price to set heaven, happiness, and their own souls at! Let any man tell them hereof, they will swear you do them open wrong, and be ready to cut your throat for saying so. How far are these from true grace!

4. The fourth and last general observation is, that when we have parted with all, we are to know that we are gainers. For Christ in Mark 10:30 saith—whose promises are yea and amen—that he shall

have a hundredfold in this life; that is, so much content as shall be worth an hundredfold. For when a man's conscience can tell him, These and these things I parted with, only to obtain peace of conscience, that peace of conscience shall give him more content than the whole world can bring to him. And what can a man desire above content and comfort? It is all we seek for here, which if we have not, all is nothing.

5. Fifthly,* He that hath Christ can be no loser; for in him all things are eminently and fundamentally; for he is Lord of all, and what I lose for his sake, if it be good for me, he hath said I shall have it.

Hence we may see therefore the wisest man and the noblest spirit. Who is the wisest man? He that makes the best choice. It is judgment makes a man; not he that hath confused notions swimming in his brain. Now a Christian considers things, lays them together, judges of them duly; he therefore is the wise man. The wicked man he is a fool. He parts with an invaluable pearl for his present delight in a few idle, vain, childish baubles and toys. Who is also the most truly noble-minded? An advised true Christian. He is able to set at nought that for which the world forget God, heaven, soul, and all for. He can despise the pleasures of a court and of a country. His eye is on his soul, on heaven, on the innumerable company of angels, on that presence where is fulness of joy. A wicked man routs[†] in the dirt of this world. 'See what manner of stones and building are here,' Mark 13:1. That is their delight, to admire the stage of this world. But had they known this gift of God, this peace of conscience, and the comfort thereof, they would look after another city and foundation, whose builder only is God.

Quest. But how shall we know whether we have made this choice or not?

Ans. I answer, By these signs:

First, If a man accounts of anything, his eye and mind will be on it. If we account Christ as our gain, our hearts will be set on him continually; if he be our treasure, our hearts will be on him.

Secondly, If we have made choice of him, our hearts will joy in him above all things; as he that found the jewel went away rejoicing. 'Shew me the light of thy countenance; for therein do I delight,' saith David. Where true belief is, there is joy. Zaccheus, the jailor, and the eunuch, after they were converted, they rejoiced. This makes a covetous man not regard at all what men say of him, for he hath that which they would be glad of. So ought it to be with us; let us be taunted, mocked, flouted at, if we have chosen Christ, all is one. We have other things to comfort us, and our eyes will be upon them.

The third note is, If we can part with anything for Christ, and endure any hard measure, for the sense and assurance we have in Christ Jesus. Many are so far herefrom as they will not part with the least earthly pleasure for Christ. Such as these, though they say they have peace of conscience, they lie; for they can have no more peace of conscience than they have love to Christ; nor more love than they have an esteem of him above all things.

Fourthly, He that hath made this choice must part with all things whatever he loves, yea, his dearest affections and lusts; for a bird caught, though but by a wing, yet is she as surely the fowler's as if her whole body were bound; so if we favour or like and embrace but one sin, though we think not thereof, there is a flood of sin comes in at that gate. He that is guilty of one sin is guilty of all.

Quest. But the weak Christian will object, Are we not, yea, the best of us, troubled with our personal secret infirmities? What shall then become of us?

Ans. I answer, 'Fear not.' For it is true, though the best child of God be thus troubled, yet he pleads against it, he hates it, he undermines

it, and strives against it; and thus opposing it, it is not accounted to him by God. But if he forsakes all sin in heart but one, the devil will suffer it and endure it well enough, for he knows he is sure enough.

The fifth note is, That such an one can be content to be at some cost, yea, loss and pains, for the word, for the field wherein this pearl is hid. He that is not of this mind cares not for the word. It is not that men can speak well and commend it; for many will do so, yet afterward make a mock of it, especially being in some company. But he that esteems it once will ever esteem it, and in all company will extol it. Herod, a very reprobate, may seem well affected where there is no temptation, or while the word is preached. Can this be a plea to God at the last day, who searcheth and knows thy heart? Many dream they have this when indeed they have nought but the shell. How few can say in truth, I have denied this or that commodity, and refused my profit for Christ's sake! Those that have done this, let them know they have a most rich gain, and the best gain of all others. They have a universal gain, that will comfort at all times. Riches and honours cannot cure the troubled mind; neither can they deliver in the day of wrath.

Then, in the next place, let them know they have an everlasting gain, that will comfort us for ever and ever. In the last place, such as have won Christ, they have such a gain as makes them that have him truly rich, and noble, and good. Other riches without grace do corrupt us. The image of God is the true and intrinsecal worth. Let this encourage us to labour to get Christ, to attend the means that lay his riches open; and thereby shall our love be so stirred up, and our judgment so sanctified, as we shall be of St Paul's mind, to account all other things loss in regard of him; and therefore it is no wonder that those that have not the benefit of the means want this esteem.

VERSE 9

And be found in him.

Some read the words actively, that I may find Christ; but the phrase in the original varying from the former, therefore it is better translated as we have it, passively (p). But when is it that St Paul desireth to be found in Christ? Ever, no doubt, but especially at the hour of death and day of judgment.

The phrase implies, first, that there is an estate in Christ; secondly, an abiding in it; and thirdly, to be found abiding in him. For the handling whereof, we will first explain the phrase; secondly, we will shew what doctrines it doth clear; then we will come to some instructions arising therefrom. The phrase, 'to be in Christ,' is taken from plants which are grafted into stocks, or from the branches, which are said to be in the tree. Thus are we in the vine. It is Christ's own comparison. And of this union with Christ there are three degrees.

First, We are in Christ and in God, first loving us; and so we were in him before we were. He chose us from all eternity.

Secondly, When Christ died, then we were in him as a public person.

Thirdly, We are said most properly to be in him now when we believe in him; and thus principally is the sense understood in this place. And thus we are in Christ, not as the manhood is in Christ, but mystically; not as friends in one another by love, but by faith we are engrafted; as truly as the branches are in the vine, so are we one.

Obj. But Christ is in heaven, we are on earth; how can we be united to him that is so far distant from us?

Ans. I answer, If a tree did reach to heaven, and have its root in the earth, doth this hinder that the branches and the root are not united? In no wise. So Christ he is in heaven, and we on earth, yet are we united to him by his Spirit, and receiving influence from him of all grace and goodness.

Now let us see what doctrines are cleared hereby: first, it clears the point of justification by Christ. For if the question be, How we are saved by Christ's righteousness? I answer, Christ and we are both one. Doth not the eye see for the body? Are not the riches of the husband and wife all one? Yes. And even also whatsoever Christ hath is ours; he is our husband; he is our head. In the second place, it clears the matter of the sacrament. The papists would have the bread transubstantiated into the body of Christ, that it may be united to us. I answer, how is the foot in the head? Is it not by spiritual vigour passing to and fro through the body, but chiefly in the head. It is not therefore necessary that there should be any corporal union. Nay, Christ comforted his disciples more by his Spirit when he departed from them than he did by his corporal presence. We say also, that the mystical body of Christ is invisible, because the Spirit whereby we are made one is invisible.

This should comfort us at all times and in all estates. Before we were in Christ we were in an estate of horror, in an estate of damnation. Now to be reduced to Christ (what comfort is it to be one of a politic body? It is but for life. Or to be in any man's favour? It is but at will); this is a most excellent, glorious, and eternal being; that man's nature should be so highly advanced as to be united to the Godhead. Yea, our persons are mystically united to Christ. Secondly, in all crosses or losses. What though we lose other states, here is a state cannot be shaken. Thirdly, in the hour of death we are in Christ; and blessed are they that die in the Lord. Death, that separates the soul from the body, cannot separate either from Christ. Fourthly, after death. Can it go hard with me that am in Christ, that am his spouse? I am in him in whom is fulness of comfort. Fifthly, in all wants here I have him to supply all. He will

give what is necessary. If we should have fulness of grace here we should not desire to be in heaven hereafter. Sixthly, in persecution all my hurt redounds to him: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Acts 9:4. That which thou dost to my members thou dost to me?

In the fourth place, Let us consider how this being in Christ is a ground of doing of all duty. I say therefore it will direct us in duties to God, towards men, and to ourselves.

First, In duties towards God, how thankful ought we to be to him, for taking us to himself, for being Immanuel, God with us, so that we are become bone of his bone. What need we now saints or angels to intercede for us? Who should Christ hear above his own flesh? For duties towards men, this ought to stir us to duties of peace and unity. Shall we be so unnatural as to fall out with the members of our own body? Non est concors cum Christo ubi est discors cum Christiano.

Secondly, It ought to stir us up to duties of respect to each other, considering they are members of Christ as we are, and shall so be found in him ere long.

Thirdly, This should stir us up to charity to the poor members of Christ. They being his members are fellow-members; and in loving them and doing them good, we shew our love to Christ himself.

And in the last place, Towards ourselves, we are to carry ourselves with more respect, and not to prostitute ourselves to every base pleasure. Consider in whom am I, and to what I am redeemed, and with what price? Shall I make my body the member of an harlot, who am the member of Christ? This pride and high esteem of ourselves above base pleasures and lusts, this is commendable; and therefore the apostle had good reason thus to account of these earthly things to be 'dross and dung.' In the second place, this will teach us to see our residence in Christ, and growth in him; for if we be in Christ, we will have an especial eye to our conversation, that

we be not feet of iron and clay under a golden head, as many base licentious drunkards and filthy persons esteem of themselves. Will Christ own such members as these, think we? No. Those that are in Christ, Christ will be in them, discovering himself by ruling in them. His house is holy. If we be of his house, we will not desire, grieve, nor affect,* but by the sway of his Spirit.

In the last place, How shall we come to be found in Christ?

Ans. I answer, we must first come where he is. We shall find him in the temple, teaching and strengthening our faith and love; and so in our judgments and affections we shall be in him. Secondly, we must separate ourselves from the contrary to Christ, as a loyal wife will from all doubtful acquaintance. We must depart from antichrist, our own corruptions and lusts, and daily we must labour to get ground of them.

And from the words this we may learn: first, that a Christian is continually under Christ's wing till he be in heaven, else how could the apostle desire to be found in him at the day of judgment?

Secondly, We learn that there is such a time when God will, as it were with a candle, search men out, and lay them open as they are. This is not thought upon. Men now shuffle it off, I shall be saved as well as any other, and this and that good company I am acquainted withal. Trust not, I say, to good acquaintance. There is a time of separation, when thou shalt be found out as thou art in thine own colours.

Thirdly, Hence we learn that the foundation of future happiness must be laid now. Before we can be with Christ in the kingdom of glory we must be his members in the kingdom of grace. Dost thou live therefore a corrupt and carnal life here? Never think to be found in him hereafter. And therefore let the uncertainty of this life be a spur to thee, to watch over thy ways, so as thou be such at this and all other times as you would be willing to be found at that day.

Many boast hereof, but their lives savour nothing hereof, but are knit altogether to their lusts or to antichrist. Woe to such. They shall go on the left hand. But such as Christ finds in him it must needs go well with them. Christ will not judge them for whom he died, but shall set them on his right hand for evermore.

Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law

In these words, and those following, the apostle lays down summarily his desire, first, negatively in these words, he desired 'not to be found in Christ trusting to his own righteousness;' implying a difference and distinction between his righteousness by the law and that by Christ. The righteousness 'by the law' he disclaims as any way meritorious, and that as well habitual, wrought by God in him, or actual righteousness, consisting in the outward works that he did. And that with good reason; for, first, man's righteousness is but finite, and therefore unfit to work or deserve infinitely, and impossible to deserve heaven and the joys thereof. Secondly, This righteousness is imperfect, and stained as a 'menstruous cloth,' and unable to quiet or satisfy our own consciences, much less God who is greater than our own consciences. And therefore the saints prayed, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servants, Lord, for in thy sight shall no flesh be justified.' But the papists answer, the work of God is perfect; but our righteousness is the work of God, and therefore perfect. We say that the works of God are within us or without us. The works of God without us are perfect, but those that are within us are imperfect, still savouring of our pollution and corruption, by reason that the old man in us perverteth all that is good in us, and therefore *partus sequitur ventrem*.* Secondly, It is true that the works of God within us are so far perfect as tend to the end he works them for in us, but our righteousness was never ordained of God to that end as to save us by them, and therefore they cannot accomplish that end; but God works this righteousness in us to convince us of our own weakness, and to be a testimony of the presence of his Spirit in us. Paul therefore says not, I will not have mine own righteousness; but, 'I

desire not to be found in my righteousness,' so as to merit salvation thereby.

But that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him and the power of his resurrection

That is, that righteousness which is in Christ, but laid hold on of me and apprehended by faith; and all that righteousness that he had, both active and passive obedience as Mediator, but especially his passive. For he was born, lived, and died for us; and this is that which St Paul desired to be 'found in,' and this is that which we must trust to.

But how can this righteousness, performed wholly by him, be mine?

I answer, By faith it is made ours; for if Christ be ours, all his righteousness must consequently be made ours.

But how can this righteousness performed by Christ be sufficient for us?

I answer, First, Because God ordained it to that purpose: 1 Cor. 1:30, 'Christ by God is made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;' and to this end God the Father sealed him,' John 6:27.

Secondly, I say, Christ is a 'second Adam,' and a public person, and became ours, we then being in his loins; so the righteousness of Christ is made ours, we being born in Christ by faith and found in him. He being our head, we have a spiritual life descending upon us; he being our husband, all his goods are ours also. This point is the soul of the church, and the golden key which opens heaven for us. If we join any other thing to it, it opens hell to us, as God will reveal at that great day. It is true the papists do acknowledge now that their good works are not of themselves but from God; but thus did the Pharisee, 'he thanked God that he was not as other men, nor as the

publican,' Luke 18:11. But the poor publican, disclaiming all such goodness, went away justified rather than the other. Let it be our wisdom therefore to rely only on Christ, whose obedience and righteousness is so all-sufficient as nothing may be added thereto, and say with the apostle, 'Not I, but the grace of God in me,' 1 Cor. 15:10.

VERSE 10

And the fellowship of his sufferings

The apostle having shewed his desire of Christ's righteousness, now comes to shew his desire also of having communion with Christ in his sufferings; shewing that whosoever brags of justification, he must shew it in his sanctification. He must shew that he hath his part in the fellowship of his sufferings, if he meaneth to shew he hath his part in the power of his resurrection. Water is not alone, but water and blood must go together. Now Christ's sufferings are either for us as Mediator, or with us as being our head, and we his members. As Mediator he suffered death, which was only for our good. We can have no trust in our death as to deserve anything thereby as he did; for by his death he appeased God's wrath, and got his favour to us which we lost, and by it he sanctifies our sufferings and pulls out the sting of all our afflictions; as it is with the unicorn, who having put his horn into the water, discharges all poison thereout, so as the beasts may freely drink without hurt (q). So it is with us: we may suffer and endure afflictions without hurt, seeing Christ hath purged them of all poisonous nature that was in them.

But there are other sufferings that we and Christ suffer jointly, he as our head suffering with us his members; for as if the foot be grieved the head is grieved, so the Christian's sufferings are called Christ's sufferings, and a Christian must look to suffer if he be a lively member of the body of Christ. Yet is not every suffering of affliction Christ's suffering, for a man may suffer justly for his

deserts. Notwithstanding even then, when a man suffers for his faults, after repentance Christ may be said to suffer with him; and therefore the fathers called the death of the repentant thief a martyrdom. For in all our sufferings Christ is in us, teaching and helping us to bear them with patience, and as a sanctifier of all of them to a blessed end, and as one that frames us to bear all of them, even as he himself did.

Use 1. This ought to teach us to conceive aright of the estate of a Christian, that he is not alone when he seems to be alone. Christ leaves them not in misery. No. For in misery he is most near and present. It is therefore a good estate, though misery in itself be not desirable, for Christ desired to die and not to die, and so we in several respects may do. For if we regard death as a destroyer of nature, so is it not to be desired; but considering it as the will of God my Father, so are we to desire it and yield ourselves to it. And accordingly we desire not afflictions for their proper natural good, yet in regard they are a means to prepare and fit us for heaven, we say with David, 'It is good for us to be afflicted,' Ps. 119:67.

Use 2. In the second place, this will teach us that we are not to fear anything that we shall suffer, because there are more with us than against us. Joseph in the dungeon, Israel in Egypt, Daniel among the lions, the three children in the fire, Paul in prison, feared not danger; for what cared they so long as they knew God was with them; and therefore they rejoiced. If we have Christ we have all, if we want Christ we want all.

Use 3. Thirdly, This may serve to daunt Christ's enemies. They cannot hurt the least of his little ones but they hurt him. 'Saul, why persecutest thou me?'

Use 4. Fourthly, This should teach us to take part with God's children. What though they suffer affliction. Moses chose the better part, that did choose to be with the afflicted people of God before

the court of Pharaoh. Wicked men may bite and kick, but they can do no hurt, *lingua malorum est lima bonorum*.

Being made conformable to his death

This conformity here meant is not in regard of the end, that as Christ died for sin so should we, but in the manner of suffering. As he did suffer and die, so must we suffer and desire death. Secondly, As he died patiently and meekly, so must we suffer patiently and meekly. Thirdly, As he had, so must we have, sweet comforts to sustain and support us; and fourthly, As he had, so must we endeavour to obtain the same issue of our affliction; that is, eternal glory. Briefly, We are to be conformable to Christ in grace, in suffering, and in glory. All these are inevitably linked together, and our head having led us an example, we are to follow. Every Christian must therefore die to sin, as Christ died for sin.

But how shall we know whether we die to sin or not?

A dead man does no harm, hath no power; contrarily, are we strong to commit sin, and do we earnestly intend* it? Surely we are not mortified. Secondly, Dead men's senses are not delighted with fair and sinful objects. If we be dead with Christ, let the sinful objects be never so delightful, they will not move us or affect us one whit; nay, they will be distasteful to us. Most are of a contrary mind. Offer them good discourse and occasions, they cannot away with them; offer any fleshly pleasure: like tinder, they are soon set on fire. Such as these, as they have no heart to suffer for righteousness, so if for vain glory they would, neither would God honour them so much as to suffer them. For grounds of this doctrine.

First, It is honourable to be like Christ our captain, our head, our husband.

Secondly, It is not proportionable for the head to be crowned with thorns, and the members to be clad delicately; that the natural son, in whom there is no blemish, should suffer, and the adopted sons,

who are the causes of all offence, should go free. It is equity, that we having taken Christ for our husband, he should be accompanied by us in sickness and in health, in dishonour as in honour.

Thirdly, It is long ago decreed of God, and predestinated, and therefore cannot be avoided. Rom. 8:7, 9, 'Whom he did foreknow, them he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son.'

Fourthly, It is equal, that if he were conformed to us, we should be conformable to him. Now he was conformed to us, in that he suffered that which we should have suffered, and did that for us which we were to do and could not. He having drunk deep of the cup prepared for us, let us therefore, at the least, taste of it. Yea, let us suffer anything with an undaunted courage when we are called thereto for Christ. He will come with comforts, he is not empty, he will make us like him, he will prepare us hereby for glory'. Fear not, therefore. God will turn all thy troubles to thy good. And thus we do fill up the measures of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh, Col. 1:24. And are made partakers of Christ's sufferings, 1 Peter. 4:13. We have the like exhortations hereunto, 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Peter 3:14–18. Thus did Paul, 2 Cor. 4:10, he carried the dying of Christ about with him. Let no Christian therefore promise to himself immunity from crosses. He that will be a Christian must be conformable to Christ, and he that will be like to him in glory, he must be like to him in drinking the cup he drank of while he was here in the flesh.

VERSE 11

If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead

By 'resurrection of the dead,' he means the glorious estate after this life, whereas* the resurrection is but the beginning; and the words sound as much in effect as if the apostle had said, I know I shall be

happy at length, but between this time and that, I know I shall meet with troubles, with many crosses; yet let the way be never so difficult, I pass[†] not by any means to come to such an excellent end as the resurrection of the dead is; in which words we will,

First, Consider that there is a happy estate reserved hereafter, which begins with the resurrection of the body, whereby we are far more happy than the angels that fell, and also more happy than we were in our first estate in Adam, which we lost; and therefore our hearts should be enlarged with thanks to God, that respects us above the angels, whom he hath left without hope of recovery.

2. In the next place, consider that the beginning of our blessed estate hereafter is at the resurrection, which is called the day of restoring of all things, and a time of refreshing, Acts 3:19. It is a day when all good shall be perfected, and all evil shall cease; all grief of mind, all trouble of body, and death itself, shall be swallowed up into victory.

Quest. But why are we not happy before our resurrection?

Ans. I answer, because our bodies and souls are partakers of misery and sin here, and therefore, cannot partake of fulness of happiness before they be united together again. God will have us to stay while all his family of blessed saints shall meet together, as well us that are now alive as our seed and posterity after us.

3. In the third place observe, that the apostle makes resurrection of the dead the last thing; establishing thereby an order, that there must be means to the resurrection, and then the resurrection itself. 'Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and so to enter into his glory?' Luke 24:26. And if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him, 2 Tim. 2:12. The second resurrection must begin with the first. We are sons and saints hereafter, but so we must also be here; only a difference there will be in degree of holiness. This resurrection doth not follow every manner of life, although men

ordinarily expect a crown without crosses, and never look for justification and sanctification, but think they shall be in heaven at an instant without them. But we must suffer with Christ in mount Calvary, before we come with him to the mount Olivet.

4. In the fourth place, we may likewise note, that it is hard to come to heaven, because of this order established by God; not in comparison of the end—for that surmounteth in excellency the hardness of the means,—but in respect of the means; some by fair death, with many crosses in their life; some not by many outward crosses, yet have store of inward troubles of the mind, by reason of their inward corruption that doth trouble them; others by violent deaths and by martyrdom. The ways are so many, and the means so diverse, as there is no certainty which way we shall pass. As St Paul knew not the means, so he cared not what the means were; for he was content to go thither by any means. Let the cup of affliction be never so bitter, the glory ensuing will sweeten all.

1. Away, therefore, with all idle and secure thoughts of sparing ourselves. 'Pity thyself,' said Peter to Christ; but was answered sharply, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' Mat. 16:23.* No; the way is very hard. We must come to health by physic. The end is so amiable, as it will sweeten all sour means; and therefore it is good for us to be afflicted. Crosses bring at length the sweetest comforts. Deny we ourselves, therefore, in Christ's cause; know nobody; look upon God and Christ's promises, and promise we ourselves no more than God promises. It is beyond our knowledge what God will do with us. He promises no immunity from crosses.

Nay, the saints and the apostles chose crosses and afflictions, rather than the pleasures of sin, who were wise, and had trial of both kinds; and yet accounts these momentary afflictions not worthy of comparison with the glory that shall be revealed. They were but light, 2 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 8:18. And if we would truly believe this, it would be easy for us to be resolved, as St Paul was, to come to heaven by all assurances, and to come to all manner of assurances,

by any means; for no worldly thing can bring content like these heavenly assurances of the presence of the light of God's love, which the children of God will by no means lose.

2. Secondly, In all crosses let us not look into the state we are in, so much as that we are going into. We are going to a palace: let us not be dejected in the consideration of the narrowness of the way that leadeth thereto. God will not suffer this fiery trial to consume anything but dross; and therefore, let us with Christ suffer the cross, and despise the shame, Heb. 12:2.

3. Thirdly, Labour for a right esteem of the things of this world. They are but momentary and fading; yea, our lives they are given to us by God. What if we part with them? If it be for his cause, he will bring us to a better life which shall not be taken away from us, and this life we must part with ere long. And thus we ought to work on ourselves, by often meditating of them, as the saints have done.

4. In the fourth place, We are to labour to strengthen three graces in us especially: faith, to assure us that we are the children of God, and that we have heaven, and all things belonging thereto, laid up for us; and we are to labour to see more and more into the value of them. And then we are to strengthen our hope, which makes us cheerfully to undergo and do anything for God's cause, through our expectation of that which faith believes. Lastly, let us cherish our love of Christ. This made St Paul desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which was best of all, Philip. 1:23.* And this love comes from faith and hope; and these together will breed a largeness of heart that cares for no worldly thing, and will be daunted with no affliction or crosses whatever.

But how far are we herefrom? Did St Paul part with life? It pertains not to us. No; not to leave a new-fangled fashion, nor an oath whereby we tear God's name daily. Alas, where is faith? What corruption is here overcome? Which of us will ever be of Paul or David's mind, to become vile or base for God's cause?† Where is he

that will endure a scoff or scorn for religion? Let us beg of God this large spirit and large affections. The children of heaven have a free spirit, basely esteeming all worldly things. Zaccheus, when he is called, cares not for his goods, nor Paul for his privileges. The Stoics commend this resolution in men, to be willing and ready to die. Alas! crosses and afflictions Paul esteemed not, so as he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. These are the things that the Stoics feared most; and it was the fear of these made them so willing and ready to die, together with a base servitude to pride. But a Christian heart is more noble. It not only fears not these, but it contemns them. Yea, cares not for life without afflictions, but with joy can undergo all manner of torments.

Let us therefore take heed how we quiet ourselves in our earthly dwellings here, supposing our estate to be happy. Surely it is the main ground of apostasy. We shall never come to see the price of religion, nor the excellency of a peaceable conscience, nor the vanity of these things, so long as we bless ourselves in them. And contrarily, let us exercise our graces in the daily trials we meet with here. Doth favour of great men, doth pleasure, profit, or honour, cross and oppose thy conscience? Let the peace thereof be preferred above all evermore, else shalt thou never come to Paul's holy resolution. And dream not of a vain, empty faith. Thou hast no more than thou dost practise. It is not 'Lord, Lord,' that will prevail at the day of judgment; but Christ will be ashamed of them at the day of judgment, that made no more account of him while they lived, than to prefer every vain, idle, wanton delight and pleasure before his honour.

VERSE 12

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect

It is a correction of the apostle. He formerly spake of his desire, choice, and esteem of Christ's death and resurrection, and the force

thereof he found in him. Now, lest secret, insinuating, proud conceits might arise, either in himself or in them, concerning his holiness, he crosses them with a 'not as,' shewing that the best estate of God's children in this world is imperfect. There is ever something to do or suffer; some lust to conquer, or some grace to strengthen.

There is no absolute perfection but only in God himself; yet in Christians there is a kind of derivative spiritual perfection, which consisteth chiefly in the parts. A Christian hath this perfection. He hath all grace in some measure. We have no other perfection; no, not so much as *perfectio viœ*, though the papists say they have it. Indeed, we are so far from it, that never could Christian keep the rules of nature, much less can we attain to the perfection of obedience to the law, for by it we are all cursed. Nay, in Christ none attains to evangelical perfection of grace, so as thereby we can be justified, as by a work of our own; for our righteousness is but in part; and this *perfectio viœ*, which they boast of so much, differs not from their *perfectio finis*, no more than love to a man raised by good report of him differeth from love caused by the good I find in him, by personal communicating with him; and this is only in degrees in nature. They are the same love.

But why or how is it that there is no perfection of grace in this life?

Because there is and ever shall be in us, during this life, a perpetual combat between the flesh and spirit, so as one weakens and hinders the other. Paul at the best found a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, Rom. 7:23; the flesh continually lusting against the spirit, Gal. 5:24, hindering us from doing good, or in doing good, or in doing thereof, from doing it in a right manner.

Obj. 1. But the papists object, Love is the fulfilling of the law. We may love; ergo, we may fulfil the law, and consequently be perfect.

I answer, Love in the abstract being perfect, is the fulfilling of the law, but in this or that subject it is not perfect. Paul's love, nor Peter's love, was not the fulfilling of the law.

Obj. 2. They urge further, All God's works are perfect; ergo, the grace that is in us.

It is true God's works are perfect, but in their times when they are finished; grace at length shall be perfect in us.

Secondly, All God's works without us are perfect, as justification and glorification they are perfect. For we are perfectly justified even now; but his works within us, such as are his sanctifying graces, are not perfected till our time of glorification. For he suffers the old Adam to be within us, for divers reasons, so long as we live in this earthly tabernacle.

For use hereof, observe this as a ground for justification by faith. Paul, Rom. 5:9, proves that even now he was justified, and in this place he denies and disclaims absolute perfection, and therefore could not be justified by it; and therefore must needs be justified by faith. If it were his case it is much more ours, who come not to that measure of the fulness of grace that he attained to.

Secondly, This may serve to comfort Christians that find themselves burdened with divers wants, with dulness and frowardness of spirit, and with manifold corruptions, and are induced thereby to call in question their Christian estate. Let them look upon a better pattern than themselves. They may be grown Christians, and yet complain with Paul of corruptions. Nay, the most strong Christians see most deeply and clearly into their corruptions, and find most opposition. There is in all men by nature a Spring of popery. They would fain deserve heaven by a perfect and holy life, without blot; and God, to humble them, suffers corruptions to check them and to keep them under, who else would be lifted up through good conceit and esteem of themselves.

Thirdly, It may serve as a caution to many who, being reprov'd justly for their faults, What! say they, we are not angels; you have your own imperfections as well as I. And stir them up to any good duty, they are presently so good, as those that are letter than they are too precise and too nice. St Paul contrarily rests in no degree of goodness, but strives on to perfection; and it is the devil's sophistry to turn that to a plea for negligence, which should stir us up to be more diligent, watchful, and careful.

But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus

The word that is translated 'I follow after,' signifies properly to labour with earnest intention of the heart and affections; and the lesson that we may hence learn is, that the life of a Christian is a laborious and painful life. For in what proportion the things we labour for are more excellent than these worldly things, so much greater our desire and labour should be in the obtaining of them than in the obtaining this world's goods. And to this end the Scripture ever enforceth this duty with words suitable to work: 'Labour for the meat that perisheth not,' John 6:27; 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate,' Luke 13:24; 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure,' 2 Pet. 1:10.

Those that will take no pains, it is a sure sign they find no sweetness in the thing; and therefore in such there can be no true goodness. And hence we may observe a difference between the desires of men. Some are effectual, some ineffectual. Those that are ineffectual commonly desire and delight in the thing they desire, but will none of the moans: 'Let me die the death of the righteous,' says the wicked man, Num. 23:10. Glory and happiness is excellent, but the gate is narrow, the way is tedious and full of troubles: he will none of that. We will laugh at one that shall wish his work and journey were done, whenas he will sit down and never go about it. Why should we not much more laugh at such sluggards, that wish daily, Oh that they might be saved! whenas they do not only not further,

but hinder their salvation. But where true desire of grace is, there will be joined thereto an endeavour, with jealousy over our corruptions, with grief and shame for them, and for our backwardness and want of goodness; for else bell itself is full of good wishes and desires. If we mean to be better, we must use all moans, undertake all pains, and travail with vehemency; even as those that pursue gains with delight, they follow through thick and thin, especially if the gain be in the eye; and those that go for company, they are soon tired. And thus did Paul. He went through fire and water, through all manner of dangers, good and ill report. His gain is still in his eye. He looks not after the way, if by any means he may attain his desired mark.

But how shall we come to this grace?

I answer, Get first faith; for by it the weak are made strong, Heb. 11:35, seq. Get assurance that heaven is thine; and God hath promised thee grace sufficient, and this is Paul's argument: 'Be ye constant and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing your labour shall not be in vain.' Where hope of reward is in the use of the means, it will stir us up to a constant use of the means, 1 Cor. 15:58. Secondly, Get a fervent love; for it is a strong affection. If lust so prevail with us, as we will omit no means to accomplish it, then a love in itself is much more powerful, nothing being too hard for it. It hath an enlarging, knitting, and communicating power. It makes a man bestow all, and rejoice more in doing good by much than in receiving. It is a grace comprehends a number under it; and therefore Christ comprehended all the law under the love of God and our neighbour. Thirdly, Cut off all superfluities. Men think they are happy when they have much to do, when indeed they were happy if they had less to do than they have. Satan he does as Cyrus did with the waters of Babylon; he diverts and separates our affections that he might pass over (r). As nurses, they hurt themselves and the children too when they keep over many; so do men hurt themselves with over much business. The Lord hath not made us all for the world, but hath reserved one day

in seven for his service. For shame let us shew we have some respect of religion and goodness; seeing God requires but one in seven, let us not be so unjust as to deny him his service on that day.

Use. Well, let those that profess themselves of another world, by all means pursue it. In nature every thing tends to his centre and place; heavy things go downward, light things ascend upward. In handicrafts and arts every one looks after excellency. Shall it be thus with them? Shall mediocrity in other arts merit dispraise, and is it only praiseworthy in religion? The wicked they labour for hell, venturing loss of credit, strength, and estate; and is there not better gain in goodness? Have we such rich promises, and do we esteem of them no more? Are not the afflictions we shall meet with many and great, and do we think to undergo them with ordinary grace, gotten without labour and watchfulness? But let us go on to the next words:

'That I may apprehend.' Whence we may observe, that the main scope of a Christian is to apprehend Christ: here by revelation, that we may apprehend him hereafter by vision. Many there are that may follow good things and use good means, yet wanting these apprehending graces of faith and love (which makes us have communion with Christ), they perish notwithstanding. Human knowledge is commendable, yet is it no other than as a scaffold in this building. It helps, but the building once done, it is for little use. Apprehend we, therefore, him by knowledge of his truth, rely on him by faith, and embrace him by love; and then if we be chased by him, we may, as Joab, lay hold on the horns of the altar Christ Jesus, and there live and die, 1 Kings 1:50. And as we have daily breaches, even so get more and more hold on him, and this will make us desire with Simeon, 'Lord, let me now depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' Luke 2:29. Let us, therefore, daily learn to see our own foulness, and go to him the rock of our refuge.

Obj. Oh, but some will say, Christ is in heaven, and we on earth, we cannot go to him when we please.

Ans. I answer, Yes; for the arms of faith are large. It takes hold of things past and to come. No height is out of the reach thereof. And, besides, Christ he is present with us. He is in his word, in the sacraments, in the communion of saints. 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be in the midst of them,' Mat. 18:20. It is his own promise.

'For which I am apprehended of Christ.' Christ he apprehends us, and that in several degrees.

First, As he is God. In his eternal love we had a being before we had any being here. God conceived us in his eternal affection, and embraced us. Secondly, Christ apprehends us in his effectual calling of us. Paul he was posting another way when Christ called him, 'Saul, Saul.' Others he calls from their mother's womb; some by afflictions and powerful crosses, as he did the jailor; others by more gentle means, as Lydia. Thirdly, There is an apprehending in all our actions, courses, and estates, directing us continually in them, never leaving us. None can pluck us out of his hands. He is stronger than our corruptions. He will not let us go till he hath drawn us up to heaven, and placed us with himself. For the use of this doctrine more shall be said in the next doctrine, which is taken from the order.

Doct. Christ he first apprehends us when we apprehend him. He apprehends us that we may apprehend him, and because he hath apprehended us, therefore is it that we apprehend him. For 'in him it is that we live, and move, and have our being,' Acts 17:28; and therefore much more our best being. He it is that gives us the will and the deed; to us it is given by him to believe and suffer with him.

Use 1. For use hereof it would teach us in all our actions to beg ability and strength of him, and get a persuasion that his Spirit doth

apprehend us in love; and that he will direct us and remove all impediments, and stand by us in all our crosses, that we are able to do nothing but by reflection from him; that though we are naturally dead and dull, yet he will quicken us by shining on our hearts with the sunshine of his grace.

Use 2. Secondly, Give him the praise of all the good thou doest, for the deed is his. Those that do not, do apprehend and are apprehended of themselves; and therefore it may serve as a mark to discern of our estate, whither do we run? and what do we apprehend in our trouble? Is it Christ who is our present help in time of trouble? Then there is a blessed change in us. But do we seek to our own devices, to our own policies and inventions? Surely we have not apprehended Christ as we ought to do; and therefore we are to stir up the graces in us, and beg increase of grace from him that is the fountain of all grace.

Use 3. In the next place, it should comfort us, by the consideration of the certainty of our estate, without falling away, if we hold fast unto the end. If it were ourselves that did apprehend us we could not long continue, but it being Christ that holdeth us, our comfort is he will not forsake us. It is the mother that holds the child. The child cannot lay hold on the mother, but is subject to falling every hour. Christ he holding us, hath promised to love us to the end, and to put his fear in our hearts, that we shall not fall or depart from him. This being daily considered will greatly comfort a weak Christian. Christ may seem to let him fall, by suffering him to fall into some great sin, but it is only to humble him, and to teach him not to trust to his own strength, which will soon fail him, but upon his mercy and grace. And therefore,

Use 4. In the nest place, it teacheth us to hold fast unto him, and rely on him, and to pray to him that he would hold us fast, and then we fall not from God, but to God. He hath delivered us, and will deliver us and keep us to his heavenly kingdom. If we fall into sin, let us repent and go to God. There is mercy in Israel concerning this,

and with him is plenteous redemption. His right hand is under us over to hold us up, that we cannot fall so deeply but he will lift us up again.

Use 5. In the next place, this may be a comfort to us in all our troubles and afflictions of this life. Are troubles near? God is not far off, Ps. 22:11, seq., and Ps. 118:5, seq., but full of comforts for such. We have an invisible wall about us, the wall of angels; and God fights for us. There is more with us than against us. God will not suffer us to be tried above that we are able to bear. Let us therefore pray, Forsake me not, Lord, lest I forsake thee. If we pray to him he will be found of us. Paul prayed for this. Christ also, that knew he was apprehended, yet prayed all night; and this are we to do; he hath promised to hear us. And therefore let us go in faith and assurance to him, in all our troubles.

VERSE 13

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended

The holy apostle dwells upon the point, that he might press it the more; and it is good to press matter of weight. The apostle shewing that conceit of perfection to be dangerous, again tells the Philippians, that he had not that which they boasted of. This pride of ourselves, and conceit, is a sin that climbs up to heaven, and enters on God's prerogative, and a sin that God doth directly set himself against. Of this compellation, 'brethren,' I have formerly spoken.

I might also touch that doctrine, that the kingdom of heaven is not perfected in us here, but that it grows by degrees. It is at the first as a grain of mustard seed. There are babes in Christianity, and old men grown Christians. And the ground hereof may be partly in the subject, partly in the object.

In regard of the subject, for that graces are imperfect in us, the more the soul hath, the more it desires.

In regard of the object, for that Christ is so full, that we are not able to receive all his fulness, so as there is imperfection in us, and superabundant perfection in him. Paul had a large affection, yet came far short. This possibility of the soul to receive more will be in us, till we be in heaven, where we shall be full; and therefore while we are here, we pray still, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' and 'Thy kingdom come,' more and more. It is a strange conceit, therefore, for any to think he may be too good; yet do these daily, or should do, pray for more and more perfection here on earth, although they say they know not what. And another reason why we apprehend Christ not so fully here as we shall do hereafter, is, because the manner of making Christ known to us is by revelation, 1 Cor. 13:12, seq. We behold him here but as it were in a glass; in the glass of his word and sacraments, which cannot represent him to our understanding so clearly, as hereafter we shall behold him in the beatifical vision.

Take heed therefore of a self-conceit of perfection. When we begin to be unwilling to grow better, we begin to wax worse. There is no stay in Christianity. It is the sight of our imperfection that makes us strive to perfection, and the more we see into our misery, the more earnestly we strive on to be freed from it.

But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before

See what is the apostle's unum neccssarium, to grow more and more to the fulness of the knowledge of Christ. All other things he counts as 'dung and loss.' So as we may hence observe, that the Spirit of God in a Christian heart, subjects all things to one Christ.

'One thing have I desired of the Lord,' said David, Ps. 27:4; make this therefore a rule to difference our estates by. What is the thing

we intend chiefly? Is it riches, or pleasures, or honours? This one thing will be the utter overthrow of all religion in us. Christ will be supreme, or he will not be. 'He that loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me,' saith Christ of himself, Mat. 10:37. There is none so wicked but would be religious, till religion comes to cross that one thing, their darling sin. And thus have they base limitations, which must needs prejudice their growth in religion; for where religion is, it will cross their base affections and lusts.

Therefore, whosoever we are that intend to be true Christians indeed, resolve first to prefer the peace of conscience and the fruit of religion above all; and resolve to abhor all things that will cross this one thing of St Paul.

VERSE 14

I press towards the mark

Behold an excellent description of a Christian course, borrowed from the exercise of running a race, being a manlike and commendable exercise, fitting men and enabling them for war. The very heathen herein condemns us, whose ordinary chief exercises, what are they but good company, as we call them, continual lying at taverns, to the impoverishing of our estates and weakening our bodies? The kind I condemn not, but the excess is such, as the heathen would be ashamed of; for which they shall even rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us.

But from the simile, we may gather thus much, that Christianity is a race. The beginning of this race is at the beginning of our conversion. It should begin at our baptism. The first thing we should know ought to be God. The race is the performance of good duties, concerning our general calling, and concerning our particular. For the length of our races, some are longer, some shorter, but the end of every man's race is the end of his life. Some

men's ways are plainer, some rougher. The prize is fulness of joy. The lookers on are heaven, earth, and hell. God is the instituter of this race, and the rewarder. The helpers are Christ, good angels, and the church, which helps by prayer. The hinderers are the devil and his instruments, who hinder us by slanders, persecutions, and the like. For ground of this race in us, we are to know that man is created with understanding, directing him to do things to a good end and scope. Other creatures are carried to their end, as the shaft out of a bow, only man foreseeing his end, apprehends means thereto. His end is to receive reconciliation and union with God, to which he aims by doing some things, suffering others, and resisting others.

And this race is also ordered by laws; for every runner is not crowned. There is a running ill that shall never procure the prize. The laws hereof concern either preparation, or the action itself. For preparation,

1st Direct. First we are to know, that there is a dieting requisite. As those that ran in a race had a care hereof, to use such diet as did strengthen, not cloy, and such apparel as might cover them, not clog them; so ought it to be in our spiritual race, we must cast aside all heavy loads, every weight and sin which doth so easily beset us, as it is Heb. 12:1. If God cast on us any place or riches, let us use them for a good end, but not make them our end; and therefore with them take up daily examination of ourselves, how we behave ourselves towards these worldly things. It were a madness in a runner, in his race, to take up a burden, and not to think it will be a sore trouble to him; and why do we not think thus in our spiritual race? Cast we off therefore original corruption, and the corruption of our place, time, and calling, which in time will grow unsupportable to us. Let us desire no more than God gives; and what afflictions God sends us, let us take, assuring ourselves they are for our good.

2d Direct. A second law is, to consider the ways that we are to run in, what dangers we are like to meet with. Forecast and resolve

against the worst, and withal promise we ourselves God's assured protection in our worst estate. The want of this is the seminary and ground of all apostasy; when men promise to themselves in Christianity such things as God never promised. Christ therefore promiseth and sheweth the worst first. But the devil, to deceive us, keeps the worst out of our eyes, and shews a sort of vain delights and pleasures. But the sting of them, through his subtilty and craft, he suffers us to feel before we see it.

3d Direct. A third law is, that we enter the race betimes. It is the devil's trick to put off the care of this, telling us we need not yet enter; we are but young, and have many years to live, as they did that hindered the building of the temple. But consider we the uncertainty of life, that we may die suddenly, and that it is just with God to take us away after that manner, if we neglect ourselves and him. And we must know also we shall lose no pleasure nor delight, but we shall find such sweet delights in those ways as we shall with St Augustine be grieved that we enjoyed them no sooner.* And besides, those that begin betimes get a great advantage of others, and through continual custom come at length to a habit of religion.

In the next place, we are to take heed of hindrances of us in our preparation; as,

1st Hindrance. First of all, hope of long life, whereby we are besotted, thinking life and death is in our command, that we shall have time enough, and need not so soon enter upon good duties.

2d Hindrance. Secondly, A conceit that when we have once given up our names to Christ, that presently we bid adieu to all delight, mirth, and pleasure; when, alas! we are far deceived. God denies not pleasure to us, but will give us whatsoever is good for us. We shall delight and rejoice, but with a joy spiritual; and we shall see nothing in this world that may any way deserve our delight therein.

3d Hindrance. A third hindrance is a despair of ever going through this race. This settles upon some, strangely making them cast away all care, and desperately trust to Christ's mercy. This made Cyprian to complain of his corruptions, saying they were bred and brought up with him; and therefore feared they would hardly give place to grace, being but a stranger (s). While men consider how great and powerful their corruption is, they with the Israelites despair of ever entering into the land of Canaan—these sons of Anak do so terrify them.

But consider we withal that God is above all our corruptions; that he can make of a lion a lamb; and that if we will trust upon him, in his time he will help us, and we shall overcome these giant-like corruptions. Christ he hath conquered them already; and though while we live we cannot wholly overcome them, yet David's house shall grow stronger and stronger, and Saul's house weaker, 2 Sam. 3:1. We shall have grace sufficient for us. God will sweeten religion to us, that we shall delight therein; and Christ will not lead us into temptation till he hath fitted us to it by his grace, and then we shall rejoice, as the apostles did, Acts 5:41, that we are accounted worthy to suffer.

Contrary to this humour, some think it so easy a matter to run this race, as they think they cannot be out of it or tired therein, whenas indeed they never yet set foot therein. Let such look to themselves if they be in this race, they shall find it no easy matter.

But thus much concerning rules or laws for preparation to this race. Now there are laws to be observed of those that are in the race; as,

Direct. 1. First, They must resolve to hold on, without discontinuance of their course of good duties; for some, by omitting good duties now and then upon slight occasions, do come, through God's just sufferance, to leave them off and never take them up again; and thereby, while they are not getting ground by continuing their course, they do lose thereby. Even as watermen rowing against

the stream, if they do not row, but rest never so little, the stream carries them back again, and they cannot recover themselves but with great difficulty; so it is in this Christian race. A little interruption of duty causes thrice so much pains to recover our former estate. Therefore we are to take up a holy resolution not to be interrupted in good duties.

2. The next law is, that we must look to gain ground still, to grow from grace to grace. It is the apostle's aim still to grow better than himself. Contrary to this many forsake their first love. They think themselves wise, but are fools, such as the Lord will spew out of his mouth, as he threatens the Church of Laodicea, Rev. 3:16. And indeed the most men at the best are but civil; and do but provide for their own case, and can endure any mixture of religion or company; and the ground of this coldness is a self-conceit, whereby men think well of themselves and their estate. Paul, he was of another spirit, ever pressing forward.

3. A third law is, that we do things with all our might; that we run this race with all our earnest endeavour. There is no bodily exercise that profiteth, but it must be with putting forth of our strength. So our Christian actions should shew even outwardly, that we do things as if we intended thereby to honour God indeed; and to this end we are to depend on God by prayer, that he would give us strength and minds to put forth our strength for gaining most honour to his Majesty, and this will bring great assurance and comfort to us in time of need.

4. A fourth rule is, that we are to run this race with a cheerful and speedy course. A dead performance of duties is no part of our race. Yea, as many go to hell by ill performance of good duties, as by committing sins that are scandalously evil; for this resting in the work done is the cause of hardness of heart, and thereby of despair; and at the best never brings any sound comfort at all to us. And therefore we are enjoined to do good duties, and to do them in a good manner. 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this

bread, and drink of this cup,' 1 Cor. 11:28; and 'so run that you may obtain,' 1 Cor. 9:24. It is no lingering. We know not how long we shall live, how soon we shall die; and therefore let us make haste to do our work before God takes away time from us, by taking us out of the world. And those especially are to look to this, that have lived long in their own courses, and are but lately reclaimed. They are much behind, and had need make haste. The journey is long, their time but short. And to this end look we not what we have done, and how far we have gone, but look what remains to be done, and know we have done nothing till we have done all.

Quest. But it will be asked, What! may we not think of duties that are past?

Ans. I answer, We may think of them by way of defence, and to give God the glory, and also to encourage us on, but not to rest or solace ourselves on them till we have done all.

Quest. But men may say, What, is there no pause? is there no Sabbath?

Ans. I answer, Yes, when we are dead. 'Blessed are the dead in the Lord,' Rev. 14:13. It is they that rest from their labours. Heaven is a sufficient reward for all the pains we can any way take here. Besides, the comforts that we have here are many, which none knows but them that enjoy them. And God hath promised the continual assistance of his blessed Spirit, that shall encourage us and lead us into all truth. Alas! what comfort have we of all that we have done, if we continue not, but sit down and take up our rests here? What good got they that came out of Egypt and died in the wilderness, it may be even in the border of the land of promise, yet never saw it? It will assuredly fall out with us as it did with them, if we harbour any infidelity in our hearts. We shall be cast out, that we shall never see this good land, the spiritual Canaan.

In the next place, take we heed of such hindrances as may make us either slack or intermit this race of ours.

1. As first, We must take heed of idle scruples and temptations. These are no other than as dust cast in the eyes of the runners, and as stones that gall their feet. Interpret them to be the subtleties of the devil, and therefore shake them off, and intend* thy duty thou art about, and pray for wisdom to discern aright of things. Regard not the golden apples of the profits and pleasures of this life, that lie in thy way to divert thy steps,† and sweep off evermore the dirt of these worldly cares, which we gather in our race, and by little and little grow to clog us.

2. In the second place, Beware of sins against conscience. They take away joy, and make our hearts dead. There are many that seeing divers of their sins before them, concerning which they find no peace in themselves, are soon out of breath, and quite out of heart, and so by little and little run into despair, and without hope ever to attain the prize.

3. Thirdly, Take we heed of ill and dull company, that are cold in religion, that cannot away with good religious duties. For as it is in our ordinary travels, good company makes time and way pass away speedily and with comfort; so it is in this race, good and gracious company by exhortation and example do wonderfully encourage us; and ill company contrarily do dishearten us, dissuade us and clog us, and draw us back from every good duty we take in hand. But many men's conceits are, they need not all this ado; they are well enough, though they be not thus holy; all cannot come to the high pitch of mortification. Surely there is hardly any beginning of grace in such who allow themselves in a dead course; for where the love of God is, it will constrain men to shew their thankful and loving hearts to him, in walking before the Lord with all their might.

4. In the fourth place, Take heed how we suffer our minds to wander in this race. Let us not look at the lookers on. The world and

the devil and wicked men, pass not for their censures. We may assure ourselves before we enter this race we shall have no applause from them. Let a slow dull jade come by, like dogs, they let him pass, none regards; but if another comes by apace, every man runs barking and slandering and backbiting after him; and if they can they will bite too. Shall a man care for such as these? No. We must resolve beforehand to have the world, the devil, and all the enemies he can make to be against us. Let us, therefore, set our eyes only on him that has our reward in his hand, that observes us and is ready to crown us; and let us beg courage and strength from him, and spiritual wisdom how we should perform every action; with what intention or remission of heart and affection; how to sanctify his name in the performance of the duties of our callings; how to make every action, yea, our recreations, a furtherance in this our Christian race.

Secondly, Let us daily search and try our hearts and ways. See how we profit or go back, how we grow like or unlike Christ; particularly, examine we how the pomp of the world seems to us, whether base or contemptible? If so, then the further we are run in this Christian race. For as in objects of sight, the further we are from them the less they seem to us, and the nearer we are to them they appear the greater, so it is in the object of our minds. Doth heaven appear full and beautiful to us? It is a sign we are near to it, and we are come a good way in our race. But contrarily, if it be mean and of no esteem or account, it is far from us; we are at the most but coming towards it.

Secondly, Examine what doth take up daily the powers of our souls and affections. Do we delight in the best things, and with Mary choose 'the better part,' which shall not be taken away from us? Luke 10:42. Or contrarily, are our delights here below, and our rest set up here? Then we have our reward here, and the prize is not prepared for us, but God will spew us out for our coldness. And, therefore, if we find coldness creeping on us, let us take heed of it. It is a dangerous estate. God cannot endure it. For while we allow of

good things, but shew not intension of spirit in the performance of them, we do even judge them, and tell the world they be things not worthy of our pains and endeavours. Let us, therefore, not allow of this coldness, though it be in us, but strive against it. Meditate of such things as may inflame us, and pray against it.

For the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus

'I press forth.' It is a word of vehemency, signifying to set forth his utmost bent and endeavour, both of the inward man and of the outward (t); and all is to heaven. So as a Christian's aim is always to Jerusalem, his looks is that way; his tongue speaks the language thereof; his carriage will tell he seeks another city, Heb. 11:14. But for these words, observe there is first a 'prize.' Secondly, 'it is a prize of a calling.' Thirdly, this calling is 'high.' Fourthly, this calling we have here in part.

Concerning this word 'prize,' it is a metaphor taken from the reward of victory gotten in some exercise. God hereby brings heaven down to us. Because we cannot go to it, he insinuates into our affections by pleasing things, and teaches faith by sense.

Use 1. And therefore, we must not rest in these borrowed words, but ever know that the thing that is described goes beyond the description by any earthly similitude.

Doct. From the thing observe that God hath reserved a happy estate for such Christians as are elected to run in this race, that are fitted to it, and that are preserved to it.

Use 2. And this should teach us to magnify God's goodness; that whereas by nature death with his pale horse and hell should follow us, now the course is altered. A holy life in God's commandments is given to us here, and then glory shall be heaped upon us. God hath begotten us to a lively hope, but hath passed by the angels, and left them without hope of recovery.

Doct. Secondly, observe this happy prize is to be given after running. God keeps this order to exercise his graces in us, that we might be a means to gain others, and that we might value happiness the more. If we did not suffer here, we could not taste heaven so sweetly; after labour sleep and rest is sweet. And it is fitting that we should be followers of Christ, to fill up the measure of his sufferings. He did first run, and then was crowned. And this order we must keep if we mean ever to be with him.

Use. And let us be comforted herein, though the race be long and painful, yet there is an end. It will not continue for ever, and with the end there comes a prize. The world runs in a mass here and there; they have their reward, and their happiness will end soon; but a Christian's happiness will never end.

Doct. In the next place observe, that it is expedient and useful to have an eye to this prize. It made Paul, and it will make us run cheerfully; and God tells us of it, to the end we may fix the eyes of our minds upon it, Col. 3:23. Whatsoever we do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, knowing of the Lord we shall receive the reward of the inheritance.

Quest. But some may say, If it be an inheritance to us, how is it then propounded as a prize to us?

Ans. I answer, It is both a reward and an inheritance. It is an inheritance because it is given to adopted sons. It is a reward after labour, not for labour; so as running is the way to a crown, not the cause of it.

Quest. But the papists say, we have it by faith. Why then is it a prize or reward? Why or how can it be a prize or reward, and yet ours by belief?

Ans. I answer, Encouragement and this prize are not given to works, as works, but as works by faith; for by it we run and overcome all

trials and troubles. Reward is due to perseverance, but perseverance cannot be without faith.

But for the matter in hand, I say it is expedient to look to the prize, that we be not carried away with temptations on the right hand or on the left; and therefore let us not look on them. Moses's eye was so fixed on this prize, as he set light by all the pleasures of his life, Heb. 11:25, 26. The eye of faith in a Christian is stronger than that of sense, yet let us take these cautions: First, that we know ourselves sons, and that we come to this prize by inheritance. And secondly, that we love not God so much for his goodness to us, as for that goodness which is in him. For a Christian aims first at God's glory, then at his own good. And so he loves God for being goodness itself, then for being good to him. And yet a Christian in order comes first to see God's goodness to him, and therefore loves him; and then he arises higher to the love of God, even for that he is goodness, and henceforth admires and adores his fulness, for else to love God because God loves us is mercenary.

Use 1. We are therefore to think of this happy estate; and as children, though at first we know not what belongs to inheritances and rewards, yet the elder we grow in Christianity, the more let us search into these things, and see what is laid up for us. It is an invaluable prize that will free us from all evil, of company, of enemies, of Satan's annoyances, of hindrances, of sin, from all occasions without us and inclinations within us, from sickness of body and troubles of mind. It is a Sabbath after six days' work. It is beyond all earthly crowns, The runners here envy not one another, nay, they help and further one another, and are glad of one another's forwardness. All are heirs, all happy, all shall be crowned, and with an incorruptible crown, an inheritance that fadeth not, but is undefiled; and such an one as is kept for us, 1 Pet. 1:4. It is not like the crowns of leaves that soon fade. No. We shall ever be in the presence of the Son* of righteousness, where we shall have a continual spring.

Use 2. But to proceed in the next place: This is a prize of calling. We must be called to it. Who can take a calling on him, unless God calls him? And who can be enabled but those that he enables? This calling of his is the beginning of his golden chain of salvation. He calls us from a cursed estate to a happy communion; from death and bondage under the devil, to be kings and princes. And this is done by outward means, and inward work of the Spirit. This calling is a powerful calling, enabling them to come that are called.

And hereby we may try whether we have any title to heaven or not.

Sign 1. For, first, if we be effectually called, it supposeth we are chosen, called, and singled out from others of the world; and therefore all swearers, and those that are given to drunkenness and profaneness, they are not called nor singled; they remain as they were. For this singling out is the first part of the execution of God's decree of election. And whom God calls, he qualifies. Princes they may call men to places, but they cannot qualify them. But God, when he calls Saul to be a king, he gives him a king's heart; so if we be called to this heavenly kingdom, we shall have holy and kingly hearts and minds given us.

Sign 2. Secondly, Men's tongues will shew what calling they are of, in their discourse. A Christian will remember he is a Christian, and will walk worthy of his calling; and with Nehemiah he will reason, 'Shall such a man as I do thus?' Neh. 6:11; speak thus? think such vile sinful thoughts? And those that are not of this carriage shew no great religion in them. And just it is with God to give such over to a great measure in sin.

Sign 3. Thirdly, This calling is to glory; and therefore he that is called, he will think of heaven, and magnify and admire God's goodness to him. What thing is man, Lord, that thou shouldst be mindful of him? and therefore those that admire the pomp and glory of this world, it is a sign their calling is worldly, and that they are called by the world.

Sign 4. Fourthly, If a man be called by God, he shall find a spiritual answering within himself to God's call. If God say, 'Thou art my son,' the heart answereth, 'Thou art my God.' 'Behold I come quickly,' saith Christ; 'Even so come, Lord Jesus,' saith the Christian heart. And therefore a rebellious disposition shews that God's Spirit is not there.

Thirdly, This calling of ours is a high calling. It is from heaven to heaven. It is from a heavenly spirit, by spiritual means, to Christ in heaven, to saints, to spiritual employments and privileges.

Use 1. Hence, therefore, we may learn who are the greatest men. Sensual men think those in outward place the greatest men of all other. Alas! they are nothing to a prince of heaven. He is a spouse to Christ; shall judge all the world, and triumph over Satan. All other callings end in the dust with our bodies. Kings shall rise as peasants, and it may be in a worse estate than many of the meanest. There is no difference in death. All other callings are by men, from men to men, to earthly purposes. Let us make, therefore, a difference, and know whence our calling is, that we may be thankful; and whither it is, that we may be joyful.

Use 2. We may also, in the next place, hence gather, who are of the highest spirits. It is a Christian, and only he. He overlooks all these base things. His way, his mind, is ever upwards; and with Paul, he thinks all 'dross and dung' that is here. It is the disposition of the world to mind high matters. Here in religion are the true aspiring thoughts; as if men will be covetous of honour, here is the right honour, and these are the honourable persons. 'Who honour me, I will honour,' saith God. Only a Christian is partaker of his desire; other men desire high matters. God knows to what end, but they leave them in the dust. But when a Christian dies, he is then partaker of his desires in fulnees.

Quest. But it will be questioned, Does a Christian ever know he is called?

Ans. I answer, Sometimes a Christian staggers a little, either being not an experienced Christian, or through sight of corruptions and temptations. But setting these aside, a Christian knows his calling, and will live by his rules. For it is not only a calling, but it works a disposition. And, therefore, if we find it not, attend we on the means of the gospel, which is called the kingdom of heaven, and it will bring us into a good estate, and shew us our estate also, which being once made known to us, we may assure ourselves it will remain with us for ever; which also may be gathered from this, that it is a high calling. For nothing can break any one link of that chain made by God, and demonstrated in the 8th of the Romans.

But to proceed. This is the calling of God; for by nature we are dead, and it can be none but God that revives the dead. God, together with the voice of his ministers, sends his quickening Spirit; giving ears to hear, and understandings to understand.

Again, We are not only dead, but in thralldom under the devil. It must needs be one that is stronger than this strong man, that must dispossess us of him. This calling is God's calling in Christ, and that is first as our head. God looks on us as we are in him; and he elects us as in Christ. For from eternity he appointed so many to be members of Christ, as he meant to save. We are called and justified in Christ. He must be ours before his obedience be ours. We are sanctified in Christ. We must be in him as branches in the vine, partaking in the quickening sap and juice of his grace; and when we are glorified, we must be glorified as being of his members. Then we are called by Christ, who is the author of this holy calling; and, lastly, we are called through Christ as our mediator. And thus chiefly is it meant here, not through works, as the papists will have it. No. Christ is the author and finisher of our faith, Heb. 12:2. In him are we crowned, as the body is said to be crowned when the head is. Let us therefore cherish this communion with Christ by all means, for thereby we shall communicate with him of his fulness.

VERSE 15

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded

St Paul he proceeds to others. If any of you be perfect as I am, be you also thus minded as I am. Perfection in this place is not meant of that perfection we shall have hereafter, or should have now, or legal perfection; but he is said to be perfect, that is, in his growing estate, increasing more in grace, righteousness, and sincerity; or it may be meant of perfection in regard of degrees, comparatively, whereby one out-goes another that is but a novice in religion. Such are those that can rule their affections, and can live in a settled course of holiness, called in Heb. 5:14 men of 'full age.' For there are children in religion, new entered into Christ's school. Then those that are come to 'full age' surely are exercised to discern good and evil. And then those that are come to their full pitch in heaven, between whom and the former there is no more comparison than is between the sun and a star for light. So as in regard of the saints in heaven, the best here are imperfect; yet in regard of the beginners, they may be said to be perfect. However, we may safely gather this,

Doct. That in Christianity there are degrees of holiness; divers grounds, some bring thirtyfold, some sixty.

Let this comfort those that discomfort themselves in regard of their imperfections. Grace must be at the first as a grain of mustard seed, and therefore let such with patience attend the means, and trust God for the issue.

Doct. Secondly, We may observe, that there is a kind of perfection attainable in this life, which we ought to strive to. The reason is, that in all things God hath ordained a set pitch, beyond which they cannot come, and to which they all tend; and as it is in nature, so in grace. Though he hath appointed to every one his several portion and measure of grace here, yet a pitch he also hath set to all, which we are to aim at, to grow better still, though in this life we cannot

attain to it; and the reason is, because we know not how God will exercise us. He doth exercise all his children, but some with greater trials than others. Besides, we have a perfect God and a perfect word, that is able to make the man of God perfect to every good work. And these are not given to us for nought; and therefore it is a shame for a Christian to sit down at any degree upon pretence of imperfection. We see plants in nature desire growth, that they may be able to stand in and withstand storms. And where this spiritual nature is, and this new creature, there will be endeavour to increase in strength, to undergo and overcome all temptations and hindrances whatsoever.

And to know whether we have this perfection or not.

1st Sign. There will ever be a base esteem of these outward earthly privileges and honours; nay, of the good endowments of our minds, counting them loss in comparison of Christ; and this will work a sure settled hope in Christ evermore.

2d Sign. Again, There will be a perfection of holiness; a neglect of things past, and an earnest endeavour to things before, 'to press to the prize.'

3d Sign. Thirdly, A perfect Christian desires the coming of Christ; but the weak one ever cries, 'Let me, O Lord, recover myself before I go from hence.' He has not that assurance of his good estate that a well-grown Christian hath.

4th Sign. Fourthly, A perfect Christian hath sweet communion with Christ, and can go to God with boldness, without fear of judgment or terror of his presence. Whereas the weakest are driven to God by fear, others by hope, this man comes to God, being moved by a sweet disposition of love.

5th Sign. Fifthly, A strong Christian is not moved with any change either of prosperity or adversity. Weak brains are soon overturned with strong waters, so weak Christians are soon drunken with

prosperity. But a strong Christian, in any prosperity, is pliable and fit for anything. David in the midst of all his royalty saw a greater blessedness than honour and riches: 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin, and in whose lips is no guile,' Ps. 32:2. In adversity also a sound Christian will not shrink, knowing God cannot be changed, though his estate may alter; and therefore he 'can want as well as abound,' growing stronger in patience as in other Christian graces. But it is contrary with the weak Christian, for every cross strikes at his heart, and at the foundation of his faith, making him presently doubt of God's love and favour to him.

6th Sign. Sixthly, A grown Christian he is experienced to find out Satan's devices and plots, and can put a difference between the motions of the flesh and the spirit, and therefore knows what corruption to weaken and what grace to strengthen; whenas a new beginner, for want of practice and experience, sees not these things; and therefore, ere he is aware, runs into many offences, and looks for no remedy.

7th Sign. Seventhly, A well-grounded Christian can withstand the bitter blasts and oppositions of this world; nothing could move Paul, nor separate him from the love of God; but a weak Christian either is blown away, or at least shaken, with every blast; as it is in young trees newly planted.

8th Sign. Eighthly, A grounded Christian bears with the infirmities he sees in others. He pities them, and helps them if he can; but judges not of them as those that are weak, who for the most part are captious. 'You that are spiritual must restore,' saith the apostle, 'those that are weak, with the spirit of meekness,' Gal. 6:1. So as it is the weak ones that are scandalised, and as they are soon offended, so do they soon give occasion of offence to others by their ill example. But the grown Christian endeavours to live free from offence; in the least things he is watchful against Satan's wiles.

9th Sign. Ninthly, A perfect man doth most of all others see into his particular wants, and looks hence after a further degree of grace; and therefore the apostle bids such as are perfect to forget things past, not to look on those that are before,* but to see what is yet before to be attained unto, and to press forward thereunto.

10th Sign. Tenthly, A strong Christian is of ability and endeavour still to beget other Christians. It is the property of a grown creature to beget its like. A weak Christian hath enough to do to look to himself.

There may be many more signs named, but these will suffice. Let us come to the means whereby we may grow to this strength and perfection.

1. And first of all, we must know there must be an order. We are to grow in fundamental graces in the first place; for we water not the leaves, but the root, of our plants; and the graces that are the foundation of all works being gotten and diligently cherished, the works, which are but as leaves, will soon put forth. The main fundamental grace of all is faith, which we are principally to look after.

First, In getting assurance of our salvation. To this end walk holily. For many live in sins against conscience, and so can have no assurance of the pardon of their sins; and how dead and blockish are they! David, though a man after God's own heart, yet losing the comfortable assurance (by his sinning against conscience) of the pardon of sin, thought God's Holy Spirit had quite forsaken him; therefore he prays, 'Take not thy Holy Spirit from me,' Ps. 51:11. Therefore labour for assurance of pardon of sin; for where the soul is wounded with the guilt of sin, it cannot enlarge itself in love, but is possessed with a fearful expectation of judgment. But when the soul is assured of the pardon of its sins, it breeds love to Christ; and there it is said of Mary,* 'She loved much, for many sins were forgiven her,' Luke 7:47.

In the next place, we are to labour for faith in the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and God's goodness to us; that 'he will give grace and glory, and that we shall want nothing,' Ps. 84:11. This will put courage into us.

And as we are to labour for faith, so also for love; which is cherished by meditation of God's mercies and his love to us; and this will set us on fire in all good works. And so much of this grace as we have in us, with so much strength and intension of spirit shall we endeavour to please God in all things; and this argument the apostle used to stir up the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 7:1, 'Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'

2. In the next place, whatsoever we do, let us labour to do it with the best advantage, labouring to practise and exercise as much grace, and as many as we can; as in giving, give in zeal to God's honour, in love, in mercy towards our brother that is in need, and in regard of justice we owe it to him. God hath commanded us to give him, and he will reward it; for we lend to the Lord when we give to the poor, Prov. 19:17. If we are to abstain from any evil, we are to abstain from it with a perfect hatred thereof, and consider how it will offend. It will break peace of conscience and dishonour religion, scandalise those that are weak, dishonour God, and bring shame to ourselves; yea, we must remember that the talents that God gives us do increase in the use of them. The more we strive to do things exactly, the more perfection we shall attain to, in the use of performances.

3. Thirdly, Let us not neglect little things either in good or ill. Omit no occasion of doing good, and take heed of the least beginnings of ill; abstain from all occasions and appearance of evil, for though in comparison they seem small, they are of great consequence.

4. Fourthly, We must keep our affections to holy exercises and means; for God works by means. Neglect none, for so much perfection thou lovest thereby, and consider what means will fit our

disposition when we are indisposed. Are we dull in prayer? Then read. If that will not be endured, then use the communion of saints; and still remember that we be not wearied with prayer, for God sends not his away empty. And that these things may be the more effectual, observe some motives to stir us up.

And to this end, consider,

1. The privilege of a perfect Christian. 'He is as mount Sion, which cannot be moved,' Ps. 46:5. If we tell him of death, it is his heart's desire. Tell him of afflictions: he is resolute; he looks for them; he knows he lives God's child, and so he shall die; when a weak professor fears afflictions, fears ill tidings, fears death, and when it comes, seeks for comfort and hardly finds it.
2. Secondly, A perfect Christian is a beautiful example, and makes others in love with religion. He is thoroughly exercised and practised. The weakling is scandalous, makes men offended at religion; soon takes offence, soon stumbles, and gets many knocks so as his life is bitter.
3. Thirdly, The perfect man honours God, and gets him much glory by hearing, reading, praying, and such duties. Now as parents love those children best that are most like unto them, so those whom the Lord finds like unto him, he will make them more near to him in likeness.
4. Fourthly, The perfecter a man is, the more near communion he hath with Christ; and hath the greater fruit of Christ's love, and findeth peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Spirit; to such as these, Christ hath promised to come and sup, and feast and refresh with his graces. For even to this end Christ came, to make us holy and pure, that he might present us to himself a glorious church, Eph. 5:26, 27; and therefore that Christ may attain to his end in us, let us endeavour unto perfection.

5. Fifthly, Our estate hereafter should move us hereunto. We look for 'a new heaven and a new earth,' 2 Peter 3:13, and we desire to be ever with the Lord in that heaven wherein dwelleth righteousness; and therefore we ought to be diligent that we may be found in him in peace, without spot and blameless. It is the apostle Peter's argument, 2 Peter 3:13, 14; and therefore 'as many of us as be perfect, let us be thus minded,' that we cannot go far enough; we must strive still on to perfection.

And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you

St Paul aims at the comfort of those that are weak, implying that every Christian stood not in this pitch of disposition with the apostle; and yet they were not to be discouraged. God will reveal the same mind to them also in his time.

1. In which words we may observe, first, that some Christians see not so far as others, neither at some times so well as at other times; but are like the man in the gospel; they see at the first men walk like trees, and after see things more plainly. 'The way of the righteous shineth more and more unto the perfect day, as the light doth,' saith the wise man. Prov. 4:18. And as the church grew to knowledge by degrees, so do we; for we first know things in general. At the first, Peter knew not that the Gentiles should be called, Acts 10. And the disciples were at the first weak and subject to many infirmities, and therefore we must take heed of judging and censuring others, and also that we discourage not ourselves, by reason of our weakness. God will in his time strengthen us, and it may be call them. Secondly, Observe it is God reveals this unto such. It is God that must take away the veil first, the veil of the thing, opening our understandings by reading and hearing; and thus the thing itself is made fit to be known. Then he opens the veil of the heart and affections, to embrace and love the things. It is God that opened the heart of Lydia, Acts 16:14. Let us therefore bear with the ignorant. Though God's time is not yet come, it may hereafter.

2. Secondly, Ministers, when they come to preach, must pray that God would take away the veil from the people's ears and hearts; and people when they come, let them pray that God would open their hearts, and not come in the strength of their own wit, knowing that God openeth and shutteth: none can open or shut till he doth it.

3. In the third place, we may observe that God in mercy will do this for us. He will open our hearts. He will reveal, though not every particular truth, yet all necessary truths, according to our estates. Some stand in need of more than others: as ministers ought to have more than people; and governors are to have a larger spirit than other inferiors: yet all shall have sufficient.

Therefore for our necessities let us go to God. He hath promised to lead us; and with David pray, 'Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of thy law,' Ps. 119:18. He hath promised to anoint our eyes with eye-salve; and it is his office to guide us; he is our prophet to instruct us.

4. In the next place, observe that if any man belong to God, he must at one time or other be thus minded as Paul was: to hate all things as vain; to strive on to perfection; to make conscience of the least offences; yea, of idle thoughts and words; of loose, wanton behaviour; to know he is not perfect enough, vigilant enough; to look how far he is short of that pitch of perfection he ought to attain unto; not to content himself that he hath outgone others. These things they shall know either here, in time of trial and temptation, or at the hour of death, when no man ever repented of his goodness or forwardness in religion, nor of his care or constancy in good courses.

And therefore let us be stirred up to be of the same mind now; and if any man shall think with himself, because God will reveal this, therefore he will neglect means, and stay till God inspires this mind into him, let such take heed: if they love goodness, they will set about it presently; but if they quench the good motions of God's

Spirit, God will take his Spirit from such. Beg that God would now change thee, for thou art not master of thy thoughts. If we now put off God till we die, it is just with God to suffer us to forget ourselves. Let us be well affected for the present; and though we see not so clearly as we should do, let us attend the means; and though we cannot grow in religion, yet let us not think it a shame, but allow and uphold such courses, else is our estate desperate.

Observe further this speech, as it is a discovery of a moderate spirit in the apostle. There are some graces that seem in show to cross one another, as zeal and moderation, but they do not. For zeal, when it meets with a fit subject for moderation, can be moderate. Paul condemns not, but hopes; and it is an example for our imitation. Love bears all and hopes all. While God suffers, why should not we suffer? Christ's Spirit will not break the bruised reed, in whomsoever it is. God hath a time for such as we condemn, even as he had a time for us, and therefore we must use all means, waiting if at any time God will give us repentance, 2 Tim. 2:25. Ministers must not be harsh with weak Christians. It is God's work to bow affections, and not man's. And secondly, when we have used all the means we can, we must depend on God's providence; and therefore we are to fetch grounds of toleration and patience towards others from God's love and wisdom, who reveals the seed sometimes long after.

The papists they check us for want of means to reduce men into unity, and to compound controversies. They brag of the pope's power this way; but it is but a brag. For why do they not conclude their own?

They are far more happy than the church was in Christ's time: he says, 'Offences must come,' Mat. 18:7. Paul sees there 'must be errors,' 1 Cor. 11:19. He could not compose all. God must reveal it in his time.

But how do they compose differences? By excommunication, imprisonment, and death; and this by the censure of an ignorant man perhaps, which is brutish and unfit for the church of God. For our part we want no means; but the effect or success we must leave to God. We are not to force men tyrannically to our opinions in lesser matters, but leave them to God's time of revelation.

And lastly, As this hope of revelation is promised, so are we to expect it and wait for it; 'for to him that hath, more shall be given,' Mark 4:24. And therefore let them that have beginnings of grace be comforted to walk on; and for those that are not entered, let them not be discouraged. God will reveal. But upon what condition it follows.

VERSE 16

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule

The word 'nevertheless,' some read it 'only' (u), as if it were a condition. But it implies both a precept and a condition, shewing that those that look for revelation of further knowledge and goodness they must walk according to that measure of knowledge they have. The word 'rule' implies in general the Scripture, more particularly a company of sound truths concerning faith, love, and hope. There is a great Bible, which is the whole word of God. The little Bible is the grounds of religion; and these are not only to be understood in the book, but comprehended and invested in our understanding and affections; and according to these we must walk. Truth is no guide to us, being only in the book, but as it is seated in the heart.

Doct. But let us come to some observations. First, we may learn that God out of his goodness hath left to his church a rule of faith and manners. There is a rule whereby men must walk, otherwise should we be in a labyrinth of errors continually, having no other light but this torchlight of nature to guide us in this thick darkness wherein we are by nature.

The properties of this rule are divers. First, It is a fixed and unchangeable rule; and therefore we must bring all to it, not it to all.

Secondly, This rule is a perspicuous and clear rule. 'Thy word is a lantern to my steps, and a light to my paths.'

Thirdly, This rule is homogeneal. All things therein are spiritual, all holy, all pure; and therefore, when the question is about religion, we must have recourse thereto as the only absolute complete rule. And therefore we must know this rule and then be led by it; for the word 'rule' implies that there must be a thing to be ruled, else what needs rule, or to what use should it serve? An instrument is in vain without use. It is true, many men make religion and Scripture but a mere object of discourse. But their example ought to be no rule to us. If we look to be saved, it must be by walking according to this rule; and therefore a Christian life is no licentious life. Though he be freed from the law, yet must he serve God day and night. Therefore it is that the Christian prospers not nor thrives in this world, because he will not lie, nor swear, nor have a broad conscience, as the children of this world have, that take all occasion and scope to be rich. But a Christian lives by rule. He hath little, and it is blessed to him; for he looks at riches and profits of another kind.

In the second place, we may observe that a Christian walketh by this rule. He thinks it not sufficient to take a step, but keeps a right course stedfastly onward.

But how may this be done? may some men say.

1. I answer: Let us use the means; as first, let us treasure up the word in our consciences. Let us get the rule within us; get the articles of faith and assurance of the promises, and let this be betimes while we are young. It is the ordinary cry, The Scriptures are heard,* they cannot understand them. But what is the reason? They are bred up in earthly businesses, and are stuffed with them So as they find no place for the word; and it is a miracle to see men thus brought up to live by this rule.

2. Secondly, When we have once treasured up the knowledge of these things, we must learn to apply them upon several occasions; for where no practice is, there knowledge is idle, and makes us worthy of more stripes. Many have general truths in their minds, but coming to apply them, they find a great want. David knew adultery was a sin, and Peter knew it was dangerous for a man to rely on himself, yet how foully did they fall.

3. Thirdly, Let us compare our experience with our rule. We shall find there is nothing therein but is fulfilled; that there is no suffering but for some sin or other; and that besides heaven hereafter, God rewards particular obedience here with particular rewards; and particular sin with particular corrections. We shall know that his judgments are not scarecrows. The work of the wicked is accursed, but it shall go well with the righteous; and by this means we shall be encouraged to good and scared from bad courses.

4. Fourthly, Be inquisitive and watchful over our particular steps. Take and hear admonitions and instructions, and be inquisitive after them. Those that are otherwise minded, no marvel if they, like libertines, spurn against all instruction and advice, and accordingly feel the smart of their ways before they see it.

5. Fifthly, Get a wonderful jealousy over our hearts. We often offend in thoughts and desires, which God, the searcher of the heart, looks into; and we must therefore be jealous of idle thoughts and words, not only of others, for so a hypocrite may be.

Obj. But loose persons will say, Oh, this is an unpleasant course; we must bid all joy farewell when we come to this.

Ans. I answer, No. The ways of wisdom are ways of comfort and pleasure. God approves of them, and our consciences will tell us so, and thereby will fit us for life or death, and will so settle us, that no estate shall be unwelcome to us; and, as Ps. 50:23, 'To such as order their conversation aright God will shew his salvation;' and, as in the text foregoing, 'God will reveal himself more and more,' so as if we be faithful and conscionable in little, we shall have greater matters revealed to us; and contrarily, if we be unfaithful and careless, God will take from us the key of knowledge and the use thereof, and will give us up to foul vices, even sins against nature, as he punished the Gentiles, and to believe lies, as Paul says, 2 Thess. 2:11. And will answer us as he did the idolaters, even according to their multitude of idols, Ezek. 14:4. So as would we have favour in our sins, and teachers that shall bolster us up in them, and not cross our vain courses? God will let us have our heart's desire, but we must know that this is an inevitable way to a desperate estate; and therefore marvel not so much at the loose liver because of his good breeding, for as they desire the ill, so they have, and are justly punished therewith.

Let us mind the same thing

Observe here, that we are not only to walk suitable to others, but we must mind the same thing that others of our profession do. So as this is a direction to concord, shewing that a Christian is a member of Christ as his head, and of the mystical body the church. Faith ties him to Christ, love ties him to the body, so as he must walk with Christ and also with the body. He must look to himself first, and

then to the body. The ground of this union is laid down here to be first an union of mind and affection, and this must be in good, or else we are brethren in evil. It is no marvel the world complains of want of love, when there is no agreement in the rule of our love, when there is no agreement in the objects of our love. It is not riotous fellowship, but fellowship in the gospel that unites us. Let us mind this same thing, and then we shall affect one another; and because our knowledge doth not extend to every particular alike, let us agree in the main points, and let not less things break us off one from another. If we did walk according to our measure of knowledge in those things wherein we agree between us and the Lutherans, [there] would not be that bitterness of spirit that there is; all censures and distempers would cease. And it is a fault in many Christians, though bred up well in knowledge, yet being of a harsh spirit and nature, while he walks not according to the same rule, and minds not the same things in the main as he should do, he grows to be bitter. As for those that would be sincere, they must endeavour to be united in one, as they have one God, one faith, one baptism; for a Christian loves not to go to heaven alone. And when he is there, he knows he shall be one with Christ and one with the holy saints, and therefore will endeavour to be in perfect unity here. Considering there is no good he hath but he enjoys it as being a member of the body of Christ, he knows it is a horrible thing that members of the same body should fall out one with another; and therefore what shall separate or divide us? Shall infirmities? Alas! We are all sick of this disease, *veniam petimus damusque*. Are they too hot? We are too cold. Why should we not stoop and yield? Christ he stooped from heaven to us. Shall errors? Why, the time will come God will reveal himself more fully. Shall sin? We know what the apostle saith, Gal. 6:1: 'Those that are spiritual must restore such with the spirit of meekness.' We must not cut off members for every sore. Shall injuries? It is the honour of a man to pass by such. Do we look Christ should forgive us when we will not forgive others? Consider it is the practice of all holy men. Paul 'became all things to all men, if by any means he might win some,' 1 Cor. 9:20, seq. Peter received reproof of him, yet fell not out with him. Some there are of such a

perverse spirit, as if they see in any one any infirmity, presently they break into these or the like words, 'I will not be of that man's profession,' thus forsaking all the good in the holy profession because of some weakness in the professors.

If they will needs be separating, let them separate from the world, from scandalous, careless, riotous persons, else Satan rules in division. He knows he is best able to deal with them that are alone, and therefore draws Eve from Adam, and one Christian from another, and so quickly overcomes them. If in company one fall, another may help him up; if he be cold, another may warm him by exhortation and example.

Consider, therefore, who are best minded, and mind the best things with them. If we find we have attained to a greater degree in grace than others, endeavour to bring them to us. The communion of saints is an article of our faith. Every one believes it, but few knows what it means; and therefore no marvel they desire it not.

VERSE 17

Brethren, be followers together of me

These words contain another exhortation, with a friendly compellation, which I pass over, having heretofore had often occasion to speak of it. The exhortation is to imitation of the apostle, 'follow me.' And because I cannot ever be with you, therefore follow those among you that walk as I do.

Whence we learn, that together with the rules of religion we must propound God's graces in us, as examples for others to imitate; and this arises not from pride, but from confidence of truth and holiness in our own hearts and conversations; and religion maketh this a virtue and duty, without which it were boasting; and so it doth many things, of themselves not seemly, very fitting. David's dance was in

worldly esteem counted but folly, yet having respect to God's glory is commendable. And therefore we must not be captious when we see such things in others, that men ordinarily count indiscretion. But mark their ground, and by it esteem of them, and accordingly follow such. 'Be ye followers of me,' saith St Paul; that is, observe what my doctrine is, and what I do and acknowledge, follow and imitate me. The apostle's doctrine consists chiefly of three heads; whereof the first, concerning our natural condition, as Rom. 1st, 2d, 3d chapters, and Eph. 2. And the second, concerning our remedy by Christ Jesus, God and man, being king, priest, and prophet, as in the Hebrews. And the third, the manner how Christ is become ours by imputation, and is laid hold on by faith, which is given to us by God, who being unchangeable and true, we persevere in this rule and course of obedience, by the mercies of God, though with many combatings and strivings, even to fulness of glory. The apostle's example see in part in this chapter, in holiness of life and death to sin, and esteem of the goods of this world as base. In the Acts see his pains in the ministry, his calling, his heavenly and holy mind in the next verse.

And therefore, let us read these often, and consider them. They are an excellent glass, that will transform us into an holy form and fashion. Many things there are in him that are extraordinary and not imitable. He wrought in another calling for his living. He was an apostle, had extraordinary gifts by revelation, and indeed not so much by study as the ministers of the gospel now, to whom God gives gifts, but in the faithful and painful* use of the means; and therefore are they not bound to imitate the apostle in this thing as in other things which he did as an apostle?

But to proceed to particulars. Imitation implies four things:

First, A doing that which another doth.

Second, A doing it in the same manner.

Third, A doing thereof grounded upon the same affections, not as in a stage play, where he that acteth the person of a king is often a varlet. But it implies such an imitation as is in a child, that endeavoureth to be like the father in disposition as well of mind as of body.

Fourth, It implies a doing, studio imitandi, with an earnest desire to be like him. For he that doth that which God commands, and not as expressing his desire of imitation, he is no follower; and therefore in all our actions we ought to desire to be like God, and endeavour to express in action what we desire; and to this end we are to search for examples and patterns in the Scripture, for those that are more excellent. For the most excellent in all kinds are the best rules for others; and because in many things we offend all, let us follow the examples of men no further than they follow Christ, 1 Cor. 11:1. And it was one end of Christ's incarnation, that he might be an example unto us. 'As I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, so ye ought to wash one another's feet,' John 13:14; 'and learn of me, for I am meek,' Mat. 11:29.

Hence we may gather the ground why we have not only rules in Scripture to live by, but also examples. For, first, they shew that the things commanded are possible to be done. Then they shew us the way and means more plainly, how to do them. Thirdly, they shew how graceful and acceptable they are when they are done. So as the Scriptures are not penned altogether in a commanding fashion, but have mingled sweet alluring examples. For there are four ways of teaching: rule, reason, similitudes, and examples. The two former enjoins, but works not on the affections. Similitudes are but slight; only examples conforms us in a most sweet alluring manner.

Use 1. And therefore we ought to be exemplary, as to follow others, and especially those that are above others. They should be burning and shining lights, as stars giving light to passengers in the darkness of this world. To this end observe some means. And,

Direct. 1. First, Reverence not only the eye of God but of weak Christians, *maxima debetur puero reverentia* (v). We are to be awful of our carriage, that We may give no ill example to them; and to this end we are to know that we should give account for those sins that we either cause or suffer others to fall into if we may hinder them. Give therefore no offence or scandal to the little ones.

Direct. 2. Labour to deny ourselves in liberties, especially when we are in the presence of such as will take scandal; and to this end labour for the grace of love, which will cause us to endure much, and put up many things which we count injuries.

Direct. 3. Thirdly, In our carriage we are so to demean ourselves that we value, esteem, and respect those with whom we converse; for else our actions being visible to others, they will seem to be done out of a self-respect, and so will not affect or work on them. Grace will teach us to honour the meanest, as those that may be dearly beloved of God, who also may excel us in many excellent qualities, and in some kind of grace may also go beyond us.

Use 2. Secondly, If we be bound to give good example, then woe to the world for offences. What shall become of those who wound and vex continually the hearts of those with whom they converse? Many are in hell, *propter alienum peccatum*. In the eyes of God, who knows the heart and intentions, sin is committed before it be acted, and therefore it is all one whether thou committest it or not. But it is not thus before men; for when it is committed it turns to scandal, and opens the enemies' mouths, and grieves the Spirit of God in his children. The prophets complain hereof; and we may observe God correct his children most to keep them from scandalising others, and that others may beware of scandal. So David's sin was pardoned, yet because he gave scandal the child died.

Use 3. Thirdly, As we must give good example, so we must endeavour to take good from others' example; and to this end,

1. First, We must eye them, and pry into their actions; for this end hath God left us a continual succession of examples.

2. Secondly, We must eye them not to observe their weaknesses, to uncover their shame; for this is a poisonous disposition, proceeding even from the devil. Neither are we to observe them, thereby to take liberty to the flesh from their ill example; but we are to eye them as we view glasses, to deck and adorn ourselves by them, and to compose ourselves in a good course.

3. Thirdly, In imitation we are to observe the best, and the best of the best, and not to compare ourselves with those that are inferior to us. For he that thinks himself good by comparison, he is not good, as a runner will not conclude he runs swiftly, because he hath outrun a lame man. And therefore St Paul says elsewhere, 'Brethren, follow me as I follow Christ,' 1 Cor. 4:16, propounding to himself the most excellent pattern of all, Christ Jesus. Contrariwise he blames the Corinthians because they measured themselves by themselves, 2 Cor. 10:12.

4. Fourthly, We must learn truths before we practise, for the best have their blemishes. So that we must learn to know how to avoid them. The papists urge us with the succession and universality of their church. No, say we, it is the doctrine that must try the church, whether it be true or false, for men are mensura mensurata. It is the doctrine is mensura mensurans, the measure measuring, whereby our actions ought to be squared and framed aright. The papists urge us with an implicit faith. Alas! what example, what imitation can there be, when they know not what to imitate? They know not what the church believes, and yet they must believe as the church believeth.

5. Fifthly, We must labour to have soft hearts, sanctified with grace and mollified, for a stony hard heart will receive no impression; and to this end are we to use the means, to embrace the word, to receive

the sacraments, and to pray that God would open our eyes and soften our stony hearts.

6. Sixthly, We are to look to every one that hath any good thing worthy of imitation, as those that delight in gardens, where they hear of any choice flowers, they will have a slip for their own garden. Thus it should be with us; where we see any flower of any grace, get that and place it in our own gardens. In every Christian there is something imitable, and something that may further us; and therefore this apostle longed to see the Romans, that he might be comforted by their faith, Rom. 1:12. It is with the church as with the firmament, ever some are rising and some are setting. Let us look to the stars of our time, and walk by their light. It is not enough that we can commend the martyrs, for that is ordinary, as it was with the Jews in Mat. 23:29. Though they builded the sepulchres of the prophets, if they had been alive together with them, they would have persecuted them; and therefore Christ saith, 'They killed the prophets.' And the ground of it is because it is a dishonour to God not to take notice of his goodness and glorious graces in others; and therefore if the stars do praise him, surely these stars must much more set forth his glory, that being of themselves sinful wretched men, by his power are made glorious lights for others to walk by.

7. And in the seventh place, In things whereof there is no certain rule to direct us, we ought to imitate the example and custom of the most holy and sober sort. As in apparel much question is, what sort, what fashion is most to be imitated, let the most sober and moderate of thine own rank be guide unto thee. It is singularity to differ from such, with a desire to be noted, and it savours of pride; and such shall be condemned by their examples, even as Noah condemned the old world.

Use. For use of all this, learn hence what is the best succession. That is the best and surest note of succession which is both in doctrine and example. Local succession is nothing. They are the

children of Abraham that do the works of Abraham. They are Jews which are Jews inwardly in the spirit. The papists they cry out against us we have no succession, but it is they have no succession. Their doctrine everywhere crosses the doctrine of the ancient Church of Rome. Their practice is without precedent. What precedent have they for rebellion, for their equivocation, and the like? They follow, indeed, but as corruption doth generation.

VERSE 18

For many walk, of whom I have told you often

These words contain a reason of Paul's exhortation; and from the connection we may observe, that where truth is, error is. Where wheat is there are tares. Walk as I do, for there are many with whom ye converse that walk as enemies to the cross of Christ. Our enemies tell us, because of our errors we are not the true church. They may better conclude contrarily, that because we have some few errors, therefore there is a true church amongst us. Where truth is there will be opposers, and therefore we are not to be scandalised hereat. The skill and courage of a Christian is seen most where truth is in danger, as the goodness of a pilot is seen specially in a tempest.

The papists will not have the word read in the vulgar tongue. Why? Because they say many errors will thence arise, while the common people understand it not. They may as well argue, because there is much deceit, therefore I will not buy nor sell. St Paul was of another mind. He would preach at Ephesus, 'for a great door and effectual was opened,' though he knew there were 'many adversaries,' 1 Cor. 16:9.

In the next place, observe he saith, 'many there were,' meaning of the better and more eminent sort, that is, of teachers. A pitiful thing, that in the golden times of the church the chief leaders of the church should be misled; and therefore we are not to wonder that

we should find it thus, and therefore we must not be scandalised by the multitude. One Micaiah is better than four hundred false prophets; and therefore we must not number the followers, but weigh them aright (w).

To proceed. He saith there are 'many.' He nameth none in particular, yet no doubt but noted scandalous persons may and ought to be particularly named, that others may take notice and heed of them; yet this must be warily done. The apostle curses the coppersmith, but only names Demas. Those that are weak must be gently touched; those that are obstinate and scandalous must be plainly made known; and this draweth some of our writers particularly to lay open the vices and falsehoods of those that are obdurate, and therefore we must not take scandal thereat, it arising from a zealous care of God's church, not of malice.

In the next place, he saith he told them 'often.' The apostle was affectionately bent for their good, and therefore to write the same things often to them it was not grievous to him, seeing to them it was false.* For the nature of man is very dull in conceiving of things that belong to salvation, and their memories are but brittle. If therefore we do often inculcate and lay open the danger of that whorish religion long since condemned, it must be well taken in these times, especially wherein men are so secure, daring to venture on anything, yea, to go to their masses, upon pretence of their strength, that they can come away without being defiled.

And now tell you weeping

As if he should have said, if nothing else will make you beware, yet let my tears move, my tears proceeding from grief and compassion of the miserable estate of such teachers, and of such as are led by them.

Affections therefore are lawful, yea, necessary in God's children. All actions in God's worship are esteemed according to the affections

that they are done with. We are as we love, not as we know. What is the life of a Christian but the performance of things with courage, delight, and joy? And therefore the strongest Christians have strongest affections. For religion doth not harden the heart, but mollifies it; and regeneration doth not take affections away, but restores them sanctified and pure.

But to come particularly to the matter here. He is compassionate, and so compassionate as his natural constitution will admit; he expresseth this with tears, which ariseth from grief for something within ourselves, or by reason of sympathy with others for some danger that they are in, or like to fall into.

Reason 1. The reasons hereof are, because they are led by the Spirit of Christ, who was all made of compassion; for he wept for his friends, for Lazarus, and for his enemies. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, and you would not.' He was tender in bearing the infirmities of his weak disciples and of weak women. His compassion was such as drew him to the lowest degree of humiliation to free us from danger.

Reason 2. Secondly, The saints have clear sanctified judgments to apprehend true causes of remorse. They know what danger is, as Paul saw here that the sheep were in danger of wolves, and saw the danger so much the greater by how much they saw not the danger they were in.

Reason 3. Thirdly, The saints have their hearts broken with sense and feeling of Christ's compassion in their hearts, and so are mollified, expressing it outwardly towards their brethren; contrarily, the wicked never felt any remorse or pity of Christ in them, and therefore know not what compassion means, so as their mercies are cruelties. Use this as a note whereby we may discern of our Christian estate; for surely where there is no compassion there can be no excellent estate.

Again, From the apostle's object of compassion and weeping observe, that spiritual evil and danger is the most proper object of Christian compassion. Paul he pities not himself because of his fetters he was in, but it was the bonds of sin made him cry, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. 7:24. And good reason, for these spiritual evils of error in judgment, hardness of heart, security, seared conscience, and the like, they lead us the assured way to damnation, as it is said in the words following, 'whose end is damnation.' Contrarily, outward crosses being sanctified to us, they bring us to heaven, as it is 1 Cor. 11:32, 'We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.' For those crosses are occasions of good affections, purging the heart from deadness and fleshly trust, they draw us to God; and therefore spiritual danger is the proper object of pity. It is otherwise with us. We lament Christian bloodshed. But how many souls are carried into error daily, turned to popery, and no remorse, no pity! There is great need thereof both in the magistrate and the minister, that they should be moved to provide remedies against such mischiefs.

And let us be far from envying such as are in ill courses; let their outward pomp be never so great, rather lament their misery. Alas! poor souls, how are they hurried, nay, do willingly run to destruction, while they are blinded with those idle shows of vanity.

But much more miserable is their estate that draw on others to mischief, that are brethren in evil. What other end can they look for but to be as tares bound up and cast into the depth of hell, being guilty of as many men's deaths as they are of ill examples in their past life?

But for ourselves, let not our souls come into their secrets; let us mourn at the lewdness of some, and the danger of all. And to this end let us consider duly the afflictions of Joseph, taking heed of sensualities, which, as Hosea saith, taketh away the heart, Hosea 4:11. Moses saw the misery of his brethren, and pitied them; so

should we consider of the danger of popery, of schism, and rebellion: and this will break our hearts, and cause us, with Jeremiah, to mourn in secret for the sins of the times, Jer. 13:17.

They are the enemies of the cross of Christ

In these and the following words is a description of these inordinate walkers which the apostle speaketh of. They are described by their disposition: first, outwardly, 'that they are enemies to Christ's death.' Then inwardly, 'Their belly is their God, they glory in their shame, and they mind earthly things.' Then by their end, which is 'damnation.' They are pointed out and described to us, to the end we might take notice of them. By the cross is not meant the sign of the cross, as the papists fondly imagine, but Christ's death on the cross, whereby was made satisfaction and redemption and reconciliation.

1. The enemies of this cross are, first, such as added hereto the ceremonial obedience to the law and their own satisfactory* works.
2. Secondly, Such as are carnal, denying the power of Christ's crucifying in not crucifying their affections.
3. Thirdly, Such as could not endure or suffer for the testimony of Christ's crucifying; and therefore to avoid persecution, they pressed circumcision with Christ, and so were enemies to his cross, Gal. 6:12. Such were the enemies thereof then, and such have we now of the papists; let them brag never so much of their esteem and reverence they give to the sign thereof. While they seem to kiss it, they betray it Judas-like. For while they teach merits, satisfaction in purgatory, indulgences, and the like, they make the cross of Christ of none effect, which is only and wholly sufficient in itself.

And whereas they say they do add, they take nothing from the sufficiency of Christ:—

I answer, Circumcision was added here by those, who are notwithstanding condemned. For as to join poison with wholesome

meat takes away the nourishment of the meat, so if we be circumcised, Christ shall profit us nothing; and grace is no grace where there is merit, Rom. 11:6. Again, consider the equity thereof in natural reason. Can it be thought likely that God should become man, to do anything which lies in the power of man to patch up and make good, or else it is insufficient? Shall finite corrupt man be able to make an infinite work perfect. No. God will not give his glory to another; and will he part with his glory in this great work, which propounds his glory as the main end thereof? Eph. 1:6, 12.

4. Fourthly, There are another sort of enemies, such as cast not themselves on the merits of Christ's cross, those whose consciences were never convict of sin. Abundance there are who glory in their proud presumptuous swaggering courses, shewing that they are either blind or stark mad. They wilfully run to perdition, they will not hear nor be controlled. Others that see their forepast life how wicked it hath been, they are so far from casting themselves on Christ's merits, as they despair and grow more and more obstinate therein, even to their own destruction; either by not seeing the merits of Christ, or through want of confidence on them, though they see his righteousness to be above their sins. And some are so detestably wicked, as because they see no salve for them, they run desperately into a custom of sin, and continue therein to their death. As we would desire to avoid this fearful estate and condition, so let us take heed of custom of sinning, for that will make us senseless, and will move God to give us over. And therefore let us take heed that we receive not the grace of God in vain, it being so freely proffered to us. And to this end, know that so far as we suffer our lusts to overrule us, and we not crucify them, so far we are enemies, Gal. 5:4. For while we know and consider Christ as crucified for our sins, it will make us, if we have any grace, think of sin as of a thing that deserves to be crucified, and hate that that caused the death of our dear Saviour; for they were the cruel tormentors of Christ. And if we embrace Christ, we shall have the same affection to sin that Christ had; for Christ will not lodge but in a heart humbled for sin. And the estate of those men is miserable,

that are so far from crucifying lusts, as they thrust themselves upon all occasions of temptation and sin, and esteem them as their only enemies, that tell them of their unchristian courses. Surely, however they may daub for a time, yet their outward profession will never administer sound comfort to them, but they shall find bitterness at their latter end.

5. There are yet another sort of enemies, namely, such as will endure nothing for Christ; who notwithstanding bore his cross, and bids us take up our cross of reproach for religion. Some will endure any pain, travail, danger, and watchings, for riches or ambition, but dare not speak a word, or appear in Christ's cause. Are not these enemies? Shall Christ out of his love come from heaven to the basest abasement for us, and shall not we endure for a while here, seeing it is also for our own good, and we are gainers thereby, and considering that Christ called us to suffer. For while we live here, and embrace true religion, there will ever be a cross and shame in the world, accompanying the profession thereof, if it be sincere.

Preachers therefore that preach not Christ plainly and boldly, and hearers that come to the hearing of the word rather for rhetorical flourishes, witty sentences fit only for discourse sake, even thus far they are enemies. For if Christ be not preached mainly and chiefly to this end, to amend the lives of men, to win souls to Christ; and if men, coming to hear, come not even for this end mainly, to be bettered in their salvation, to be strengthened in grace; they shall be damned as enemies for this, that the means of salvation they profane and despise.

And therefore let us abase ourselves for our sins, and magnify God's goodness in affording means of salvation. Labour also to shew how we profit by suffering for the gospel, and count it an honour, and 'rejoice that we are worthy to suffer' for Christ, Acts 5:41, labour to overcome the world and our lusts, and to honour Christ even in his meanest children. If the love of Christ will not constrain us, no motives will draw us.

VERSE 19

Whose end is destruction

The word signifies a reward, and is translated and taken often for an end,* because reward is given at the end of the work; and thus is salvation called a reward for goodness, because it is given at the end of a holy life. The other word signifies damnation or destruction, which implies all things tending to or accompanying the punishment of a wicked life. And the connection of these words with the former may be thus framed. He that is an enemy to the cause of life is an enemy to life, but those that are enemies to the cross of Christ are enemies to the cause of life and to that which saves them; and therefore they must needs be destroyed. This made the apostle judge of them thus, and withal he saw they were void of grace, and were incorrigible. And from hence we may infer,

That we may in some sort judge of the spiritual estate of men, even while they are alive. For as astronomers can judge of eclipses, and statesmen of the continuance or danger of the State, and physicians of the event of diseases, by the course of natural causes, so in religion there are predictions on good grounds, what will follow of ill courses tending to damnation.

But more particularly, there is a threefold judgment.

1. First, One by faith, which concerning ourselves brings certainty; and so we are able to judge of ourselves.
2. Secondly, There is a judgment by fruits, comparing men's disposition and state with their fruits; and so we say, if men walk riotously, we can infer, Surely he is in no good estate. 'By their fruits shall you know them,' saith Christ,' Mat. 7:16.
3. Thirdly, There is a particular revelation of God's Spirit. This the prophets and apostles had, but now we have no such rule. Yet by the

fruits and course of men, it is an easy matter to judge what the end of those men will be, following those courses; for God's word is the same now that it was then. Indeed, when we judge men in things indifferent, this is rash, and condemned by the apostle, Rom. 14:3.

For use hereof, let us learn to judge ourselves, and know if we break wilfully the known rules of salvation, we are in a fearful estate. And we should also submit to the judgment of God's ministers while we are here, and amend; for else look assuredly for the sentence of death hereafter from God himself, when there will be no revoking thereof. For though punishment may be deferred a while, yet assuredly it shall not go well with the wicked at the last, Eccl. 8:13.

In the next place observe, There is an end to every way, for it is taken for granted that they have an end; and surely we will not, nor cannot, be always as we are. We are labourers, and there is a time of payment of our wages. And therefore, we should look whither our ways do tend. There will be an end of this life, but damnation shall be without end. We should also be inquisitive to see if we be out of this way, that we may be reformed; for these worldly pleasures must end in eternal vengeance, and this life is but a way to that end.

And in the third place, Learn to be patient. When we see the wicked run on in a broad highway, what though they be admired here and lifted up! They are but condemned persons; and therefore, envy them not, seeing we would be loath, upon serious deliberation, to change estates with them. Observe we further from these words, that God will judge eternally, not only for gross, scandalous sins in the course of our life, but even for errors in judgment. For we must judge aright, as well as affect aright, and God hath no service from corrupt judgments. Those that join man's merits with Christ's merits, they cannot rely on God alone, neither can they rejoice in Christ. Christ hath but half of them. Therefore, let us keep the virginity of our judgments; prostitute them not to lies, but reserve them chaste and pure to Christ.

And secondly, Take we heed how we converse with such as are of corrupt judgments. They are God's and Christ's enemies, and will labour to bring us into their ways; and then, assuredly let us look for their end. It is reason, that those with whom we converse here, we should converse withal hereafter.

Whose god is their belly

These words do partly shew the inward disposition of these men. By 'belly,' in this place, he means in general all contentments and worldly pleasures, whereof these teachers being satisfied, they lived at large and at ease.

Quest. But how may they be said to make their belly their God?

Ans. 1. I answer, We may be said to make anything our God, first, when we count it one, as some of the papists have esteemed of the pope, as of an essence between man and God; and some emperors have required themselves to be so esteemed, and adored as a deity (x).

2. Secondly, When we give such affections to it as are only due and proper to God, as to trust in it, to repose content in it, to joy in it; and so is that sentence true, amor tuus, Deus tuus (y).

3. Thirdly, When we use actions of invocation and adoration thereto; and thus the papists make saints their god, attributing such power in working to them, as is only proper to God.

4. Fourthly, When we bestow all labour to give satisfaction thereunto. For explication, these men gave the intension of their most inward affections, to procure content to their lusts. All their labour was to this end, and so quieted themselves in the enjoyment of them. And as they made their 'belly their god,' so their belly acted the part of a god, in giving them laws, bidding them to do, project, devise this or that; undermine such, and grounding them in this first fundamental law, 'Thou canst not live long, neither wilt thou

live well; therefore, while thou livest, live for thy pleasure, take thy ease;' and from thence, enjoins them to use all means thereto: take all acquaintance, undermine all that cross thee; and all to this end, that thou mayest have thy ease.

As it was then, so now is it with the papists, their successors. All the differences in religion between them and us, are by them grounded on the belly. That is the monarchy of the pope, and worldly pomp, and masses invented for idle priests, Latin prayers, little or no preaching; only that the people being ignorant, they might more easily command them. If their errors were not invested in gain, we should soon accord* their worship, especially the manner thereof, only to delight the sense.

And among ourselves, many are not wanting that make profession of religion, but deny the power thereof. So long as religion and outward content do meet, and when religion brings preferment, all will be religious, for they live by no rules but those that their lusts prescribes: morning and evening taking care for the flesh, how to be rich, how to live at ease; and for this will sell their birthright in happiness, refusing the word, refusing good company, yea, heaven itself. And this justly comes as a judgment for man's first rebellion. When men will not serve God as they should, they are justly given over to the service of those that are no gods.

Quest. But it may be asked, May we not seek to content our flesh?

Ans. I answer, We may respect our bodies; and there is a due honour that belongs to the outward man, but we must so seek for them, as in the first place and principally we seek the kingdom of heaven, and its righteousness; and then God hath promised to cast these things upon us, Mat. 6:33. But when we break order and measure, being first and principally careful for our lusts, the devil knowing our haunts, offers baits fitting for our humours, and we, like filthy swine, devour our own destruction.

And therefore, to avoid this, let us set the fear of God and damnation before our eyes; and if we use not these things moderately and soberly, let that in Rom. 8:13. be as a flaming sword to keep us from the way of destruction. 'If we live according to the lusts of the flesh, we shall die;' and therefore, 'as strangers and pilgrims, let us abstain from fleshly lusts, which fight against the soul;' against our comfort here, and our happy estate hereafter.

Secondly, Let us avoid the company of condemned persons, but look on them with a kind of horror and detestation of them; and pass not for their wicked censures, 'Their end is damnation, and their belly is their god.'

But because the best are drawn away by these pleasures, let us observe some directions.

And first, Let us see the reasons why we are thus inveigled with them.

Reason 1. First, These earthly contentments are present to our sense. The other only are present to faith, which the carnal man looks not after, neither cares for.

2. Secondly, We nusle* up ourselves in an opinion of the necessity of these things, seeing the present use of them; and we see no present use of those better things.

3. Thirdly, These things are bred up with us, and we are acquainted with them from our infancy, and so they plead prescription; and when we are thus taken up before, religion comes after, and very hard it must needs be, to keep our minds lifted up; and yet is it most necessary to be; for lusts do drown men in perdition, 1 Tim. 6:9.

1. But for helps in this estate of ours, observe first, with due consideration, the nature, dignity, and excellency of the soul; that it is a spirit of an excellent beauty, adorned with understanding and judgment, not made to cast off the crown, submitting itself to the

rule of every base lust, which indeed is the only happiness of the beasts; nay, if happiness consists in pleasing the senses, beasts are more happy than we, for they have neither shame without, nor conscience within, to disquiet them in the enjoyment of their pleasures.

And know also that this body of ours, being of that excellent temper, is a fabric which was not made only to be a strainer for meat to pass through. The quality of the brain in man, the structure of the eye, do testify man was made for divine meditation, to contemplate of the works of God, which it doth behold with the eye as through a glass.

2. Secondly, We must know, by giving our affections to these things, we are made like the things we affect; for the soul is placed in the midst, as it were, between heaven and earth, and as it affects the one or the other, so is it fashioned. If we love the flesh we are flesh; if we follow the Spirit, we are transformed to its likeness.

3. Thirdly, Consider that God is better than the worshipper, else is he mad that will worship it. But the belly is baser than ourselves. Reason teacheth us the pleasures of this life end in death, when our souls must still continue after all. Now to seek such pleasures as cannot continue with us is madness, as appears even by the light of reason; and therefore are of more power with natural men than pure religious truths. But for those that are called, the Scripture puts them in mind of the last day of judgment, and tells them that they are made for heaven; and such are therefore to set their minds on things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, Col. 3:1; and when they begin to grow worldly, and to follow their belly, it calls them back with a 'but know for all this, God will bring thee to judgment;' which, duly pondered, cannot but be as a hook in our jaws to bring us back to a more diligent watch over our ways.

And whose glory is in their shame

A second part of the inward disposition, shewing that they glory in that which brought shame to them; for circumcision was a ceremony given to the church when it was but in the infancy; and for them that were born in the strength of the church, being well grown, to glory in such beggarly rudiments was shameful. In the words, first consider the affection; second, the object or end, for the word implies both. And in the first consider the sin, then the cure.

The sin that is reprov'd in them is 'vain-glory;' that is, glorying in a thing not to be gloried in; and it is grounded upon pride, which is a desire of excellency in vain things; and it is for the most part in vain injudicious men, who ordinarily do glory in things that tend to shame. These Philippians saw that Paul was now committed. The doctrine he taught they thought was not good enough; they would be wiser than he, and of deeper reach.

And thus even within the pale of the church, what a scandal is it that men should glory in a graceless grace of swearing, filling up rotten discourse with new devised oaths! And others glory in their foolish conceited gallant apparel; which was for no other end but principally to cover shame. Is not this to glory in shame? And much more those, that blaming, as it were, God for making them no fairer, will mend the workmanship of God by painting. These, while they seek to keep outward blemishes from the eyes of men, do discover to the whole world that they have a spotted rotten heart within them.

And, indeed, it is too common for men ill bred up, to think admirably of themselves, when all their courses are mere vanity. He is the only man of account that cannot put up a cross word without blood. Is not this to glory in shame, whenas it is the glory of a man to pass by an offence, and they are the best men that can overcome themselves? And as helpers on of this vain boasting, we have a generation of ignorant unsettled understandings, that admire at such shameless boasters, and so are causes of strengthening such in their vain-glory. Such are flatterers of great men. Let them

remember what is denounced against such. Woe be to them that call evil good and good evil.

In the next place, Shame is not only the object of vain-glory, but the end. They that are vain-glorious shall be brought to shame at length. Thus it is said of Babylon in Isaiah, and mystical Babylon in the Revelations: 'Though she say, I sit as a queen, and shall see no mourning, yet shall her plagues come in one day, death, and destruction, and mourning,' Isa. 47:9, and 51:19; Rev. 18:8.

For God hath knit vain-glory and shame, a punishment proportionable and fitting to the sin, and striking the offender most near, even to the heart. And thus did God meet with Ahithophel, Absalom, and Haman. They sought vain-glory, and their ends were shameful; and such shall be the end of all such as boast that they can do mischief like Doeg, Ps. 52, title, et seq. And the righteous shall see, and fear, and laugh at them.

For use to ourselves, therefore, let us take heed of sin. For by nature the best of us are subject to it. We are all inclinable either to glory in such things as we should not, or to receive glory from such things as we ought not; or else to glory after an inordinate manner. And in that measure we glory amiss, in that measure we consult shame to ourselves. Glory we may, but it must be well grounded, and in a right manner.

And to the attaining thereto we must first labour for a sound knowledge of God, and for a sound dependence upon him in all things, and also labour for to see our own estate, and our many wants; for wanting this knowledge, men glory in merits while they live. But when they die they grow ashamed of their courses and blind judgment. For while they live they judge of themselves by their own conceit of themselves, which is grounded either by comparing of themselves with those that are worse than themselves, as the Pharisee, that thanked God he was not as the

publican, Luke 18:11; or else upon the conceit that shallow persons have of them.

1. But these are not rules for us to follow. Look rather what says the humbled conscience; what says God's word and his justice; and take example of the apostles and holy men of God, that gloried in the Lord reconciled to us in Christ, 'who is made to us wisdom, sanctification, and redemption,' 1 Cor. 1:30. 'Rejoice that our names are written in heaven,' Luke 10:20. Rejoice that we understand and know God to be just and merciful, Jer. 9:23, 24. Glory in the testimony of a good conscience, that we are true Christians, though but weak, 2 Cor. 1:12.

2. Secondly, We should be content with the judgment and approbation of God, and hearken to the admonitions of his ministers, and care not for the censures of the world.

3. Thirdly, Take we heed of the first beginnings and motions of sin; at the first they are ever modest. The worst man that ever was, was not shameless in sin at the beginning, but giving way to sin by little, loses all shame, and causes at last corruption in judgment, and justifying a man's self in wicked courses. Pleasures, riches, and such things, they are like a vizard, only an outside of beauty; or like one that vaunted himself, he can act the person of a king, but is in himself a bond slave. They act their parts here on this worldly stage for an hour, and leave all their followers in eternal bondage for ever. Therefore let us not be ashamed for Christ's cause; but stand out, labour for sincerity now, and we shall have glory hereafter, which as the light shall increase, whenas 'the candle of the wicked shall be put out,' Prov. 24:20.

Who mind earthly things

To 'mind,' in this place is taken largely, to think upon, remember, desire, joy, and to have all the soul exercised. 'Earthly things;' that is, lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, pride of life, pleasures, and

profits, and honours, which are therefore called 'earthly,' because they are conversant about earthly things, and because they make their followers 'earthly minded;' and lastly, they are called earthly, in opposition to those that are heavenly. And thus in particular, those that mind honour are ambitious; those that mind riches are covetous; if pleasure, then they are voluptuous, and all of them are earthly. For as the ocean is but one, and yet divers parts thereof have several names, so worldliness is but one sin, yet having many kinds it hath also divers names.

1. The observation that hence we may gather is, that the earthly disposition and mind is the temper of that man who is in the estate of damnation; for the mind of such do shew a dead soul, estranged from the life of God: 'To be carnally-minded is death,' saith the apostle, Rom. 8:6. For a man lives as he minds and loves.

2. Secondly, Earthly disposition is opposite to God; so Rom. 8:7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.'

Observe we further, the apostle describes not these by any notorious gross scandalous sin, but by the inward disposition of the heart; for outward actions are only effects and rivers flowing from the spring of corruption in our hearts.

Whence we may note, that God looks to the inward frame of the soul in men; and therefore though in the eyes of men a man may be without spot, yet is his corruption that is within, open and manifest to the all-seeing eye of God.

And therefore from hence we are to be stirred up to humble ourselves before God, by examining our hearts, and laying open our most secret corruptions.

2. And secondly, This ought to comfort us, that though in our daily practice we often fall, yet God in his goodness looks at the inward frame of the soul, and accepts of it.

3. Thirdly, This justly lays open the folly of men's censures. If a man break not out into open outrageous sins, they esteem and commend such for good men, though it may be his soul is full stuffed with atheism, revenge, and all manner of villany.

4. Fourthly, This should teach us to condemn ourselves, even for sinful thoughts; for know, though thou livest without danger of man's law, thou mayest have a rebellious mind opposite to the divine law of God, by which thou shalt be judged.

Yet seeing for this present life we stand in need of earthly things, and are not to cast off all care of them, let us hearken to some directions in the use of them. For riches and other necessaries, God sends them unto us to be as means to sweeten our pilgrimage here.

Rules. 1. In using them, take heed they do not possess and take up our whole heart, immoderately labouring after them, and before any spiritual grace. This the apostle blames in these men. He saw they made religion to be subordinate, and to give place to their worldly lusts, and that as he cared not, if by any means he could attain to the resurrection of the dead; so they contrarily cared not, if by any means, through any cross or loss whatsoever, they could attain to riches, honour, or the like; yea, if religion stood in their way, though it were with the loss of religion and a good conscience.

2. Secondly, We must take heed that we use these earthly things so as to draw good out of them, and to employ them to good. Labour we to see God in pleasure, in riches, and in our abundance, knowing and esteeming of them as a beam of the bright sunshine of God's favour to us, and thus to be lifted up to admire and praise his goodness.

3. Thirdly, Make them instruments of mercy and bounty. It is an excellent way to further our accounts. So receive the good as we avoid the snare. The way is not to hide our talents in a napkin, to

enter into a monastery, to live idle; but to occupy, use, and employ them in the service of God and of our neighbours.

4. To conclude, Let us so use them as they be helpers of us to a better life, not hinderers; for we are in an estate between two, in a warring and conflicting estate, even as a piece of iron between two loadstones, and know not which way to lean; and yet may offend in the excess of either side.

And therefore let us observe some signs, whereby we may know whether we be right or not.

Signs. 1. And first of all, this affection of love, being the primary and principal part, is known by other affections, If therefore our love be set on the world, we shall grieve and vex ourselves for worldly losses, and fret and be chafed when we are crossed in them; and this made Ahab so lumpish, as nothing could comfort him but Naboth's vineyard.

2. Secondly, Let us observe whither our labours and endeavours are carried, what we talk of most, what think we or meditate we on, first and last, morning and evening. If we observe our carriage, it will discover our mind.

Such are also opposite to any religious good course. He that is rich bitterly opposeth goodness; and therefore it is that Christ said, 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon,' Mat. 6:24; and concludeth, 'It is harder for a rich man to get into heaven, than for a camel to pass through a needle's eye,' Mat. 19:24.*

But to cure this sore, let us fetch arguments from the nature of the soul of man, and the nature of these things; and consider the incongruity between the soul, a pure heavenly spiritual essence, and base earthly corrupt things. Dust was made meat for the serpent by a curse, and not for man.

And remember, the God of truth hath threatened vengeance against his dearest children that do not mortify their carnal lusts. Abhor we therefore the first thoughts of this sin, and divert our souls to higher thoughts; and be humbled, shaming ourselves for debasing our souls in that manner, else will God take us in hand. For he will not suffer his children to surfeit on the world, but will bring them back, that they shall see and know 'all is but vanity and vexation of spirit.'

VERSE 20

For our conversation is in heaven

The word translated here 'for' in the former translation is 'but' (z); and so it depends on the foregoing words, 'some walk as enemies to the cross of Christ,' &c. 'But our conversation is in heaven.' If it be as it is here translated, 'for,' then doth it follow the 17th verse: 'mark them that walk, as ye have us for an example. For our conversation is in heaven,' shewing the reason why he was so confident in propounding his example to be imitated. Which way it be taken, it is not much material, only from the opposition between those examples he speaks of immediately going before, and is propounded in this verse.

Note That in the church there are always men of divers dispositions. Some ever go within the current into Mare Mortuum,[†] and others ever against the stream, like the stars that are carried with a secret motion of their own, notwithstanding that in this world they seem to be carried by the violent motion of the common course of men.

1. And this was first in God's eternal decree, that there should be perpetual enmity between the seed of the woman and of the serpent.

2. Secondly, There is a difference in calling; some only outwardly, some inwardly by his Spirit; 'Many are called, but few are chosen,' Mat. 20:16.

3. Thirdly, They differ in their rulers; one are governed by the devil, and led captive to do his will, others by God.

4. Fourthly, In regard of their conversation; some are heavenly minded, others are altogether earthly.

5. Fifthly, Their ends are different; the way of the one is upwards to heaven, the way of the other is downward, tending to the gates of death, even to hell.

But to come to the words. The apostle saith not 'my conversation,' but 'our conversation;' implying that those that mean not to be of the number of those that have their end in damnation, they must be of the number of those of a holy conversation. The word in the original signifies most properly a freedom, or a burghership.[†] So as from the metaphor we may gather thus much.

Doct. That heaven is a city, and all true Christians are citizens and inhabitants of this city; for as it is in the city of this world, so may it be said comparatively of this city and the inhabitants.

First, It is under a governor, who is the Lord Christ.

Secondly, It is governed by law, which is God's law.

Thirdly, It hath a storehouse of all good things, as of food, and of other of the like sort, which is heaven, for it hath bread of life; it hath rich and plenteous treasure.

Fourthly, It hath liberties. They are free from Satan's tyranny, free from the law's curse and condemning power; and are all kings, and shall all reign. They shall be free from all weakness, from ill

company, from temptation. The Lamb shall be all in all. 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God,' Ps. 87:3.

Fifthly, They speak one language, the language of Canaan. The language of the beast they abhor.

And lastly, Their carriage is alike. Grave like citizens of heaven, their faces are still as they were going to Jerusalem, their continuing and abiding city; for while they are in this life, they are still as it were in the suburbs.

Hence we may gather divers grounds, that while we live in this world, a Christian is but a pilgrim and stranger. First, Heaven is his home, and this life is but a way, and he a passenger. And thus David accounted of himself, though a king, yet but a stranger, both himself and his fathers; and therefore, as a passenger, he provides for his journey, he stands not for ill usage, cares not to look after delights in the way, but uses them as advantageous to his journey.

And secondly, He is inquisitive after the way, fearing he should go amiss; and furnisheth himself with cordials, to cheer him and strengthen him in his journey. He inquires after the guide of God's Spirit, to be as the pillar of fire to guide him in the darkness of this world.

Thirdly, He is well provided of weapons against such enemies as he shall meet with in the way. He hath the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

2. The second ground that arises hence is, that a Christian's endeavours are of a high nature. His look is high, his soul and mind are ever upward, casting all burdens of earthly cares and delights from him, that he may freely mount up in the presence of his Maker.

3. Thirdly, This carriage of a Christian is not by fits, but it is his trade, his conversation and course of life. In all things he looks to

heaven. His course is by rule and by law. Whatsoever he does he does as in obedience to God chiefly, with all his power, as approving himself to God, in whose sight he ever sets himself. Briefly, he doth all things as a citizen of heaven.

4. Fourthly, We may also ground hence, that a Christian may have his conversation in heaven, even while he is here alive; for he is born anew, having received the life of grace. God requires not impossibilities, but always gives ability to the discharge of that which he enjoins.

Quest, But in particular, how may a Christian be said to be in heaven, or to have his conversation in heaven?

Ans. (1.) I answer, A Christian may be said to be in heaven; first, as in his head Christ Jesus, who is in heaven already, being gone to prepare a place for us.

(2.) Secondly, He is there by faith, which makes things absent as present; and so it is that 'Abraham saw Christ's day and was glad;' and therefore is faith called, 'The evidence of things not seen,' Heb. 11:1.

(3.) Thirdly, A Christian is in heaven by his hopes.

(4.) Fourthly, He is there by his desires. *Animus est ubi amat* (aa).

(5.) Fifthly, A Christian is in heaven, whenas his meditations are there; when his thoughts are thereon continually busied, as St Paul was, when in admiration of those joys he crieth out, 'O the depth both of the riches and wisdom of God!' Rom. 11:33.

(6.) Sixthly, He is there, when by continual prayers to God, he hath an inward admittance to the throne of grace, where he may freely open his heart to his God; and therefore it is that those that are Christians indeed are often in this duty.

5. Hence we may gather, that the glorious estate in heaven is of the same kind with this life of grace, only differing in degrees of happiness; both estates are free: there only a freedom of glory, here a freedom of grace. Both are estates of redemption. There we are redeemed from sin and death and the devil, here we are only redeemed from the power of them; there have we the full harvest, here we have the first fruits; here we are heirs by faith, there by full possession; to all of us Christ is all in all, only there he rules immediately, here he rules by means, by his deputies. There they have communion with the saints, here we also have communion, though we live amongst the wicked. There they praise God continually, here we endeavour it continually. There they have communion with the beatifical vision, here we have communion with the ordinances which will bring us to it.

And, therefore, let such as intend to be saints hereafter be saints here, and live by the laws that are given us from heaven, and that they live by in heaven; for the kingdom is in such sort one and the same. The kingdom of grace, the preaching of the word, is called 'the kingdom of heaven,' as well as the kingdom of glory; and men do think in vain ever to enter into glory, without coming in at the gates of grace, as appeareth out of the apostle's argument, 2 Peter 1:10, 11, 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

And to this end, amongst many other, observe with me these following directions.

1st Direct. First, For a preparation, hear the word of God; for by this we are in heaven in part already. For where the word is preached, there is the presence of the blessed Trinity, and the holy angels bringing down heaven itself to us, teaching us in the laws of that kingdom. Use reading also; for even thereby we talk with the saints who wrote those things for our instruction, and that Spirit that guided them in writing will also guide thee in reading. Receive the

sacraments often, for these ordinances are the heavenly manna to us, and strengthen us in our way to the spiritual Canaan.

2d Direct. Secondly, Rejoice in often communicating with the saints. These earth moles that are delighted in cœno, not in cœlo,* all company is alike to them; but a Christian will here converse with such as he shall be with hereafter, and the saints have found much help this way. Even Saul, in the company of prophets, became a prophet; and the most earthly man that is amongst good men, in good discourse, will suit himself to them; and indeed good discourse is of much avail this way, if it be frequent as it should be. I enforce it not as a duty to be done at all times, but it should be oftener than it is.

3d Direct. Thirdly, Use such means as are of force to subdue the hindrances of this disposition. Such as are lusts of youth, which ought to be tamed by fasts, and such watchfulness that may make us at the length wise; for so far as we overcome our lusts, so far we have our conversation in heaven; and therefore we must often in private watch, and in private pray; as the Scripture saith, we must watch unto prayer.

4th Direct. Fourthly, Use much meditation. Be ever setting our minds something to this end, that our affections may be wrought upon, to forsake the world with detestation, and to love and embrace heaven; and for this duty we ought to redeem some time continually. Thus principally Enoch walked with God; and David, though a king, meditated in God's law day and night.

5th Direct. And from this duty, let us be brought to a holy use of soliloquies; checking and shaming ourselves for following these pleasures, for unthankfulness and want of cheerfulness, as David, 'Why art thou cast down O my soul, why art thou so disquieted?' Ps. 42:5. By these recollections a Christian is indeed himself, and for the present even seated in heaven.

6th Direct. In the last place, besides ejaculations, use daily a set prayer; for thereby we ascend into heaven, and are fitted thereby to be more and more heavenly. It is the trade of citizens that make them rich. This is our trade, to trade by prayer with that heavenly city, where our treasure is, and by it we shall grow daily in riches. Thus is our soul strengthened and our affections stirred up to converse with God, and thus come we to set our faith in heaven, together with our love, where our Father is, where angels and saints, our city and eternal happiness, is. Thus is our hope strengthened, which carries us through all afflictions undauntedly, and so is a heaven to us before heaven; and thus are our desires in heaven, to be at rest, to be with Christ, which is best of all.

Obj. But some will say, We cannot always intend[†] such things as these, we have our callings, and are busied about earthly matters and cares.

Ans. 1. I answer: True it is, yet in the use of these things, we may be heavenly minded; for God in mercy appoints us callings, to busy our minds about, which else would be delving in the idle pleasures of sin: only he requires, that we in the first place 'seek for heaven.' We shall not continue here, but we are travelling still; and therefore it is good for us ever to redeem some time for heaven, that we may come with more speed to our journey's end.

2. Secondly, As a help to us, he hath left us his Sabbaths, in pity to our souls, which else would altogether be rooting in the earth. Let us have a care of the well spending of them; for by this we pay homage to heaven, and are put in mind thereof.

3. Thirdly, Every day redeem some time for meditation of the vanity of this world. Hereby will our untunable souls be still set in tune; and for our callings, every day sanctify them by prayer, and then all is clean.

4. Fourthly, Go about them as in obedience to God, knowing that God hath placed us in these callings, and he looks for service in employing those talents bestowed on us, and in our serving one another. And let us endeavour to shew what our religion is, in avoiding the corruptions of our callings. Labour also to see God in everything, in crossing us, in encouraging and assisting us; and this will stir us up accordingly to pray continually, and in all things to give thanks; and it will make us fear always, for the same care and love of God that brings us to heaven, doth guide us in our particular actions and callings. And in other matters use ourselves so as we by these things raise our minds on high, for there is a double use of the creatures. First, temporal, and from thence a spiritual use is raised. Thus did Christ. By considering water he was raised to think of spiritual regeneration and washing; and thus we should do, labour to see God in his creatures, and thus shall we help our souls by our bodies. God will have it thus, and therefore setteth down heavenly things in earthly comparisons.

7th Direct. Lastly, We must endeavour to make a spiritual use of all things as God doth. Doth God send crosses on us? Then before they leave us beg a blessing, that they may work his intended effect in bettering us. Doth God bless us with prosperity? Pray that God would sanctify it to encourage us on to good duties, so as in all estates we may have our conversation in heaven. Let no man therefore make pretence that he is poor, that he hath no time for this. No. Grace works matter out of everything. Poor Paul, nay, Paul a prisoner, see how he is busied; and the truth is, that worldly prosperity is the greatest enemy to a heavenly mind that can be.

Obj. But the weak Christian will complain that he cannot find this in him, but he is still carried away with worldly matters. Though he strive against it never so much, yet the world goes away with him.

Ans. To such I answer, Strength of grace this way is not in every Christian, neither is it at the first. Paul had his distractions, Rom. 7 from ver. 15 to ver. 24, yet must our labours and endeavours be that

way. The sin that is in us cannot hurt us if we strive against it. God suffers his children to see their weakness, as he did deal with Solomon, to humble us and make us learn his lesson, that all 'is vanity and vexation of spirit.' Let not such therefore be discouraged, but cheerfully go on in a good course, wherein the more we labour and strive, the more we beautify religion, and credit our city, and draw on others to be fellow-citizens with us.

And thus shall we free ourselves from terrors of conscience, and from the snares of the devil, even as birds when they soar aloft need fear no snares. Thus also shall we get a portion here, for it is the promise of the God of truth, that if we first seek the kingdom of heaven, all these things shall be cast upon us. Thus also shall we be sure of God's gracious and faithful protection, who hath said he will keep us in our ways.

And lastly, Thus shall we end our days with comfort. Woe be to him that dies not to the world before he goes hence. But to him that hath his soul in heaven, even while it is in his body, this life is but a pilgrimage, and death is advantage.

From whence we also look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ

These words lay down such an estate of a Christian, as is both a cause and a sign of heavenly conversation; and in them we may consider, first, That Christ is in heaven. Secondly, That there is a second coming of Christ. Thirdly, That Christians expect it. Fourthly, That this expectation is a cause of heavenly carriage.

For the first, that Christ is in heaven, we have the Scripture to warrant it, but the text is pregnant herein. We look for him from heaven, ergo he is in heaven.

And therefore it is a gross conceit of the papists, that dream that his body is everywhere in the bread, or with the bread, as the Lutherans would have it. The Scripture determines that the heavens must contain him; that he sitteth now on the right hand of God; that he

shall hereafter come to judge, and therefore he is not now here; nay, because he is not here he sent us the Comforter, the Spirit, that shall lead us into all truth, as he himself expressly saith, John 16:13.

Secondly, Hence we may observe, that there is another coming of Christ, which yet is not fulfilled. There is a twofold coming of Christ, one whereby he comes in the flesh. This was his first coming. The second coming is in triumph, when he shall perfect our salvation. This appeareth by the desires of the creature, Rom. 8:37, seq. Secondly, By the faithful desires of his children, which cannot be in vain. Thirdly, To this end he took our flesh to draw us after him. Fourthly, To this end he left his Spirit with us to testify it. Lastly, He hath left us his promises and prophecies thereof, witnessed by the angels: Acts 1:11, 'This Jesus shall so come, even as you have seen him go into heaven.'

Thirdly, That Christians do expect this coming of Christ is evident out of the words, 'from whence we look for the Saviour,' saith the text. The word 'look' signifies an earnest expectation, implying faith, hope, and patience.* Faith is a ground of hope, supposing the promises which are grounded on an almighty God of truth. Now patience comes from hope, so as the word implies thus much. We hope, we believe, we patiently wait for the second coming of Christ. This is the disposition of every sound Christian, and it begins with the beginning of our new birth; for so, 1 Peter 1:3, it is said, 'We are begotten to a lively hope;' and Titus 2:13, 'The grace of God once appearing, teacheth to look for the blessed hope.'

Reason 1. For as in nature the seed desires growth, everything desires perfection, so much more in grace. Where once it is settled it continually desireth a more perfect estate, until the coming of Christ, when it cometh to the top and pitch thereof.

Reason 2. Secondly, There is such a relation betwixt Christ and us, we being contracted to him here, as there is a continual longing for

the consummation of this marriage; even as the time between the contract and the marriage is a continual longing.

Reason 3. Thirdly, Our estate here is a warring and laborious estate, and a painful service, and therefore what marvel if a sabbath, a peaceable, victorious, and triumphant estate, be sweet and to be desired?

Use. Hence we may learn that the estate of the children of God here is imperfect, for they are under hope of a better estate. Before Christ's time they expected the first coming of Christ. So it is said of Abraham, that he longed to see Christ's day. Now after Christ's first coming, we look after his second coming, when we shall be perfected; and thus the souls in heaven are in expectation of a further happiness.

Use 2. And this is the reason of the contrarities of estate that are in a Christian. He rejoices because he is under hope, but he sorrows because he hath not already obtained the thing he hopeth for. He rejoiceth because of his assurance, but sorroweth because of the crosses he daily meets with; rejoiceth in the communion of saints, but 'woe is me that I dwell in Mesech,' Psa. 120:5. We are kings, but over rebels; prophets, but have much ignorance, for we see but in part; priests, but are daily polluted with the soil of this world, and therefore do stand in need of continual washing.

Use 3. Thirdly, This expectation is not only a work of ours, but a grace wrought in us by Christ, by virtue of the covenant: for God fits us with graces that have reference to our future happiness; and it arises from love and patience, grounded upon assurance of an end and glorious issue. Christ knew we were to meet with enemies, and therefore gives us hope as an helmet and an anchor to keep us from shipwreck; for he is a saviour as well in saving us here from despair, as hereafter from hell.

Use 4. This, lastly, may serve for a trial of our estates: for many that think themselves to be good Christians, think with Peter 'it is good being here,' Mat. 17:4; it is good for them to be in this world. They fear the coming of Christ. The very thought thereof destroys all their mirth. It is to them like the handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar. The child of God is of another disposition. He is begotten to this hope: his desire is accordingly; his endeavour and labour is by any means to attain to the resurrection of the dead, Philip. 3:11.

Obj. But it will be said, that it is often seen that good Christians do not always desire the coming of Christ.

Ans. To which I answer, It is true; but it is caused by their careless carriage. And yet, ever there is a spirit in them, to endeavour to do something that may prepare for his coming. But a strong Christian hath ever this desire; and if he be a mortified and growing Christian, he never wants this hope, and comfort, and earnest longing: and therefore his prayer ever is, 'Come, Lord Jesus.'

Fourthly, We may observe out of the words, where this hope is, and this expectation, it stirs up and quickens the soul to a holy conversation. It is propounded here as a ground of the apostle's holy conversation.

For it stirs us up to be pure, even as he is pure, as it is 1 John 3:3. For we are a holy spouse, and there will shortly come the marriage-day; and fitting it is that we prepare ourselves fitting for such a husband. Thus it was with the concubines of Ahasuerus. Though a temporal and earthly king, yet the custom was, they should be twelve months before they came to the king, Esther 2; and much more should it be our duty, evermore to be prepared to come into the presence of our eternal, heavenly King, to meet with the bridegroom; because we know not how soon it may be that he will come, and send his angels for us to appear before him in glory, to call us to the wedding.

Secondly, This hope will stir us up to do all good duties, and to right performance of good duties; to do all things sincerely, as in the presence of God our judge. And therefore, not only the duty of preaching is urged upon Timothy, but the manner, 2 Tim. 4:2, who is charged by the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge all at his appearing, that he should 'preach the word: be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-sufferance.' And the apostle Peter having declared the second coming of Christ, thence infers, 'What manner of men ought we to be in all godly conversation,' 2 Pet. 3:11. And indeed, meditation of the principles of religion will inform us well in the manner of our duties, as in the nature of them; and thus shall we be fruitful in particulars, according as our meditations are directed, though the principal matters and objects of our meditation are but few.

Thirdly, This hope and expectation will stir us up to pray for the consummation and bringing to pass the performance of all those promises which are to be performed before the coming of Christ, as that the gospel should be preached in all places; that the conversion of the Jews might be hastened, and the downfall of antichrist might speedily come to pass. And this hope will also encourage us and put us forward, that in our several callings and standings, we should help on the performance of them as much as is in our power to perform, by helping on the building of the church and the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, and the confusion of his enemies.

Lastly, This hope will work in us a sweet and comfortable carriage in all estates and conditions, carrying us through all impediments with courage. For 'yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry,' Heb. 10:37, and he will come full handed. 'My reward is with me,' saith Christ; and lest we should think it long before he comes, he told us long ago that those were the latter days, and that the ends of the world were then come upon them. Do men, then, molest us, persecute, and vex us? Let us be comforted. He comes that will tread all our enemies under our feet. Do we find that we have but short spirits, that our graces are but weak? Let us not

dishearten ourselves. He that keeps heaven for us will give us necessary graces to bring us thither. If we want, go to the God of faith and love. He hath promised to give us his Spirit, to make all grace abound in us, never to leave us nor forsake us till he hath perfected his work, in setting us with him in glory.

But to proceed to the object of this expectation, it is Christ who is described unto us by the Saviour, whom he calls also Jesus, which signifies a Saviour; and this he doth to impress it the deeper into his affections.

Quest. But some may say, Christ hath saved us already. What need is there, therefore, of his second coming?

Ans. I answer, It is to perfect our salvation. For redemption of our bodies and glorious liberty are reserved to his second coming. We look not that he should die any more, but appear as a Lord of glory in glory, without humiliation for sin, having already gotten victory of it.

Doct. The observation is, that Christ is a Saviour, and the Saviour by way of excellency. He saves all that are of his mystical body from all evil, and preserves them to all good. He saves their bodies and their souls now from the power of all evil, and hereafter he will free them from all evil. He is the everlasting Saviour. While we live here his blood runs continually. This is the 'fountain opened for the house of Judah for sin and uncleanness,' Zech. 13:1. In it are we cleansed from the guilt and damnation of sin. What would we have more? 'We are kept by faith to salvation,' 1 Peter 1:5. Let this raise up our souls. Are we swallowed up with the sense of any misery? Let us know that we trust a Saviour that is every way absolute, that invites those that are sick with sin to come unto him; and 'how can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Heb. 2:3. Away, therefore, with all popish conceits of meriting by our works. All glory must be given only to his mercy; all that he did for us was to the glory of his grace, Eph. 1:6.

Lastly, This should comfort us when we think of the last day, to think withal, that he shall be our judge that is our Saviour, and therefore should cast away all terror from us, knowing that our head will not destroy his members, but that he our husband being a great king, will also crown us his spouse with a glorious crown. Therefore, when we see the foregoing signs come to pass, 'let us lift up our heads, knowing our redemption draweth near,' Luke 21:28.

To go on, in the next place: Christ is not only our Saviour, 'but he is our Lord,' wherein we may see the apostle's Christian wisdom. He useth such titles as may most of all strengthen his faith and affection of the present meditation, which being a point of the resurrection, a thing Seeming contrary to reason, to flesh and blood, he strengthens himself in this consideration, that he 'is the Lord,' who hath all power and authority committed to him, Mat. 28:18.

Secondly, He is Lord by title of redemption, so as we are no more our own, but his; for he hath bought us with a price.

Thirdly, He is Lord of the world, and of the devil by conquest, Heb. 2:14.

Fourthly, He is Lord over his church by marriage. He is our husband, governing his church with sweetness and love.

He is also the Lord by way of excellency above others, depending on no creature. He is 'Lord of lords.'

Secondly, He is Lord of body and soul and conscience, punishing with terrors here and damnation hereafter.

Thirdly, He is Lord eternal. He endures for ever, and cannot die.

Fourthly, He is such a Lord as cannot abuse his authority. He cannot tyrannise. His grace and virtue are of equal extent with his power.

Fifthly, He is a holy Lord, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, that is, Lord of hosts, Rev. 4:8.

In all these he is far above any earthly man, yea, above all creatures. And therefore it is a sweet estate to be under government and rule. They then that are lords here on earth must consider, though they rule and are above others, yet they are under the Lord. Thus did Joseph. Therefore they must rule, 'but in the Lord.' It is his will that must rule their wills.

Secondly, This should comfort Christians, that they have such a Lord as is Lord of angels, at whom the devils tremble; whom storms, winds, seas, sickness, death, and all creatures do obey. Yet we cannot challenge this comfort, but upon condition of our obedience. The apostle joins Lord and Saviour together, to shew that he is a Saviour only to those that take him for their Lord to govern and rule them. As he is our priest, he must also be our king. He comes by water to purge and wash us, as well as by blood to suffer for us. The wicked they will not have this man rule over them, but they shall not say nay. God will be a Lord over them, ruling by his power; with a rod of iron he will bruise them in pieces, none shall deliver them. If we will avoid this miserable estate, let us make him Lord in us. Thus shall we crown him, and then he will crown us with himself.

VERSE 21

Who shall change our vile body.

The words are plain, and shall need no exposition; therefore we will briefly come to the doctrines.

Doct. 1. And first, We may observe hence that our bodies are base; and thus are the bodies not only of wicked profane men, but of the

servants and dearest children of God; all are vile. And that in these respects.

First, In life our original is base. We are dust, and to dust we must return, Gen. 3:19; and our continuance is full of change, subject to diversity of estates, sickness, health, pain, ease, hunger, fulness. And base we are, because we are upheld by inferior creatures. We enter into the world by one way, but go out by divers deaths; some violent, some more natural, and by divers sicknesses loathsome to the eyes, to the nostrils, and especially when we are nearest our end, whenas our countenance is pale, our members tremble, all our beauty is gone. But after we are departed, so loathsome is this our carcase, it must be had out of sight; yea, though it be the body of the patriarch Abraham,* Gen. 23:4. For as the body of man is the best temper, so the corruption thereof is the most vile. The best countenances of the greatest personages are the most ugly, ghastly objects of all others, by so much the more, by how much they were the more excellent; so much the greater is their change. And yet are we not to conceive of this body so as though there were no glory belonging to it; for, first, it is God's workmanship, therefore excellent, and so excellent as the heathen man Galen, being stricken into admiration at the admirable frame thereof, breaks out into a hymn in praise of the Maker (bb). And David could not express it, but says, 'I am wonderfully made,' Ps. 139:14. God made this his last work, as an epitome of all the rest.

Secondly, We are told that we owe glory to our bodies; and therefore we are bidden that we should not wrong our bodies; and the Scripture speaks infamously of self-murderers, as of Judas, Saul, Ahithophel. They are branded with a note of shame and reproach. And God, to shew the respect we owe to our bodies, hath provided to every sense pleasing recreations, as flowers for the smell, light for the eyes, music for the ear; to be brief, he made all things for the bodily use of man.

Thirdly, These bodies of ours are members of Christ, redeemed and sanctified temples of the Holy Ghost, as well as of our souls. And therefore we must take heed, when we read of the base terms that are given to the body, that we do not mistake. For it is true in regard it keeps the soul from heaven, it is the grave of the soul; but indeed it is the house, the temple and instrument of the soul. But being misused, it proves an untoward dark house, an unwieldy instrument.

We are to take heed, therefore, of the error of those who afflict it by writing and declaiming against it, or by whipping of it, when, alas! it is the sin of the soul, the unruly lusts and affections, that are the causes of all rebellions in us; and if the body doth rebel, as often it doth come to pass since the fall, this proceeds from the corruption of the soul yielding to the body aid to serve the lusts; and God hath appointed a religious abstinence as a means to tame such lusts and weaken them, which it were to be wished were used oftener than it is.

Quest. But it will be said, Are the bodies of Christians base, for whom Christ shed his most precious blood?

Ans. I answer, While we live here, we are in no better condition than others, as concerning our bodies. Hezekiah is sick; Lazarus hath his sores; David and Job troubled with loathsome diseases; and thus it is fitting it should fare with us.

For, first, Christ laid us this example. He took our base, ragged nature on him. He hungered and thirsted, was pained, and death had a little power over him. And, shall we desire a better estate than our master, our head, had? or do we ever think to partake with him in happiness, that will not partake with him in his mean estate? The decree of God is, that to dust we must, as all the rest of our fellow-saints and servants shall.

Secondly, Hereby God doth exercise our faith and hope; causing us to look and expect a better resurrection; and by this means are our desires edged to a better life, for else would we set up our rest here, and make this our paradise.

Thirdly, As yet there is sin in us; from the danger whereof, though we be delivered, yet there is a corruption that remaineth behind in us; and by this he will teach us the contagion of sin, and teach us to see how the devil hath deceived us, by the effects thereof bringing pain, torment, and loathsomeness.

Fourthly, It shews God's wisdom in vanquishing sin by death, which is the child of sin; for by it shall we be purged from sin, from corruption both of body and mind, and thus is our base estate made a way to our excellent estate hereafter.

We must therefore moderate our affections to the best things of this life. Health is changeable, and will not continue. Beauty is a flower of a stalk. The flower quickly fades away and perisheth. The stalk that is more base continues longest. Flesh is grass, either cut down by violent death; or if by age, the longer it lives the baser it is, and increases continually therein till death, whenas it is most base.

It is therefore foolish for any to swell because of beauty or strength, which at the best are but curious* excellencies of a base body; and far more sottish are they that think to resist old age and God's decree, by trimming up and painting a withered stock. This is not the way to conquer vileness. But if we will be rid thereof, labour for the meat that perisheth not, John 6:27 But that which maketh us endure to everlasting life is, with Mary, to choose the 'better part, that shall not be taken away.' 'Meat for the belly, and the belly for meat: but God shall destroy both the one and the other,' 1 Cor. 6:13.

And let this be as a cooler, to quench the base wildfire of love; and consider what is it we so affect.† It is but beautiful dust, a painted sepulchre, a body that after death will be vileness itself, that while it

breathes it is full of rottenness, the matter of worms, supported it may be by a carrion soul, that whether it willeth or nilleth^z must leave it and go into a far worse place.

And contrarily, in the last place, it should teach us to be at a point,§ cheerfully to honour God by sacrificing ourselves to him when he calls for us. Count it no shame with David to be vile in the eyes of men for God's cause. If the worst could be imagined, which cannot be, we had as good perish with usage as with rust. But this is the only way to be glorious, to avoid vileness, even to sacrifice our bodies and all in a good cause. What though the world esteem vilely of us, as good for nothing but the shambles, Rom. 8:36; shall we fear them? No. Fear him that can destroy both body and soul. It is better to go to heaven without a limb, than to go to hell with a sound healthful body. Therefore when temptations of the world do begin to provoke thee, say to thy flesh with Bernard, Stay thy time; the time is not yet to be happy (cc).

And therefore, to conclude, our soul is but a stranger here; we must entertain it well into this house of our body. It is but a guest, use it not basely. It is no ill guest. It gives us sight, taste, speech, motion. When it goes away, our body is but a dumb, dull, base lump of earth. Nay, when it is gone, whilst the body is in the ground, the soul having a most vehement and earnest desire to be knit to it again, puts God continually in mind of raising it up at the last day of the general resurrection, and of glorifying it in a holy, eternal, and happy estate.

2. Secondly, Out of the words we may observe, that these vile bodies of ours shall be changed. This we receive as an article of our faith; and yet were it believed truly as it ought, it would work a strange alteration in the minds and manners of men, contrary to that they are now; and howsoever it is not embraced, yet it remains a grounded truth, that these bodies of ours, sown in corruption, shall rise incorruptible, 1 Cor. 1:15. It was foretold in way of consequence in paradise; for the head of the serpent could not be broken but by

conquering death, which is the last enemy. It was figured out unto us in Aaron's dead sere rod that budded, and Jonah's deliverance out of the belly of the fish, where he had been three days and three nights. It was believed of all the fathers, Heb. 12:1, seq. And for security before the flood Enoch, and after the flood Elias, were taken up in their bodies.

And besides, it is not contrary to reason. I do not say that reason can reach unto it. For Christ he is alive still. The dust whereof we are made, and whither we go is preserved. It is not annihilated. And why cannot Christ raise a body out of the dust, as at the first make it out of dust. Why should he not be as able to quicken dust now as at the first? and especially, seeing the soul is reserved in heaven to this end, till the day of his second coming.

Nay, it is not contrary to the course of nature. We see every year summer comes out of winter, day out of night, youth out of infancy, man's age out of youth. And the apostle in the Corinthians, 'Thou fool, the corn is not quickened except it die,' 1 Cor. 15:36. Nay, we see what strange changes are daily wrought by art; and shall we think God's almighty power cannot work far more strange effects?

Use. The use therefore is to instruct us if we believe that Christ shall change these vile bodies, then sure the same bodies shall rise that died; for change is of qualities, it abolisheth not substances. And therefore Job's confidence herein is remarkable, Job 19:26, 'Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold,' speaking of Christ; so is it, 1 Cor. 15:53, 'This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality,' and the ancient creeds had, *credo resurrectionem carnis hujus*.

Secondly, It is very unequal that one body should honour or defile itself, and another body should be honoured or damned. It is comfortable therefore to us that love our bodies and honour them, that they shall rise again and we shall enjoy them for ever.

Thirdly, Christ our surety he raised the same body that was crucified: and therefore the same bodies here that fulfil the measure of the sufferings of Christ here, shall partake of his fulness in glory.

Use 2. A second use is for comfort. Is this a life of changes? Let it not daunt us, but know they are all to end in glory, and they all tend to bring us thither. We ever change for the better, and the last change of all is the best of all. And therefore let us endure these changes with a light heart.

Use 3. In the third place, Who is the author of this change in us? The text saith that 'Christ shall change us.' John 6:39 and 40, 'I will raise them up at the last day,' saith Christ, of those that know him and believe on him. He is furthermore our head. Now we know the body must be conformable to the head. If it be crowned the body is crowned; and therefore, Rom. 8:11, the apostle saith, that if the Spirit dwell in us that did dwell in him, the Spirit that raised him up will raise us up also.

Thirdly, Christ is a whole Saviour. He therefore will raise up our bodies as well [as] our souls; for he is the Saviour of both. He hath delivered both from hell; he will raise up both to heaven.

Fourthly, He is the second Adam. As we did bear the image of the first Adam in corruption, so must we bear the image of the second Adam in glory.

Fifthly, He is the seed of the woman, that must break the serpent's head; and therefore he must work this change.

Sixthly, Christ changed his own body, being burdened with all our sins; and therefore, as an exemplary cause, shall much more raise us up. For sin being once overcome, which is the sting of death, what can keep us in the grave?

Use 1. Let this strengthen our faith in the consideration that we have such a strong Saviour, that nothing shall be able to separate us

from his love, nor to take us out of his hand.

Use 2. Secondly, Make it a ground how to direct us how to honour our bodies; not making them instruments of sin against him, but so to use them, that we may with comfort and joy expect and desire his coming to change these vile bodies.

Use 3. Thirdly, Let us labour to assure ourselves of our parts in this change, in this resurrection. This we shall know if we find Christ's Spirit in us. The same Spirit that raised up him, if it be in us, will raise us up also, Rom. 8:11. For the first resurrection is an argument of the second; and he that finds his understanding enlightened, his will pliable, his affections set upon right objects, will easily believe the second resurrection of his body. Secondly, If we hope for this change, and so hope that we are stirred up thereby to fit ourselves for it, to cleanse ourselves. Thirdly, If we grow in grace, 2 Pet. 3:18, it is a sign that we have an entrance into Christ's kingdom; for God doth ever honour growth, with assurance of a blessed estate.

Use 4. Fourthly, This should comfort us in time of death, considering we lose nothing but baseness, and our bodies are but sown in the earth; and this depositum which God committeth to the fire, air, earth, and the water, they must render up again pure and changed by Christ. And, therefore, it was a foolish conceit of the heathen to burn the martyrs' bodies, and to cast their ashes into the water, thereby to put them out of hope of their resurrection, not knowing God is as able to raise them out of fire and water as out of earth.

Use 5. Fifthly, This ought to administer comfort to us at the death and departure of our friends out of this life, knowing that they are not lost; that the earth is but a house and a hiding-place for them to sleep in; and that at length God will not forget to raise them up with the residue of his saints. He will change them, and make them like his glorious body; and this was the use made by the apostle, 1 Thes. 4:18.

Use 6. And lastly, Pray to God to teach us to number our days, so as we may apply our hearts to wisdom, Deut. 32:29.* But when is the time of this blessed change? It is not laid down, only it is implied by the word 'shall,' that the time is to come. But out of all question it is meant at the last day, and not before.

First, Because all are to be gathered together, even those that were buried four thousand years ago, must stay till the number be fulfilled; and it will make for God's glory that we should all meet together to attend on him, with multitudes of angels, so as they cannot be perfected without or before us, and we shall not prevent those that are asleep, 1 Thes. 4:15.

Secondly, It is for the comfort of Christians that are weak, that the martyrs and constant professors of Christ should be pledges of their rising, who continually cry, 'How long, Lord?' Rev. 6:9.

Thirdly, God wills that things should now be carried as in a cloud, and that the last day should be a day of revelation; which could not be, if before there should be this change.

For use. This must teach us to desire that day, and pray for the hastening thereof; till when, the souls in heaven are not perfectly happy. For all must be brought in before they can be made perfect. And therefore they desire and hope for, and pray for, to be united to those bodies again, that they lived withal, and so dearly loved.

But who are these that shall be thus changed? The text saith, 'our bodies;' that is, our bodies that have had 'our conversation in heaven.' And, therefore, those that have had no part in the first resurrection, they shall have no part in the second. The baker and butler of Pharaoh all shall arise and be lifted out of prison, but some to the resurrection of life, and others to the resurrection of condemnation. But to proceed.

That we may be fashioned like unto his glorious body

So that Christ shall be the exemplary cause, as well as the efficient cause of our resurrection. For he is our head and our husband; and it is reason we should be suitable to him, and be ruled by him. He came not to make himself like us, but us like him. He first must be a king, blessed and anointed, and a Son. The head makes us like to him, kings, blessed and glorious. Enoch and Elias, though before his real incarnation, yet they ascended by virtue of his resurrection, and so shall we. They are glorious like to him; so shall we in his good time and pleasure.

Quest. But how?

Ans. I answer, In these particulars:

First, As he is immortal, never to die again, so shall we. We shall be freed from all sin; and so, consequently, from all mortality.

Secondly, We shall be incorruptible. We shall have no corruption within us or without us, as it is, 1 Cor. 15:53. We shall be embalmed with the Spirit, that shall cause us to remain for ever incorruptible.

Thirdly, We shall be unchangeable; always the same, without sickness of body, or indisposedness of mind.

Then, in the fourth place, we shall be in perfect strength. Here we contract to ourselves weakness by every little thing, as alteration of air, study, and the like; there the body shall be enabled to every thing. But here we are weak, unfit, and soon weary of any duty, soon tired in prayer, weary in hearing, so as even Moses his arms must be supported, Exod. 17:12.

Fifthly, We shall have beauty and comeliness, the most lovely complexion and proportion of parts. There shall be no dregs in our body: all shall be spent by death; far better than after physic, which notwithstanding brings the body into a quiet repose. All wants shall be supplied. What is misplaced shall be reduced into right order.

And therefore, what though we lose limbs for Christ's sake, he will not be indebted to us; none shall go thither maimed.

Obj. But some will say, Christ himself retained wounds after his resurrection, and therefore much more shall we be imperfect.

Ans. I answer, This was a voluntary dispensation. He suffered them to appear for the faith of Thomas, not of necessity.

Sixthly, These bodies of ours shall be spiritual, as it is 1 Cor. 15:53, seq. A natural body is upheld by natural means, as meat, drink, physic, but then shall there be no need of such things. Christ shall be all in all to us. And again, our body shall obey the spirit. Now the body keeps the spirit in slavery, but then shall it readily yield to every motion of the spirit. The ubiquitaries* when they speak of the spirituality of Christ's body, they would have it in all places. But they may as well conclude, because we shall have spiritual bodies, therefore our bodies also shall be in all places like to Christ's body. The ground of the glory of these bodies shall be the beatifical vision, and our union with Christ. If our beholding him here in his ordinances be of such a power as to transform us from glory to glory, 2 Cor. 3:18, what a change shall be wrought in us when we shall see him as he is! And if his first coming had that power to make all things new, 2 Cor. 5:17, much more when he cometh the second time in glory shall he make all things new and glorious.

Use 1. This therefore, in the first place, should encourage us in all causes of dismay and trouble, rather than we will offend God to lose our bodies, knowing that we give them to God, and shall receive them again with advantage.

Use 2. Secondly, Labour we to make our bodies instruments of his honour, that honours us; and let us honour our bodies wherein are the seeds of immortality, and glory in so using them as that they be carried to the grave with honour.

Use 3. Let us also honour the bodies of the deceased saints of God, and the places of their sepulture, as cabinets wherein the precious dust of the holy saints are laid up in keeping.

Use 4. And let us not be like them without faith, that think the bodies are lost for ever that are cast into the grave; like children seeing the silver cast into the furnace, think it utterly cast away, till they see it come out again a pure vessel.

Use 5. And when we die, let us not trouble our minds with the discomfortable thoughts of worms, rottenness, darkness, and the like; but with the eye of faith let us look beyond these, on the haven whither we are going. This made Job, though covered all over with ulcers, to say with a cheerful heart, 'My Redeemer liveth, though after my skin worms consume this flesh,' Job 19:26.

Use 6. If we want limbs to our bodies, to comfort ourselves, the resurrection will restore all things.

Use 7. Furthermore, Let us serve here with our best endeavours. It is but a while, and it shall not be in vain. Is it not better thus to do and partake of this blessed change, than to spare this vile body, and pamper it by sacrificing all, or to employ all our time in the serving and pleasing others; and to that end not to care to prostitute ourselves to all manner of filthiness? What shall we get by these courses? but at the resurrection of the just, when we should lift up our heads because our redemption draweth nigh, then shall we be overcome with shame, grief, terror, and horror of conscience. But happy are we therefore, if in a good course we can so resign up ourselves, so as to be resolute with Esther, 'If I perish, I perish,' Esther 4:16; 'if I live, I live to Christ; if I die, I die to him,' Philip. 1:21. What I have committed to him he will keep. I am assured thereof; and therefore I will not offend him for any pleasure or profit whatsoever. These resolutions had the patriarchs and God's saints, and these made them die with comfort.

According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself

The word that is translated 'working,' may and doth signify power; and so it was translated heretofore, and is to be [so] meant* (dd). But the words being plain, we will come to some observations.

Doct. 1. And first of all observe, That Christ hath a power able to subdue all things to himself; and this he hath by virtue of his office of mediatorship, and this in respect of God to reconcile and appease him. Secondly, In respect of opposite powers to overcome all of them. Thirdly, In respect of the persons to be saved, that he might free them from all ill, and raise them to all happiness; and these things requires a power that must be above all created powers. For God could not be appeased but by an infinite price, the blood of one that is God. And we could not be defended from sin and hell—whose power is the greatest of all finite power—but by a power beyond it; and such a power as must regenerate and renew us, notwithstanding the opposite power of the devil, and our corruptions within us, which is a greater work than the work of our creation. And all this he hath done. 'He hath subdued him that had the power of death, the devil,' Heb. 2:14. He hath subdued diseases and winds with a word, and with a word he smote his enemies to the ground. He hath subdued all ill of the body and mind, forgiving sins, opening our hearts, subduing our corruptions, and death hath yielded to his power. 'O death, I will be thy death.'

Doct. 2. In the next place, as Christ hath this power, so he will use this power for the good of his saints; and this he will do because whatever Christ is, he is for the good of his church. He is powerful, merciful, and loving for his church's sake. And secondly, Because our bodies do require it. For it must be an infinite power that makes the body of dust. And therefore though Christ was the Son of God, declared from the beginning, yet it was said he was mightily declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead, Rom. 1:4. For from a privation to a habit[†] there can be no regression

by a natural course; and therefore for our bodies to return from dust, must be by a supernatural infinite power of one that is God. Let those that are enemies to Christ his members consider this. Against whom do ye strive? even against the Almighty, who in his humiliation was able with a word to strike his enemies to the ground; and now being in glory, how fearful and terrible should his power be to such? who should learn betimes to kiss the Son, before they perish in the midway, Ps. 2:12. And for his children, let them comfort themselves that are under the government of so powerful a majesty; for he will bruise all their enemies under them. Nay, they are already all conquered. And let them consider of all his promises, and apply them to his power. It is a powerful Saviour that said, 'Come to me, all you that are heavy laden, I will raise you up,' Mat. 11:28. It is he that is able to subdue all things to himself, that promises, 'My grace shall be sufficient for you,' 2 Cor. 12:9. He is a prophet, to instruct fully; a priest, to satisfy God's wrath to the utmost; a king, to subdue all their corruptions. Thirdly, Let this encourage us to set ourselves against our corruptions. Some there are that having a little strove with their lusts, and finding that they have not gotten any sensible ground against them, they as out of hope and heart sit down with this opinion, 'as good never a whit as not the better,'* and so yield up the bucklers. What a distrustful incredulous estate is this! Is not he God that hath promised? Is he not truth itself? Hath he said, and shall it not come to pass? Fear not these Anakims nor Canaanites. Depend on God in the use of the means, and let him alone with the performance of his promises. Fourthly, Despair of none, though never so weak, so long as they use the means; for Christ hath created all by his word, he will raise us up by his word, and will change us by his word; and by this word he is able to change others though never so obstinate. For so long as they are under the word and means, they are under the arms of an almighty power; and therefore, if any be in our power, or if we wish well to any, we should persuade them to prize the word and to use the means. In the next place, this is a ground of trial of our estates. Would we know whether we are of the number of those that shall be raised up hereafter and changed? Then examine whether we have

found this power changing us, and bringing us to grace here; for, Eph. 1:19, 20, the same power worketh in us to believe, that raised up Christ. Do we then find our understandings enlightened, our wills conformable to his will? Do we find the strongholds of sin in us rased, and new spirits, new thoughts, new desires in us? Oh, these are blessed evidences of Christ's almighty power in us, that will raise us up at the last day.

By this means also we may try our profession. Do we come by faith and religion, with pleasure and ease? Alas! this is no sign of any powerful strong work in us. It is easy to go to church to hear the word or read it, to receive the sacraments. Contrarily, if we find an inward change, that our hearts are so altered as we can overrule our members contrary to our lusts, and contrary to occasions, then 'stronger is he that ruleth in us than he that ruleth in the world,' 1 John 4:4. It is easy to resist a temptation where none is. The mighty power of Christ is seen, when, being environed with temptations, we are enabled to resist. I pray, saith Christ, that thou should[st] keep them from evil in the world, and not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, John 17:15. If we be under crosses, if this Spirit and power of Christ be in us, it will enable us to bear all patiently, it will keep us from murmuring and fretting. It will also convince us of our natural estate, so as we shall see evident necessity of God's almighty power to change us. This made the apostle Paul and the jailor to look about them for help. 'Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?' And thus it will make us never to give God rest, nor Christ respite, till that power that shall raise up our bodies do raise up also our souls, and he shine in us by his Spirit that did bring light out of darkness, and fashion us as in his wisdom shall be most meet.

In the next place, the consideration of God's almighty power should teach us not to be dejected or cast down at the reports of the afflicted state of the church abroad. It should bring us rather to God, to rely upon his goodness and power, for God is ever God almighty, and the same merciful God that ever he was; and therefore, we should pray for the church the more instantly, that God would give

them beauty instead of ashes. We should urge him with his promise of building up and defending of his church, and destroying of antichrist; and let us make the resurrection of the body a ground to strengthen us in the belief thereof, as the return of the children of Israel from Babylon was sealed by the resurrection of the dry bones, Ezek. 37:1, seq.; as also the apostle, from the resurrection of the dead, gathereth that God by that power hath and will deliver him, 2 Cor. 1:9, 10.

Furthermore, when we are oppressed with any extremity, though never so great, by continual meditation of his promises, we should strengthen ourselves, and apply them to our present estate and condition, knowing that he that raised us out of dust will not suffer us to be buried in misery, but will with the trial give us a gracious issue at the last, by raising up our bodies at the last day by his almighty power, which made also the patriarch Abraham to hope above hope. What though our helps be few? It is no matter what the instrument is, so as Christ is the chief worker.

In the next place, This should encourage us to stand out stedfast in a good cause for the truth. Do not think with ourselves, Alas! I am but one, and a weak, silly man: what can I do against a multitude? Let not such thoughts discourage thee. Think of Luther, a poor monk, who alone set himself against the whole world, and wrought that effect that we have all cause at this day to honour the memory of him. It is not thou, but God in thee, that is able to confound all thine enemies; and therefore, with Moses, behold him that is invisible.

Yet further, This should be observed by a Christian, as a ground of his perseverance to the end; for when we know we are Christians, what can bereave us of our blessings? what can make our faith fail? It is God's power that will keep us to salvation, and he that believeth shall have life, and shall not come into condemnation, John 6:39, 40, 44, 47, and many other places; and Christ, by his almighty power, sways all our life to our building up to salvation; and

therefore in contraries we should believe contraries, that death will work life, misery happiness, corruption incorruption, and this vileness glory; for it is God's order to work by contraries, that his power might the more appear.

And at the hour of death, then behold him that is thus able and all-sufficient; that shall presently glorify our soul, and at length will raise up our body also, and unite it to our soul, to partake with it in glory and happiness; that will then quit us of all sin, corruption, death, change. All our enemies shall be trodden under our foot, and all this by his almighty power, whereby he is able to do far above that we are able to think; and therefore let us, with a holy admiration thereof, say with the apostle, Eph. 3:20, 21, 'To him be glory for evermore. Amen.'

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