

NAPHTHALI;
OR,
HOLY WRESTLING.

BEING THE
LATTER OF TWO SERMONS

Delivered FEB. 9, 1812,

AT
PROVIDENCE CHAPEL, GRAY'S-INN-LANE,

BY THE LATE

Rev. WILLIAM HUNTINGTON, S.S.

TAKEN IN SHORT HAND.

And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.

GEN. xxx. 8.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

EPHES. vi. 12.

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NAPHTHALI;

OR,

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LUKE xiii. 24.

“~~Strive~~ to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say ~~unto you~~, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”

I SHEWED you in the morning that there was a gate or door into the sheepfold, according to our Lord's words, “I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture,” John x. 9. And that there was a gate into the household of faith, and that such who have entered in by this gate are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, Ephes. ii. 19. That there is a gate into the thousand years reign; “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years,” Rev. xx. 6. And that there is another

gate into heaven, or ultimate glory; "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." And I shewed you of those gates, that we must pass through them in this life; "Go through, go through the gates," says the prophet Isaiah, "cast up the high-way, gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people:" and if you do not enter these gates in time, you cannot enter the gates of heaven at the end of time. "Open ye the gates," says the prophet, "that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in," Isaiah xxvi. 2.

The first gate is the gate of life, and this I shewed you from our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and you are not to marvel, nor wonder at this, for his errand into this world was to give everlasting life: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live;" which I further shewed from the vision of dry bones, which represents the elect of God, before the work of regeneration hath passed upon them. I took notice also of the quickening, and strengthening power and influence of the Holy Ghost, who through Christ is the fountain of all natural, spiritual, and eternal

life; and of the reason assigned by our Lord, "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19; and to pass through this gate is called a passing from death unto life.

The next gate is the gate of justification, or our coming into a justified state, which is to pardon, and to acquit, a guilty sinner, from the guilt and punishment of his sin, by Jesus Christ. First, it is said to be by his grace, as the Apostle tells the Romans; "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ:" and the same he tells Titus, "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Secondly, it is said to be by faith; "We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law," Gal. ii. 16; and from this cometh our peace, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God:" and, as I shewed you, it is all through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is likewise in another place said to be by his blood; "Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him," Rom. v. 9: and through this gate you must pass.

The next gate I shewed you was that of truth. Our Lord says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," John xiv. 6; and he told his followers, that they should know the truth,

and the truth should make them free, John viii. 32. They should know him to be the truth of all the types and ceremonies under the law, that they should be freed from the carnal and soul-binding commandments of men, freed from the wrath of God, the curses of the law, from the accusations of conscience and satan, and freed from the fear of death; that they should understand the true doctrines of the gospel from errors, heresies, and lies; for, "When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth:" and thus I shewed you, that the gate is only to be opened to the righteous nation, that keepeth the truth, that they may enter in, Isaiah xxvi. 2.

And now I intend to enter further into my text, to shew you what our Lord means when he saith, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate:" and as I soared too high for some of my hearers in the morning, I will now come down to your experience, and shew you once for all, as it will be for time and eternity, how to strive to enter in at the strait gate. In the next place, I will take notice of this part of my text, "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" and then point out what it is that hinders them. And,

First. You are not to understand, when our Lord says, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," that he means a gate straight before you,

as if it was at the end of a parallel line ; no, the meaning of it is, the great difficulties that will attend sinners if ever they enter in at this gate ; and the poor conscious sinner, believing the safety of them that have entered in, he is labouring hard in hopes that he may gain admittance. There are thousands that labour hard, but never enter in at this strait gate ; and hence it is, because they follow them that know not the way. One tells them the way is by obedience to the moral law, and then all shall be well ; another tells them it is by their obedience to the gospel, that is, obedience to the letter of the word, and that will do ; and others tell us that they were drawn by love, without any chastisements, without scourgings, without any wounds, without a daily cross, without multiplied afflictions, and without the path of tribulation : but remember, Christ says, “ Enter ye in at the strait gate ; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life,” Matt. vii. 13, 14.

At this gate we always find there is a pulling two different ways, and it is this that brings us into great straits. At this gate we are like David, after he had sent and numbered the children of Israel, when God by the Prophet Gad sent a message to him, proposing three common judgments for his folly ; “ I offer thee three things ; choose thee one of them, that I

may do it unto thee. Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies while they pursue thee? or that there be three days pestilence in thy land?" Says the Psalmist, "I am in a great strait." To flee before them that pursue is dreadful, for there is not half so much compassion in men, one towards the other, as there is in devils; no, there is not, for you often hear of hundreds of men quarrelling, and fighting, and cursing each other, but you never heard of two devils disagreeing; and what Milton says of them is a scandal to men;

O shame to men! devil with devil damn'd,
 Firm concord holds, men only disagree
 Of creatures rational, though under hope
 Of heav'nly grace: and God proclaiming peace,
 Yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife
 Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,
 Wasting the earth, each other to destroy:
 As if (which might induce us to accord)
 Man had not hellish foes enow besides,
 That day and night for his destruction wait.

Paradise Lost. Book II. line 496.

And therefore, says David, No, by no means let me fall into the hands of man, for we shall have no pity from that quarter. In the next place famine is dreadful, and so is a pestilence destroying from one end of the country to the other: "And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait; let us fall now into the hands of

the Lord, for his mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man. So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel," and in three days there died seventy thousand of David's subjects: and then the destroying angel appeared over Jerusalem with a drawn sword, until the Prophet by an impulse from heaven went to David, and told him to build an altar of sacrifice; he did so, and the plague was stayed. Now by this you see he was in a great strait, and so are poor, sensible sinners, when they come to this gate: they find that salvation is to be had in Christ Jêsus, and in no other object.

In the first place they feel their need of him, and yet they have no personal knowledge of him, nor saving acquaintance with him; they know that the worship of God in a broken law, is not acceptable. If they could see themselves in the cleft of the rock, Christ Jesus, and obtain a pardon from him, then they would be satisfied; but they have a thousand perplexing thoughts, an accusing conscience, and an accusing devil; there is a broken law in the way between them and him, there is a multitude of transgressions, there is much hardness and impenitency of heart, and carnal enmity in the mind; there is a rising in rebellion against God, insomuch that there is a great trembling felt at his sword and rebukes, and it is these difficulties that make the strait at this gate.

In the next place by strait, you are to understand a pulling two different ways, the one against the other; and this you see in Paul, he says, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you." And just so it is at this gate, our corrupt affections, carnal relations, a form of godliness, and the religion of our forefathers, these all cling to us, and these will not let us enter in: on the other hand, we have a wounded spirit, that brings no comfort to the mind, nor assurance to the heart; the anger of God against sin, producing slavish fear; the dread of death, the dread of the judgment day, and the dread of damnation, all these things pulling the other way; so that we are in a strait betwixt two, unless the work is so sharp and severe as it was with Paul, and we are thereby enabled to come to a point at once. Paul tells us he thought much of his being a Pharisee, of his reputation also for being a zealous advocate for God according to the traditions of his forefathers, and concerning his zeal in persecuting the church of Christ, and his animating others to the same work; but as soon as he was plucked as a brand from the burning, then admire his zeal, he conferred not with flesh and blood, neither had his high character among scribes and pharisees any weight with him. No, but, says

he, " I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ : " and thus every one will more or less find, that there is a pulling two different ways, and which will bring them to great straits at this gate.

Another strait you will find is trouble. You read in Daniel, that the walls of Jerusalem and the temple were to be built in troublesome times, and that they should be troubled and straitened in the work ; and so it is with us, when God takes us in hand, we are discontented with a portion in this life, and yet we are not sure of a portion in the next ; we see vanity and vexation of soul inscribed upon all things under the sun ; we have made proof that all the pleasures of the children of men are vanity, and we have said at last, it is madness. We evidently see that the way of sin is the way of destruction, we find misery and a frowning providence, and by reason of sin we feel the anger of an offended God ; and we believe that he hath prepared a furnace of everlasting fire for all the ungodly, and this drives us to our wit's end ; yet at the same time when we apprehend we can lay hold of grace, we find we are sadly nonplussed. We are informed by scripture, that nothing can be done without faith, " Without faith it is impossible to please God ; " we know repentance is right in his sight, we know that godly sorrow and an humble mind is well pleasing to him, but no humility, no

godly sorrow can we produce. Therefore being distressed and troubled in our souls, by the wounding we receive from the sword of his Spirit, we run from place to place in order to find out some one who is skilful in healing these wounds; and no sooner are our wounds laid open, but the devil directly sends tag, rag, and bobtail, to ease our troubled consciences, and every one of these, physicians of no value. "They bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace: and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him." And thus, says the Lord, they heal the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. They are the worst enemies the children of God have, and the devil's best friends; and every faithful minister, that endeavours to rip up the wounds that these enemies have healed, they will for this good work prepare war against him. Mind what the Lord says of such, "They bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him;" that is, if they do not preach the same doctrine as these false prophets do; and this is the way they go on; and I cannot shew you any thing clearer than what is recorded of them in the story of Ahab.

Jehoshaphat, though a good man, goes down to Samaria, to pay Ahab a visit: now it is most

clear, Jehoshaphat had no business there, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? for Ahab had sold himself to work iniquity, the scripture informs us, and never was redeemed with money nor price, for as he lived so he died. But whilst Jehoshaphat was there, Ahab said to him, Wilt thou go up to Ramoth-Gilead with me to battle? Jehoshaphat answered Ahab, "I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses. And Jehoshaphat said unto the King of Israel, Enquire I pray thee at the word of the Lord to day." Then Ahab gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, Shall I go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? and they replied with one voice, Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. Among these four hundred prophets there was one that made him horns of iron, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, with these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou hast consumed them." But Jehoshaphat knowing all these to be prophets of the devil, said, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we might enquire of him?" Now Ahab knew that Micaiah was a prophet of God, as well as Jehoshaphat did that the others were prophets of the devil, but, says he, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

But he called an officer, and said to him,

“Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah.” And the messenger that went after Micaiah, said unto him, “Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me that will I speak.” When he came to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? and he answered him, “Go, and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.” Ahab knew that he had spoken ironically to him, therefore says, “How many times shall I adjure thee, that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?” Then said the prophet, “I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead! and one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.” And the Lord said, “Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also. Now therefore,” says Micaiah, “Behold, the Lord hath put a

lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee." As soon as he told him this, the king said, "Put this fellow in the prison," I wonder he did not call him, as the scribes and pharisees did my blessed Master, Beelzebub, "and feed him with the bread of affliction, and with the water of affliction, until I return in peace. And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. And," looking on the people, "he said, Harken, O people, every one of you." Then came near one of the false prophets, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way went the spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee? And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself."

And thus as Ahab had delighted himself in these false prophets, and had kept them at a great expence on purpose that they might prophecy smooth things, so he was deceived by them, and went up and fell at Ramoth-Gilead. And God to let us know that it was his work alone, put it into the mind of the Syrians to fight neither with the great nor the small, but with the king of Israel. And when the Syrians saw Jehoshaphat in his robes, they said, Surely it is the king of Israel, and the captains pursued him, until Jehoshaphat cried out, and God helped him. Then they perceived it was not the king

of Israel, therefore they gave up the chase, and turned back. "But a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness, wherefore he said to the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded:" and he stayed himself up in his chariot till the evening, and there died according to the predictions of Micaiah. And as they were washing his chariot, the dogs came and licked his blood, according to the prediction of Elijah which he spake, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." And how applicable is the word of the Lord by Isaiah to such; "I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake they hid not hear; but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not," Isai. lxvi. 4. And as I before observed, these are the worst enemies the children of God have, and the devil's best friends. They are called in our days builders up, they prophecy smooth things to their hearers; but God says of such, they may build up, but I will pull down; and because of these false prophets we find it a strait gate. But, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."

My next thing is to shew you where this gate must lead to: and I will not go out of life's

reach, if you can follow me in this one narrow path. The gate here respects Christ principally in the office of Mediator. If either of you were going to a nobleman's house, you would find that you would have something of a gate to pass through before you could enter that mansion; and thus it is in our text, when we get in at this gate, we go directly to God the Father by Christ. The apostle Paul says, a mediator is always a mediator of two: "Now," says he, "a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one," Gal. iii. 20. But he is a mediator between two parties; God is one and man the other: And this our dear Redeemer points out to us when he says, "I am the way to the Father. He that entereth not by" me, "the door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. No man can come to the Father but by me." Here you see he is the mediator, he is the door of hope, he is the gate of life. We are said to experience four things by virtue of this Mediator;

In the first place we are said to go sensibly into the enjoyment of God's grace. Mind what Paul says, speaking of Christ; "By whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Now take away Christ, and there is no access; take away the confidence or faith in him, and there is no access; for we, both Jews and Gentiles, have by

one spirit access to the Father, with confidence, by faith. And this should teach us, that in all our approaches to God, if we have a confession to carry, a petition to present; if we have a tribute of praise to offer, the apostle says, whatever we do, we are to do all in the name of Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father by him. And our dear Lord teacheth us the same doctrine; whatever you ask, says he, ask the Father in my name, and I will do it. But contrary to this we find the Arians, the Socinians, and the Deists, they run into his presence like the unthinking horse into battle, and thus rush upon the thick bosses of God's buckler, and defy all the mediation of the Mediator. And if you was to read all the petitions they ever made, you would find that they knew no more of God than they knew of themselves; they knew no more of the Saviour, they knew no more of his love; nor is there any more acquaintance, familiarity, or friendship between God and them, than there is between God and Satan. But, says Paul, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," by Jesus Christ our Lord; and this is going to the gate; here you find it is the gate into God's grace.

Mind in the second place, He is the way to the enjoyment of the light of God's countenance. His threatenings to some are in these words; "I will scatter them as with an east wind before the

enemy: I will shew them the back and not the face in the day of their calamity," Jer. xviii. 17. But what doth the Lord mean by this? you may say; he means, as they have forsaken me, so will I forsake them; I will not shew them any more of my mercy, but mine anger; and their own evil way which they have taken shall bring them to everlasting ruin and destruction. And in this sense it may be said of a sinner, that God hath turned his back upon him, because he himself is afar off from God by wicked works; but when by the application of the blood of Christ to a sinner's conscience, he is brought nigh unto God, then he is represented to be in the light of God's countenance. Mind the words of the Psalmist; "There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;" but if you take away the gate, you cannot come to the light of his countenance, for if ever God's light shines upon you, he will shine in the face of Jesus Christ.

"He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also," says the Saviour of sinners; for I am "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," it should be, the engraven image of his person. In another place the apostle Paul says, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus

Christ." But if you take away the face of Jesus Christ, how can you get at the Father? You may run about and enquire as Philip did, "Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." Ah Philip, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father? Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me," John xiv. 9. 11. Therefore you cannot enjoy the light of his countenance but by this gate.

In the third place it is a gate that leads into God's presence. The Psalmist says, "The upright shall dwell in thy presence;" but Christ says, You shall not come into the presence of the Father but by me. If this is the case, how can you get into the presence of God any other way, only by Jesus Christ? But all that thus do enter in at this gate, do at once come into God's grace, to the light of his countenance, and into his presence; and they will get so accustomed to it in this world, that in the day of judgment they will stand before him, in soul and body, with magnanimity and greatness of spirit. Observe what the scripture says on this; "The upright shall dwell in thy presence." Now that very presence in which they dwell will be the everlasting destruction of the wicked; for, as a dream when one awaketh is gone, so the wicked shall perish at the sight of God. And here the righteous shall stand when the wicked shall

perish; one crying to the rocks to fall on them, and the hills to cover them, and the other rejoicing before him; "The upright shall dwell in thy presence," but the wicked perish at the presence of God.

The fourth thing is, it leads into God's favor. "Blessed is the man," says Christ, "that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord." You may see this again in the first chapter of Luke; when the angel came to the virgin Mary, he brings his salutation from heaven, and declares the favor of God. "Fear not Mary," says he, "for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." The next salutation she had was from her cousin, saying, "Blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord;" and he will perform his word through the Messiah, and blessed are all they that believe.

In the next place according to scripture, we stand complete in the favor of God, for, "We

are," says Paul, "complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." And Peter in writing to them that had obtained like precious faith with himself, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, says, and take notice of his words; "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue;" thus he hath given us all things for life and godliness, for the Lord will bless the righteous, with favor will he compass him as with a shield. But you must be complete in Christ; take away this gate, and then how can you get into the favor of God? But believe in God, that your faith and hope may be in God.

But perhaps you will say, Pray why do you enforce our coming into the grace of God, the favor of God, and into the light of God's countenance? The reason why I enforce this is, because the whole gospel is preached to bring this about; hear what John says. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto

you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 1—3. Now I would ask you, what fellowship I could have with one of you if I came to the door of your house, and am not admitted into your presence? I am not suffered to enjoy the light of your countenance, but I am kept without; what would this be worth to me? Then what is all religion worth if it leaves us without the presence and fellowship of God?

Christ is, as he is called, the way to the Father, and if we embrace him we shall find favor with the Father; for, says he, "By me if any man enter, he shall go in and out, and find pasture." There is no fellowship with the Father but through the Son. It signifies, joint interest; this is the highest sense of the word, fellowship. Now among men the sense of the word, fellowship, is that which subsists between a man and his wife; hence she is called his companion, the wife of his covenant, and we are commanded not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. And these have joint interest; whatever she hath it belongs to him. In his covenant he tells her, With all my worldly goods I thee endow. Yes, say you, but we have marriage settlements! you may have, but the bible knows nothing of it, and I call it a Smithfield bargain, for where this is the case, the wife is not the object but the money; and we generally

find that whenever the union takes place with the cash, then the conjugal union is dissolved. And some men try hard to get a portion in this life, who despise the gift of God's grace. The Lord says of some, that they shall have their portion here, of this world's goods, who no doubt will have a bitter portion hereafter. But, God says, my people, these are my portion; "The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." And David takes hold of this, for, says he, "The Lord is my portion says my soul, and therefore will I trust in him." And the Lord not only tells us he is our portion, but he gives us faith also to claim it. I will, says he, be a God to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, that is my name for ever, and my memorial to all generations: I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee. In another place we find he says, "I will bring a third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God;" There is our claim. And in this fellowship between the Lord of hosts, and poor sinners, there is more union than there is in the fellowship of men; and the Lord hath not only left this upon record, but he speaks it to our conscience, and there proves our claim too.

All the fellowship among men falls short of this, for we may see men who are fellow-soldiers

and yet not of one heart with each other; we may see in noblemen's families fellow-servants, and in gaols fellow-prisoners, but you cannot say of them as John saith of the saints, "He dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him." This is higher than any fellowship that is found amongst men, for there is something of God lodged in us, and something of ours lodged in God. What is that lodged in us? It certainly is his most Holy Spirit, for he hath given unto us his Spirit, as an earnest of our inheritance; and we in return give unto him the greatest thing that we have, but what is that? Why, it is what the Lord himself asks for; "My son, give me thine heart;" and that is really the most we can give, the giving up our heart and affections unto God. And this David did, which made him cry out in that heavenly exstacy, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. And what did God say of David? Why he said, that he was a man after his own heart. But what made him so? Why the scripture informs us that when Samuel anointed David, the Spirit of God came upon him from that day forward; and by this you may see how this fellowship subsists: The Lord gives us his Spirit, by which we are enabled to give him our hearts.

Now the way in which we are to come to

God, is by Christ Jesus; and take notice, that the way of entering this gate is nothing else but by a single act of faith. Christ says, "I am the door, no man can come to the Father but by me. If any man enter by me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Therefore we are to enjoy the light of God's countenance, to enjoy his presence, his favour and his grace; these are things to be enjoyed, and all these things are called life; "In his favour is life, weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "Grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life;" you see therefore here what is to be found in his grace and favour, namely, life. In his grace is life. Paul saith, We have confidence through faith in the grace of Christ; and some of you can say the same, as I likewise can. Brethren, this is a good claim. Some of you can remember the time when you could not place any confidence in God; I can look back on that time when I could put no confidence in God; but did you at that time find life? But how is it with you now? Does your conscience reproach you now and then, and tell you that sin is the sting of death? The sting of death is gone from the believer. Oh! say, some of you, I feel that I want pardon and justification, to take away this sting.

Do you not find at such times as these that

there is an accuser, one that accuseth and condemneth within? Yes, say you, I do, and I know I am not got through the gate, because it is said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," and I am condemned; and it is God that justifies, and yet I do not find that I have had the sentence of justification passed on my soul. Well, admit this to be so, and yet you may depend upon it that there is life there, although you have not got rid of all condemnation. Come, I will ask you another question: Do not you with all your heart believe, that you shall sooner or later find grace and favour with God, through Jesus Christ? Yes, say you, sometimes I do really believe I shall. Well then, hear what Christ says, "He that believeth, hath everlasting life." And do you find the saints the objects of your sincere regard and love? If so, then Paul says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Do you clearly see these things? If you do I will dispatch this part of my text. But our Lord says in the last clause of my text, "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

There will be a twofold struggle at the gate, at the end of time; but then it will be too late, because all the doors and gates will be shut; and God's work of opening the hearts of sinners

will be completed. Mercy's door, which was entered by faith, will be shut; and Christ will no longer be the Mediator. No, no, he will not, because "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord Lord, open unto us," the answer he will make you is, "Depart from me, I know you not." No, it must not be deferred until the day of death, as many defer it; nor must it be left to the day of judgment, as many simple ones expect. We must enter in while it is called to-day, if we enter at all; for it will be too late if once the master is risen up, and shut to the door, and you stand without and knock: now these all come too late. Take notice further. It is said, "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" the reason is they have no faith, they are destitute of the Spirit of God, they have not got oil in their vessels. They are not made wise unto salvation, they are called foolish virgins, their lamp is gone out, (their profession withers, or their natural joys are gone) because guilt rises up, and shame and confusion covers them, and a dread of damnation sinks them down; and with these it is too late. Again,

There are many that seek to enter in whilst in this life, and yet are not able; the reason is because they were never enlightened to see the

glory, the beauty, the excellency, and the preciousness of the heavenly Saviour; nor were they ever drawn by the Spirit of love to experience the spirituality of things above. And if they are not enlightened to see the preciousness of the Saviour, nor quickened by the influence of the Holy Ghost to know the unutterable joy, the influence of love, the heavenly glory, the sweet enlargement and liberty of soul, the glory and beauty of Christ's righteousness, of the spiritual fulness of grace that there is in him—I say, if they are not influenced by these things, then there is nothing under the sun so charming to them as sin, or else there is something of earthly treasure to outshine in their view the glories of heaven. This you may discover in the young man in the gospel. This young man bid fair when he came with, “Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Why, says the Saviour, (who came to give life,) if you would have it by working you must go to the law. This young man had plenty of this world's goods, yet he was restless about something future. Christ says to him, What is written in the law? Honour thy father, and thy mother; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, &c. “All these,” says he, “have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?” Thou lackest one thing yet, “Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven;

and come, take up the cross and follow me;" and you shall enjoy God, Father, Son, and Spirit, as your eternal reward in heaven, and be the companion of angels and all the saints, where you shall bathe in pleasures to all eternity. But this would not do by any means for him, for you see the treasure of this world outshone the treasure of heaven; and he, not knowing the spirituality of the law, said to our Lord, "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?"

By this you may see a man that is spiritually blind, how the devil leads him by the nose. This man could tell Christ himself, that he loved his neighbour as himself, a thing which is not to be found in depraved nature; and I will be bold to say that there were thousands of his neighbours, within the compass of two or three miles, that were suffering with hunger and nakedness; and at the same time he had a sufficiency to maintain and provide for a whole village. If thou hast two coats, says the scripture, give one to him that hath none; but this man held all his possessions, and yet said he loved his neighbour as himself. The Lord struck at the root; and although he seemed so willing to do something to merit heaven, yet we find without the grace of God in the heart we can do nothing: "Without me ye can do nothing." When the young man found that heaven was to be obtained this

way, he went away sorrowful, seeing that he had great possessions. And it was his possessions that made his damnation sure, for "The love of money is the root of all evil;" and a covetous man is, in the sight of God, an idolater. Christ tells us, Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. That man's heart and affections, like a great many professors in our day, laid in his property and cash at home; the language of his heart was, I will keep it and hold it let the consequence be what it may, and yet the thoughts of everlasting burnings fills me with sorrow: it is said, "He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." "It is easier," says our Lord, "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven; for the love of money is the root of all evil:" and it will be impossible for you to enter this gate with the love of money, and the love of the world in your hearts. I know what it is to enter in at this gate, and to enjoy my God, as much as any man in this world; and I tell you that you cannot dwell in God and enjoy him, whilst you hoard up in your affections any thing of this world, for that will keep him out.

The scribes and pharisees they could not get in, but why? Because a man that gets in by Christ, he hath access to God by faith in

the Son of God. The scribes and pharisees went about to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God; but we are told by the Apostle, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all them that believe. But they spake to the grief of him who was wounded for our offences, they persecuted him without cause; they said, We are Abraham's children, we never were in bondage to any man; but Christ told them, "If ye die in your sins, where I am you shall never come." They came before him trusting in their own righteousness, having their hearts and affections set upon this world; and this it was that shut them out, as it doth many now, who trust in their own righteousness, and submit not to the righteousness of Christ. But what sort of a Saviour do you suppose that the Jews expect even to this day? Perhaps you may say, Why one to save them from sin and guilt, the tyranny of the devil, the wrath of God, and from everlasting destruction. No, not they, they have not a thought about it, they have carnalized all the scriptural predictions of the Messiah. For when they read Isaiah, who prophesied unto them, saying, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the

mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace. Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever, the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this:" what would you suppose is their judgment of all this? Why, they suppose the Messiah to be a temporal Prince, that he will ascend the throne as David did in his time, that he will be a noted warrior; thus they only think of a temporal Saviour. And the same it was with them in Christ's day. Therefore when they found the Saviour's appearance to be contrary to what they expected, they rejected him at once; but as soon as any Impostor arose and promised them deliverance from the Romish yoke, they joined themselves by thousands unto such, and in the end they perished.

The Apostles themselves seemed to have imbibed the same traditions of their fathers, for they asked him after his resurrection, If he would at this time restore the kingdom to Israel; but he gently rebuked them, and said, it was not for them to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. And at another time, they were all for making him a temporal king, but he withdrew himself from them; and on this account it was they eagerly ran after every impostor who promised them de-

liverance; but however they found what our Lord told them to be true, which was, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive," and ye shall perish. God bless the hints dropped: I add no more.