

SERMON VI.

DELIVERED PREVIOUS TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER.

BRETHREN and beloved, I shall close our past and present exercises with some remarks and observations on the 30th, 31st, and 32d verses of the eleventh chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians :

“FOR THIS CAUSE MANY ARE WEAK AND SICKLY AMONG YOU, AND MANY SLEEP. FOR IF WE WOULD JUDGE OURSELVES WE SHOULD NOT BE JUDGED. BUT WHEN WE ARE JUDGED, WE ARE CHASTENED OF THE LORD, THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE CONDEMNED WITH THE WORLD.”

IN the preceding verses our apostle gives the Corinthians a particular account of the institution, use, end, significancy and design of the Lord's Supper, as he had it from Christ himself; informing them of the continuance of it until the second coming of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ; and then proceeds to shew the evil of an unworthy

partaking of this ordinance; how such are guilty of, vilify and reproach the body and blood of Christ.

To the avoiding of which heinous sin and guilt, he exhorts them to self-examination, using this as an argument for it, that such as are unworthy communicants, bring guilt and condemnation on themselves, for want of spiritual judgment to discern the Lord's body; *i. e.* not distinguishing between the bread, which in this ordinance is the sign and symbol of it, and Christ's body, which is represented by it.

The punishment for which sin he expressed unto them by this figurative expression, "eating and drinking judgment, guilt, condemnation, or damnation" to themselves, for want of spiritual wisdom and perception to discern by faith the Lord's body.

The end and design of the Holy Ghost in this word, here rendered damnation, or judgment, being to rouse, alarm, and threaten the profaners of this sacred ordinance, giving them warning what they might expect, and how they would be

visited for this their sin, it is in and under this view and consideration allowed by some, that the word damnation here, includes and contains both temporal judgments and damnation, and they say that our translators finding the word ambiguous, like men of integrity and honesty, have put the word judgment in the margin.

And as though they would preserve both senses, to keep profane persons from the Lord's table, and to keep up in the minds of nominal professors a proper esteem of this sacred rite, we have them freely and fully, as it were, expressing their own thoughts in the words given as an exhortation before the celebration of the communion in the Established Church. ' So is the danger great if we receive ' the same unworthily : for then we are ' guilty of the body and blood of Christ ' our Saviour, we eat and drink our own ' damnation, not considering the Lord's ' body, we kindle God's wrath against us, ' we provoke him to plague us with divers ' diseases, and sundry kinds of death.' Nor is this unlike the apostle's method

with the Corinthians, who, in his tenth chapter of this Epistle, sets before them how the Lord had dealt with men of great characters, who enjoyed high privileges, who falling into sin, were severely punished, which he treats of by way of caution, that they might abstain from those sins, and avoid sharing the same punishments.

And the words which lie before me to explain, are not wholly foreign from this. For though they speak immediately and directly of temporal chastisements and punishments, yet I conceive it may justly and properly be inferred from them, as though some profane unregenerate Corinthians, might be visited by the Lord in an immediate and particular manner, with the sorest marks of his divine displeasure for this so heinous a sin.

To express myself more clearly and fully unto you, I view it thus: that as at this time the word was spoken by the apostles themselves, who had been eyewitnesses of Christ's Majesty, which word was also accompanied with signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of

the Holy Ghost; so some of the sorest tokens of God's wrath necessarily fell upon some professors, who lived in sin under the use of ordinances, and perverted the very use and design of them.

The apostolic office was an extraordinary office in the church of God, appointed for the first rearing and governing the New Testament church, and to deliver that faith which was once to be given to the saints, as Jude expresses it, and they are entitled "the foundation the church is built upon." See Ephes. ii. 20. Which office accordingly had many extraordinary gifts and privileges annexed to it. Such as an unlimited commission to preach the gospel to all nations; they had an infallibility in their preaching and writing, which was absolutely necessary, seeing they were to lay the foundation to all ages. 1 Cor. iii. 10. They had authority and jurisdiction committed to them by Christ to act as elders in any church where Providence should cast them.

As they were infallible as apostles of Christ, in doctrine, worship, order, and discipline; so they had extraordinary

gifts whereby they might revenge all disobedience. Hence Paul, speaking of some erroneous persons, declares a ministerial act he had dispensed towards them. He says concerning Hymeneus and Alexander, who had “erred from the faith, and made shipwreck of a good conscience, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.” All which was executed by an apostolical power he had of delivering the bodies of men into the hands of Satan, to be tortured and afflicted by him, in order to bring them to a sense of their sins, and as a chastisement and correction for them, and a token of God’s displeasure at them: as appears from what befel the incestuous Corinthian, of whom the apostle informs this church in the fifth chapter of this Epistle, that this affair having been related to him, though he was absent from them, he well knowing all things concerning it, as perfectly as though he was present, resolved what should be done in this case by himself. And that was to deliver the man to Satan, in the name, and with the power and

authority of Christ. When the members of this church were gathered together as a church, to be witnesses of this wonderful operation, to acknowledge the justice of God in it, and that they might fear and take warning by it. At which meeting the apostle would be present in spirit, and the extraordinary gift of the Spirit of God bestowed on him, would be visibly exercised upon this man before them all, as if he was in the midst of them, and this not by any power of his own, but “with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

As the miraculous actions performed by the apostles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out Satan, who possessed the bodies of men, were wrought to gain credit, and give confirmation to the truth of the gospel; so striking persons dead, as Peter did Ananias and Sapphira with his apostolic rod, inflicting punishments on the bodies of some notorious offenders and heretics,

even to a delivering them up to Satan, to buffet, torment, and terrify them, was to keep up a due esteem and proper respect for the divine institutions and commandments of the Lord and Saviour.

And truly when I consider the state and case of many of the members in this apostolic church at Corinth, and the very speedy corruption of this divine institution amongst them, I consider the words, if understood as used by the apostle, in the most awful manner, but suited to their peculiar case.

For Paul preached, raised, and planted this church, as is most probable, about the year 54, and continued with them "a year and six months preaching the words of God among them," (Acts xviii. 11.)

After which he sailed into Syria, from whence he proceeded to Ephesus, from thence to Cæsarea, and Jerusalem; and having saluted the members of the mother church there, he went down to Antioch in Syria, from whence he first set out, and having spent some time there, he departed and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia, and came again to

Ephesus, where he continued for two years. See Acts xix. 11.

After which term of time, an uproar was raised by Demetrius, a silver-smith, against the apostle, which was in the year of Christ 59, according to our Bible. And it is supposed this epistle was written after that uproar, which seems to be a truth as may appear from chap. xv. 32.

So that if we follow those who place Paul's first preaching at Corinth to be in the year of Christ 51, and place, as such do, the writing this epistle Anno Dom. 55, in the first year of Nero; or as others, place Paul's preaching at Corinth in the year 54, and his writing this epistle in the year 59, it is all one as to this, that this ordinance of the Lord's supper was very early corrupted by these Corinthians.

And here it may deserve an observation to remark the craft of Satan, who works upon the church of Christ, according to the temper, climate, and disposition of those amongst whom it is situated.

Corinth was the metropolis of Achaia, or Peloponnesus. It was situated be-

tween two great seas, the Ægean and Ionian. The city was about sixty furlongs, or seven miles and a half from the shore of it. It abounded in riches and luxury. It was in time so much enlarged, and became so famous, that it was little inferior to Rome itself. Julius Cæsar, moved with the commodious situation of the place, rebuilt it after it had been burnt, and it became a colony of the Romans. In this place Christ had a church, which was in the situation we have before described : many of the members of it had polluted the table of the Lord, to correct them for which, some were visited with pining sickness, consumptive weakness, and untimely death.

It may not be amiss, under our present consideration of the verses before us to consider them in order. Here is the chastisement, or punishment expressed in general and particular, which fell upon unworthy receivers, who as they eat judgment, or condemnation to themselves ; so they were visited with sickness and death. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

Which judgments would be forborn, and might be prevented, if they would but judge and examine themselves beforehand, they would not then be exposed to such judgments. Upon which the apostle gives this direction to the people of God, who though they may be afflicted, and are liable to afflictions, yet they should take heed not to misinterpret the Lord's end and design, but should look on their afflictions, not as punishments, but as chastisements, inflicted on them for this end, that they should not be condemned with the world.

I will begin with the 30th verse: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." *For this cause*, viz. their irreverent, unworthy participation of the Lord's supper, many of the members of this Corinthian church, on account of their profaneness, were visited with popular diseases and mortality which carried signs, marks, and evidences of God's displeasure towards the persons thus visited.

Some, it may be, were sickly, languish-

ing in consumptive cases, others were in very sickly frames, and some it may be had died suddenly and immaturally. Though suppose we conceive some uncommon sickness and mortality sent from the Lord amongst them, as peculiarly suited to their sin; it is by no means unlikely or improbable, which opinion I confess I am not averse from, but inclinable to. For hereby the majesty, honour and power of Christ would be most visibly displayed. And one cannot but conceive the sickness, mortality, and deaths which were amongst them, were so signal, as to be visibly noticed by those who were without. But how did the apostle know why they were thus visited, and that their deaths were the fruit and punishment of their unworthy receiving? It is possible and probable, it was the fruit and effect of the apostolic and prophetic Spirit he was endued with. Or, he speaks this, as says Diodati, 'by divine revelation.'

The apostle proceeds in the 31st verse, to inform them, and us, that if persons would examine and judge themselves

beforehand, they would not be exposed to such judgments. He had before, in the 28th verse, given a rule, which by attending to it, would prevent the sin of unworthy receiving, and he here again enforces it, as a means which would prevent their being visited by the Lord with diseases, sickness, and death, as signs of his displeasure with them as unworthy receivers. "If we would judge ourselves," examine, search, try and prove ourselves, before we eat and drink at the Lord's table, solemnly bewail, confess, and accuse, condemn ourselves and mourn before the Lord on account of what we are as fallen creatures, what we have been, and done, and are still liable to through "sin which dwelleth in us," we should not be judged.

If in matters relating to the worship of God, and as it respects the administration of this ordinance, and the receiving it, we regulated the whole according to the rule and standard of the divine word, we should not be judged by the Lord. He would not inflict those diseases, sicknesses, and death on receivers. It follows

from hence, that some of the Corinthian believers, because of their carelessness, fell under God's stroke, had weakness, sickness, and death sent amongst them, as a chastisement, a temporary judgment, by way of rebuke. What for? I reply, not merely for their receiving unworthily. A sin I am unwilling to charge upon them, unless it be in a very low manner and degree. But principally in their conniving at, holding fellowship with, and continuing in church-fellowship with such persons whose lives were truly shocking and infamous.

Their not separating from such, not cutting them off, and disinheriting them from all church-privileges, may be looked upon as their sin, and which by consequence was polluting, and a means of rendering the table of the Lord contemptible. The apostle in the 32nd verse, speaks by way of consolation to real saints in this church state. "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Informing them hereby, that God intending by this means to re-

duce them to their duty, and a proper reverence and estimation of this his sacred institution, chastised them as a father, agreeable to his everlasting kindness and goodness towards them, being ever mindful of his covenant, of every article in it, and promise of it; in which for his own glory and the real spiritual good of his chosen, he hath inserted this clause, "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: then will I visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes," (Psalm lxxxix. 30, 31, 32.) In the performance of which part of the covenant God's free grace, his holiness, truth, and justice shine forth in his providential dealings with his people. Which is a method and dispensation by which he instructs his people, and brings them to an amendment of their lives in an outward carriage and behaviour, by which they are saved from being condemned with the world, viz. worldly men and contemners of God, profaners of his word and insti-

tution, who are fore-ordained to eternal destruction.

I conclude, that the apostle seems to direct our thoughts thus: That some persons among these saints had sinned so grievously, and were visited so sorely by the Lord, as a punishment for their sins, that the spiritual part of the church were ready to interpret their afflictions as punishments also, proceeding from the vindictive justice and wrath of God; which he endeavours to guard and preserve them from, by styling the afflictions which befel them, chastisements, suggesting they were fruits of God's fatherly love and good will to them. "For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth: as many as I love (says Christ) I rebuke and chasten."

May the Lord bless what hath been delivered from the scripture before us, as far as agreeable to his truth, and as it may serve to be useful to us. Amen.

SERMON VII.

SONG OF SOLOMON, II. 10,—13.

MY BELOVED SPAKE, AND SAID UNTO ME, RISE UP, MY LOVE, MY FAIR ONE, AND COME AWAY. FOR LO, THE WINTER IS PAST, THE RAIN IS OVER AND GONE. THE FLOWERS APPEAR ON THE EARTH, THE TIME OF THE SINGING OF BIRDS IS COME, AND THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE IS HEARD IN OUR LAND.

THE FIG-TREE PUTTETH FORTH HER GREEN FIGS, AND THE VINES WITH THE TENDER GRAPE GIVE A GOOD SMELL. ARISE, MY LOVE, MY FAIR ONE, AND COME AWAY.

AT this season of the year, we are presented with a most glorious display of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. By the return of the sun, and by its benign influences upon our earth, we see nature emerging out of its barren situation in which it lay during the winter-season, and it is renewed and puts on a most delightful, and beautiful appearance. The *power* of God in it is very conspicuous, and it is ascribed unto him in the 104th Psalm, verse 30. “Thou renewest the face of the earth.” And the *wisdom* of God is displayed in the glories and beauties

which meet us in every part of the creation, which shines forth exceeding beautiful in the spring, which is a kind of new creation; or rather, a resurrection, inasmuch as those herbs and plants, and flowers, which were in appearance dead and buried during the winter, again revive, and yield their reviving sweets, and wholesome produce, and strengthening virtue unto us.

And we may well be led to admire the *goodness* of God herein, it being an infallible truth, "that the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." This most delightful change, which is now to be seen in the face of nature, is, under God, the effect of the gentle showers, the soft air, and the warm sun, all which contribute to clothe the fields with grass, the trees with buds and blossoms, the hedges with flowers, and to produce life and vivacity throughout creation. And it should serve to remind us of the most blessed effects, which divine grace produces in the souls of the Lord's people. The scripture, which I have chosen to be the subject of our present meditation,

contains a description of the spring, such as is inimitable. The Holy Ghost, in this divine treatise, which is styled "The Song of Songs," is pleased to consecrate a variety of images taken from nature, and makes use of them, and sanctifies them, to illustrate and set forth our Lord Jesus Christ, and his grace and love towards the church by them; and likewise to describe by them the graces of his beloved people also. The chapter from whence our text is taken, contains a sacred dialogue between Christ and the church. He begins with a description of his own beauty and excellency, and goes on to describe the beauty and excellency of his beloved spouse the church, and compares her to a lily, and calls her my love; which draws forth the heart of the bride, the Lamb's wife, and she breaks forth into the highest praises and commendations of her beloved. She extols him to the skies. And Christ vouchsafes to bring her "into the banqueting-house, and his banner over her is love." For there is nothing but love, everlasting, unceasing love, in the heart of Christ

towards his people. Christ having entertained his spouse with the blessings of his love, a solemn charge is given that no disturbance be made. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." Holy souls, when favoured with real communion with Jesus, are very watchful over themselves, lest by giving way to any carnal affections, their beloved Jesus should be offended. And then the church relates what Jesus her beloved said unto her. "The voice of my beloved! behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." The voice of Christ is truly reviving, charming, and ravishing unto the souls of his people. They account themselves truly blessed when they hear it in the word; and it is this which makes the word precious unto them. Many hear the word of Christ, but they do not hear Christ in the word speaking unto them. It is Christ's voice heard in the word that quickens souls and makes them alive unto God. Believers hear Christ's voice dis-

tinctly and plainly, and they admire and adore him for his marvellous grace and condescension herein. Behold, he cometh to meet his people, and to bless their souls with his loving-kindness, which is better than life itself. Leaping upon, and over all the mountains of distance and opposition, of sin and guilt, of barrenness and corruption. Skipping upon the hills, denoting his eagerness to relieve, comfort, and enjoy the company of his people. "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." The church here gives a particular account of what Christ said unto her. "My beloved spake." She calls him, "My Beloved." This is Christ's title, *Beloved*; yea, he is the well-beloved of his people. He is the

Father's beloved, the saint's beloved; and he is my beloved, saith the gracious soul. "And said unto me," distinctly and plainly, with an energy which cannot be described nor expressed, the effect of which has drawn my heart, and warmed my whole soul, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." And then the reason of his invitation and command is given; "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone." I shall, in attempting an explanation of our text, endeavour to explain, *first*, the literal and natural meaning of the passage. And, *secondly*, the mystical and spiritual meaning of it. And, *First*. Here is a most beautiful description given us in it of the beauties of the spring. The winter is past, cold frosts removed from the earth, and the rains which fall in winter seasons, which serve to make it more dark, uncomfortable, and disagreeable for travelling, are over and gone. The heavens shine clear and serene; the sun sheds his influences in a most bountiful manner; so that nature revives, and puts on her lively green. The showers of rain which

now fall, being for the refreshment and comfort of it. The meadows are clothed with grass ; all nature wears a smile, and the flowers appear on the earth ; the fields and hedges are adorned with them ; gardens in which they are, filled with their sweet perfume, invite the beholder to come and see the wonderful works of God. The material sun shining on them, they thereby open and expand themselves and the gentle air breathing on them, wafts their rich odour and perfume, to the refreshment and delight of the observer. And as it were to crown the whole, the birds sit on every hedge, and warble from every tree their melodious notes, in voices unknown to us, praise their Almighty Creator and bountiful Benefactor. And it is indeed a most delightful concert of music which the winged songsters warble forth. In it are a variety of sounds, each endeavouring to praise and perform its part best ; and as it were as the bass, the voice of the turtle is also heard. So that the whole creation appears as one grand temple consecrated to Deity. And as the spring

advances, more glory is discovered and manifested; every month brings forth and yields something more for the delight, use, benefit, and service of men. The fig-tree, at her proper time, putteth forth her green figs; the sun, by its influence upon it, moves and draws the sap which was congealed in the winter, up into the branches, and this puts itself forth in buds, leaves, blossoms and fruit, which is a sign that the winter is past, the spring is come, and summer is at hand; and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell, all increasing the beauty of nature, and a proof of the advance of spring and summer. So that we may well behold, admire, and adore God, displaying his munificence herein.

Thus much, then, for the opening and setting forth the literal meaning of our text. But our *second* consideration of the words in their mystical and spiritual meaning, presents us with a more glorious display of power, wisdom, and goodness, than can be seen in the visible structure of the universe, in the variety of creatures in it, and in the vast expence of Provi-

dence in providing for it. David, in devout transport, says to God, "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

None but an infinite and everlasting God could regulate the seasons of the year, crown it with his goodness, and cause the clouds to drop fatness, open his hand of bounty, and satisfy the desire of every living thing. But creation and preservation, though the effects and fruits of God's bounty are small, infinitely so, when compared with his gracious doings and dealings with his people in Christ. The words then, as they now lie before us, are to be treated as they respect their *mystical* meaning. And in them we have, first, our Lord Jesus calling upon, and addressing his church, in the most endearing manner. Secondly, inviting her to come forth out of her state of solitude, that he might enjoy her company. And, thirdly; his renewal of it, saying, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." "My beloved spake,

and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." These are the words of Christ which he spake, and which the spouse heard; and they are words of marvellous grace! The church calls Christ, "My beloved;" for he was formed in her heart, there he dwelt, and his love was uppermost in her thoughts. His beauties had ravished her heart, his love had melted her soul, his righteousness was her wedding-dress, and his blood her atonement, and the foundation of her hope. And what Christ had said unto her was sweet and ravishing. He had called unto her to awaken her attention, and to quicken her graces; and he had addressed her in a most endearing manner. "Rise up, my love, my fair one."

He would have her forsake all others, and cleave wholly and alone to him. He would have her forsake all carnal thoughts and pursue with vigour and spiritual ardour after divine, spiritual, and heavenly things. And he in a most endearing manner, calls her *my love*. For the whole heart of Christ is fixed upon his people. He loves them with a love which passeth

knowledge. He loved them so as to lay down his life for them. He loves them so as to set them as a seal upon his heart, and to engrave them upon the palms of his hands. He loves them so perfectly, that neither death nor life shall separate them from him. And they are his property, the purchase of his blood, the travail of his soul, the gift of his Father unto him. And they are his, as in a day of the Lord's power they make a free and full surrender of themselves up unto him, saying, "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

Christ not only calls his church, *My love*, but adds, *My fair one*. That God's jewels, the real sheep of Christ, and the lambs of his flock, are fair in his sight, is a truth which at times the Lord's people can hardly credit. When believers are looking into themselves when they are exercised with the sight, sense, and feeling of the body of sin and death, which they carry about with them, they are sometimes led to question their state, to doubt of their own personal interest in the Lord Redeemer, and to ask, 'If I

‘ am a child of God, how is it that it is ‘ thus, and thus with me?’ whereas the believer’s fairness is in Christ, and it is a matter of faith, and not the subject of sense. Every believer, weak, or strong, is one with Christ, and justified by God from all things. All his sins are washed away in the most precious blood of Christ. And he is clothed with the most glorious robe of Christ’s obedience, in which he shines most completely righteous before the throne of God. The Lord’s people are, in Christ, without fault before the throne. Their sins are pardoned, their persons are accepted, and they are free from all condemnation. And believers, in this case, should not attend unto what they are in themselves, but unto what they are in Christ. Nor should they suffer the testimony of sense to prevail over and above the testimony of faith.

Christ himself, speaking to his church, says, “Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.” It is in Christ alone that the believer is complete. Hence the spouse could say, “I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.” And it is

well when the dear people of God consider and remember, that as their fairness and completeness is in Christ, so God's testimony concerning them is in the word, which word always contains in it matter for joy and consolation to the people of the Most High. Though we (as indeed we ought to do) esteem one saint more than another; and it is a sign of real grace, when our esteem is increased in proportion, as, in our own views, they advance in holiness: yet the Lord's love to his beloved ones is equally the same.

He loves the weakest as well as the strongest—the bruised reeds, and smoking flax, are as dear and precious unto him as the strongest believers; for he loves his people in Christ, and views and beholds them in him, and what he is, that they are before him, beloved as he is, and blessed in him with all spiritual blessings; and he delighteth and rejoiceth over them in Christ to do them good, and will never remove his loving kindness from them. It is sometimes the cause why the faith of a child of God is weak and feeble, because he is looking

for something in himself, as a reason and motive why the Lord should love him ; whereas the sole cause why God loves his people is in himself alone.—“I have loved thee, says the Lord, with an everlasting love.” And this is the fountain from whence all spiritual blessings proceed. From his everlasting love towards his church, he gave his only begotten Son, to live and die for the salvation of his people, and out of the same boundless love he gives the eternal Spirit, and pours him forth upon his people as a Spirit of grace and supplication, and God’s love and grace are the sole cause and motive why he is pleased to pour forth himself in an abundant manner, in a way of grace and consolation towards and upon his dear people.

Christ beholds his church fair—all fair—and his fair one, as he views her in his own righteousness, and cleansed from all her sins and filthiness in his own most precious blood, and adorned with the graces of his divine Spirit. And he having thus addressed her, calls upon her, and invites her to come forth out of

her solitude—"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." The reason for which is given: "For, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone."

This, in its mystical and spiritual meaning, may intend the following things: By the winter being past, may be meant, the wintry state of the Jewish church while under the ceremonial law, and which is now abolished, Christ being the end of it, as well as the end of the moral law also; for as it pointed out the Lord Jesus, and directed people to look to, and believe on him; so he having accomplished all that was typically represented concerning him in it, he has "blotted out this hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary unto us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

The wintry Jewish state of the church is past. And it may likewise have reference to the miserable state of nature in which God's people are, before they are born of God. For before regeneration takes place in their souls, their understandings are totally dark, the state

or kingdom they are in is called the power of darkness. No light from heaven to comfort them, no refreshing dews of grace fall upon them ; and as it respects their hearts, they are frozen, all flint, cold as marble, hard as the adamant, and have no expectation, but to partake of the blackness of darkness for ever. Yea, this is felt, experienced, and acknowledged by the soul, when awakened by the Holy Spirit, to be truly and really the condition of every one in his natural state. It is by regeneration God's people are delivered from this condition, and pass from death to life, and by it are manifested to be the sons of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. The winter is a season which is uncomfortable ; dark days and long nights, cold storms and much rain are naturally to be expected. So when souls are first awakened, upon perceiving what their state and case as sinners is, they often experience much darkness in themselves, want of comfort, and of the reviving and refreshing influences of Christ the Sun of righteousness. These words then of Christ hold

forth much consolation. "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone." God's converted people may be backsliders, but can never become unconverted. Once born again of the Spirit, and we are born for ever.

And though in experience it sometimes may seem, to a child of God, that he is worse than he was before conversion, yet this can never be the case. For before conversion he was wholly, and only carnal, but by regeneration he is made alive to God; is made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, and the Lord will "never forsake the work of his hands; his gifts and callings being without repentance." Before conversion he had in him nothing but sin, but now the Spirit of God dwells in his soul, who has wrought in his heart such a rooted abhorrence against all sin, as shall never be conquered, though it be opposed, but shall in the issue finally prevail. *The winter is past*, the state is changed, the heart renewed, the will subdued, the understanding savingly enlightened with the knowledge of God. So that such can say, We were once

darkness, but are now light in the Lord. And as the winter is past, so likewise *the rain is over and gone*. By which I should understand the storms of divine wrath, which will never burst, nor fall, nor overwhelm the believer; he being secured herefrom by the Lord Jesus Christ, who saves his people from the wrath to come.

Again; these words may have respect to the spiritual revival of the work of grace upon the hearts of God's people after spiritual decays. For as it is in nature, so it comes to pass at times with truly gracious souls; that as mists and fogs arising from the earth darken the horizon, and intercept the light of the sun from shining upon us; so the mists and vapours of corruption which arise in and from the hearts of believers, hinder them from enjoying those comfortable sensations of divine love, which they have in times past experienced. And as the winter is removed and dispelled by the return of the sun nearer to us; so it is by the return of Christ the sun of righteousness, that the souls of God's

people are warmed, enlightened, and quickened.

Blessed be God, the pleasing spring of the year is come, through the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and by the preaching of the everlasting gospel, by which a spirit of holy freedom is enjoyed with God, and by which we have access unto him with cheerful confidence. And salvation from the Lord to wretched dying men is proclaimed by the ambassadors of peace: "God was in Christ reconciling the world (i. e. the elect) unto himself:" We were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son. So that the wrath of God can never return to deluge and overflow the people of God, for "he rests in his love, and joys over his people with singing."

"The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." The rainbow in the heavens is a token of the covenant between God and the earth. "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." And the

rainbow of the everlasting covenant round about the throne, is a full testification that all the storms of God's wrath due to his people for sin, are over and gone. In consequence of it they are blessed with the light of life. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined, and doth shine into the hearts of his faithful people; to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." And the Sun of everlasting light and righteousness shining upon them, and the sacred Spirit breathing upon them; hence the souls of God's people become fruitful in bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. The flowers appear on the earth, in the church, the field which the Lord hath blessed; the flowers of faith, and hope, and love, appear. And, as in the spring-season, the fields and gardens are adorned with flowers, so, under the influences of Christ, and by his immediate presence in, and by his divine blessing upon, the word and ordinances of his appointment, multitudes of souls are converted, who are as ornamental in the

church as flowers in a garden, and who yield a precious odour unto God, being richly perfumed with the grace of Christ. "The time of the singing of birds is come;" this, in its mystical signification, I apprehend may be applied unto newly converted souls, who, being truly awakened and turned unto the Lord, begin to sing the Lord's song in his church below.

They rejoice in God, and yield unto him continual thanks and praise. When the church is blessed with a spring-tide of God's love, and the Spirit is poured out from on high, and this and the other person is born in her, then it is a time of singing indeed. The praises of God are warbled forth. Some in adoring thoughts, and devout transports, praise electing love and grace. Others, from the views they are favoured with of the Lamb that was slain, and who is now in the midst of the throne, are filled with love and gratitude to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins, in his own blood. Others, under discoveries of pardoning mercy, break forth, singing thus: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that

is within me, bless his holy name. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." When, through the effectual grace of the Spirit, the redeemed of the Lord return to God, in effectual calling, and come to Zion, it is with songs of praise. And there is a wonderful variety in the songs of praise, which the ransomed of the Lord have in their mouths ; each one of them thinks the grace of God to be marvellous indeed, and the methods of grace towards each of them to be full of miracles ; so that there is a holy strife and contention to outvie each other : each believing himself to be the greatest miracle of grace. And, indeed, every one of the Lord's people have some peculiar mercies to thank Jehovah for. And here they are all of one heart and one soul, all uniting in this, to ascribe the whole of their salvation to God and the Lamb, and to give the sole praise and glory of it to Father, Son, and Spirit. And I might here observe, what blessed songs

of praise are warbled forth by those birds of paradise every sabbath day. Though it does not fall under our observation, yet it is an infallible truth, that multitudes of souls are turned to the Lord by the preaching of Christ crucified, and from whom Christ receives a tribute of praise, every Lord's day. What high praises of God will be in the mouths of his people this day! Some, through faith in his blood, finding redemption in it, will cry out to his glory: "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." Indeed Christ's praise in his church on earth is glorious. But it does not reach and come up to the grand concert and hallelujah in Heaven, where all the saints, filled, perfectly filled, with the love of God, with the joys of the Holy Ghost, and looking stedfastly at, and upon the Lamb, as he shines in his meridian glory before the throne, cry, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Blessed be God! as sure as any of us are brought to sing the Lord's song here below, as sure as we praise Christ from the ground

of the heart, and seek, through grace, to make his praise glorious, so sure shall we be admitted to join the heavenly host of the redeemed which now surround the throne, to sing and love Jesus Jehovah, as angels and saints do. And who knows how soon ye who love Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, may quit your places here below, and cease joining with the church militant, to worship with the church triumphant! Blessed exchange! O glorious prospect! Transporting hope! What, shall I, a sinner saved by the Lord, be admitted without spot or wrinkle into the city of God, the temple above, to worship the Lord with holy, with perpetual worship? This is grace indeed, which will astonish and ravish the souls of the glorified for ever and ever. Under the shadow of Christ, the tree of life, the rock of ages, sheltered and secured by his promise and protection, how sweetly do the ransomed of the Lord sing! And it will not be long before the sweet singing of birds, the ransomed of the Lord, I say, before their universal concert of hallelujahs and

hosannas will be fully come ! “ The voice of the Turtle is heard in our land.” By the voice of the Turtle, in its mystical meaning, I should understand the holy and blessed Spirit, who was pleased to descend upon our all-glorious Immanuel, “ in a bodily shape like a dove,” (Luke iii. 22.) to consecrate him as the Christ of God. And it may be, the allusion in the text is to Noah’s dove, which being sent out by him, brought in its mouth an olive branch, or leaf, whereby Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. One can scarce read that history without considering how the Holy Ghost descended upon Christ like a dove, when he was baptized by John in Jordan. Jesus is the peacemaker ; he has made peace by the blood of his cross : and the Holy Ghost is the peace-bringer ; he comes with the olive branch of peace and pardon ; he blesses the preaching and publication of it by the gospel ; and he brings it home to the heart, by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. It is by his divine agency that the gospel becomes the power of God, in converting,

comforting, and establishing the Lord's people. He comes to comfort afflicted consciences, to revive broken hearts and contrite spirits, by assuring them, that God is reconciled by the death of his Son, that he is at perfect peace, in Christ, with all his people; that he will not be wroth with them, nor rebuke them. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." The Holy Spirit, in a most affectionate manner, delights to inform, instruct, and convince his dear people, that the winter-storm of God's wrath is past, and the floods of his vengeance dried up. And he likewise swiftly and speedily flies to their relief. What a blessing that the voice of this Turtle is heard in our land! And the voice of this Turtle is heard in the church. It is his blessed presence, and his most gracious influences and operations upon the hearts of poor sinners, which make them alive to God, and bring them near to Christ. All the real success

which attends the preaching of Christ's Gospel is owing to the eternal Spirit, who renders it effectual, makes it spirit and life, and by it conquers sinners, and comforts saints. What an unspeakable blessing is it to hear the voice of this Turtle, speaking peace and pardon to our hearts ! O that it may be our prayer, that the gospel preached here, and throughout our land, may be accompanied with the power of God, and that the Holy Ghost may be sent down from heaven, to make it effectual to all that believe ! Here let us admire the love of God ; he gave his only begotten Son to be a sacrifice for sin, and he gives his eternal Spirit to be a witness for Jesus, and to testify how highly acceptable the offering of Christ's body and soul upon the tree, has been to law and justice ; and he sends his eternal Spirit down from heaven to breathe upon his church, to be the Lord and giver of spiritual life unto them, and to perfume their souls ; their hearts, and affections, with the savour and odour of Christ's obedience even unto death. He makes the name of Jesus unto them as a

precious ointment poured forth ; and by breaking among them this alabaster box, he sheds abroad the rich perfume which refreshes their souls, purifies their consciences, warms their hearts, and eternally engages them, and attracts them unto Christ, who is in their esteem inconceivably and inestimably precious. So that what Isaac said to Jacob, is the case of the church ; “ See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.” And it is hereby that fruit, real fruit, is produced in the hearts, and brought forth in the lives of God’s people, to his praise and glory.

“ The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs ;” which may be intended to shew how early, abundant, and excellent are the fruits of faith, repentance, and all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God, are produced in the hearts, and brought forth in the lives of God’s renewed people, through the mighty operation of the Spirit in them and upon them. This shews us, that God’s people are alive when they bring forth fruit :

that where Christ dwells, he does make fruitful. And that as, at this season of the year, all trees which are alive bring forth according to their kind; so all that are truly alive to God, bring forth fruit unto God. And you should ask this question: Am I alive to Jesus, am I living to him, and for him? I cannot step into the garden, or walk the fields, but I see every thing springing, all shewing how effectual the air, and rain, and sun, have been to them. If I am alive to God, if Jesus has my heart, if the Holy Ghost dwells in me, then I must be springing forth in affection, and breathing forth most earnest desires after him. It is added, "the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell:" mystically pointing out the blessed fruitfulness of the church, and the sweet smell of their prayers and praises! "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." From what has been delivered, we may observe, that all spiritual fruitfulness is owing to Christ. And that, as in nature, the shining of the sun, and the gentle showers of rain, and the soft air, serve to produce a beautiful

spring: so in the church of Christ, by means of his blessed shining upon the hearts of his people, and by the showers of his grace, and the blessed breathings of his Spirit, his church is become a paradise of delight; into which the Lord descends, and by his sacred presence, fills it with unspeakable glory. And the Lord Jesus, having solemnly invited his spouse to come forth out of her state of solitude, that he might enjoy her company, and she be happy in him, closes it with a renewal of his request, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." May what has been delivered be a means of quickening our souls, and of causing us to arise in heart and affection after him, and seek him in every means of grace; and may we be looking out, and longing for his calling us to come up where he is, to behold his glory, and to sit down at his marriage-supper, to praise and adore him for ever. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

ZECHARIAH VI. 12, 13.

THUS SPEAKETH THE LORD OF HOSTS, SAYING, BEHOLD, THE MAN WHOSE NAME IS THE BRANCH; AND HE SHALL GROW UP OUT OF HIS PLACE, AND HE SHALL BUILD THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD: EVEN HE SHALL BUILD THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD; AND HE SHALL BEAR THE GLORY, AND SHALL SIT AND RULE UPON HIS THRONE, AND HE SHALL BE A PRIEST UPON HIS THRONE: AND THE COUNCIL OF PEACE SHALL BE BETWEEN THEM BOTH.

It would serve much for our spiritual profit and instruction, in our reading the sacred scriptures, to consider the state and condition of God's church and people, at the time, when the Lord is pleased to comfort them with his gracious promises and declarations of mercy. It was an ancient, and it is still the observation of the children of God, that "in the mount the Lord will be seen." In the mount of difficulties he does appear for the deli-

verance of his people, and makes himself known unto them, as a promise-keeping, and a promise-performing God. We have a remarkable instance of the truth of this in the words of the text now before us. For the condition of the people of God was, at the time these words were delivered, very afflictive. The people of God were now returned from Babylon, in which return they had seen God's goodness, and faithfulness to his word of promise. They were now in their own land, and had received a commandment from Cyrus to build the temple. But in this work they meet with much opposition from their enemies. And through this opposition their hands were weakened, and their hearts were discouraged, so that they desisted from this good work. In order to encourage and quicken them unto this work, the Lord was pleased to raise up Haggai, and Zechariah, to prophecy unto them. By the prophet Haggai, they are commanded to go on with the work, and are reproved for their backwardness. And to encourage them, the Lord is pleased

to declare, that the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, for I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. And by the prophet Zechariah, he delivers out a glorious prophecy concerning the Messiah, who was to be manifested in the flesh, and in this temple to appear, and be seen in it, as the glory and splendour of it, he being its great and glorious antitype. The words of our text contain a great and precious promise, very comprehensive, which contains in it the greatest of all blessings, and has in it every thing which may serve to comfort our hearts, to quiet our consciences, to strengthen our faith, and confirm our hope in God. And every word in our text is worthy of our particular notice and regard. Here is, first, the promiser, "the Lord of Hosts." Here is, secondly, a demand for our attention unto what he speaks, and concerning the person of whom he speaks: "Behold the man whose name is the Branch."

Here is, thirdly, a promise of Christ's incarnation, and the work appointed him, and assigned unto him; "he shall build

the temple of the Lord." And, fourthly, here is a confirmation of it, and the consequence of it; he shall build the temple of the Lord, and "he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne." And, fifthly, here is the fountain and foundation from whence all this proceeds; from "the council of peace," which was between Jehovah and the Branch. These words give us an account of an everlasting transaction between God and the Lamb. And therefore in discoursing upon these words, I shall first attempt to speak of this council of peace, which was from eternity held between the Father and the Son, as it will make way for the opening the particulars contained in our text. Now that there was a council of peace between the Father and the Son, concerning the salvation of the elect, appears from many passages, particularly the second epistle of the Corinthians, chap. v. ver. 19. "God was in Christ, (the phrase, in Christ, denotes an immanent act in God,) reconciling the world unto himself, not imput-

ing their trespasses unto them." By the world is meant the elect of God, which he so loved, as to send his Son to be the Saviour of, and for the life of which Christ gave himself. And about the peace and reconciliation of those, or in what way to make peace and reconciliation for them, "God was, in Christ," consulting, contriving, and planning the scheme of it; which was this, not to impute their sins unto them, but to Christ, now called to be the Saviour of them. The covenant of grace which was *between the Father and the Son*, is the subject matter of the lxxxixth Psalm; in which you have the Father speaking thus: "I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen," that is with Christ, who was chosen by the Father to be the head of the whole election of grace. "I have sworn unto David (meaning Christ, the antypical David,) my servant: thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah." You have the divine

call of Christ to the office of Mediator, in these words : (Isaiah xlii. 6.) “ I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, (says Jehovah the Father unto Jehovah the Son,) and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people.” And this covenant between the Father and the Son, is largely treated of in the 49th and 53d chapters of Isaiah : in which chapters, and particularly the last, you have the terms proposed, and the reward promised. The terms : Christ’s making his soul an offering for sin. The reward : a promise that he should see his seed, the travail of his soul, and that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand. And in the words before us, we have this divine compact between the Father and the Son. And that this is the sense of the passage, is allowed by Dr. Owen, and other learned divines. The truly great and learned Dr. Gill observes, that his objections against this being the sense of the passage, had been these ; ‘ that this counsel in eternity was between ‘ the three persons, and not two only ; and

‘ that that was past ; whereas this is spoken
‘ of as future ; but when, (says the Doctor)
‘ I consider that Jehovah, and the Branch,
‘ are the only persons mentioned in the
‘ text, and so could only with propriety be
‘ spoken of, though the counsel was be-
‘ tween the three ; and that in the Hebrew
‘ language, tenses are frequently put one
‘ for the other, the past for the future, and
‘ so the future for the past, and things are
‘ said to be when they appear to be, though
‘ they were before ; the sense may be,
‘ that when the man, the Branch, should
‘ grow out of his place, and build the
‘ temple, and bear the glory, and sit a
‘ priest upon his throne, then it should
‘ clearly appear, that there had been a
‘ council of peace between them both,
‘ which was the ground and foundation of
‘ all.’ It is clearly revealed in the Holy
Scriptures, that God has loved his people
with an everlasting love. See his own
declaration, (Jer. xxxi. 3.) “ I have loved
thee (says the Lord unto the church,)
with an everlasting love.” This love pro-
ceeds from the heart of God, and is the
fruit of his own divine sovereignty : with-

out any cause or motive in the creature. It pleased the Lord, out of the riches of his own grace, and to the praise of the glory of his grace, to choose, appoint, and predestinate, his own co-equal and co-eternal Son, to be the great Head of his body the church. And having chosen Jesus Christ to be the Head, he chose his people in Christ, to be members in him their Head, before the foundation of the world. Christ was laid as the foundation, and the elect were laid upon him as the only foundation which could bear them up, and support them. And the Son of God, viewing the elect, as presented by the Father, in the glass of his own eternal decrees and purposes, in all that beauty, holiness, and glory, which the Father designed them for, and decreed to make them partakers of in heaven: he fell in love with their persons, and asked them at the hands of his Father, that they might be his bride and spouse, and God the Father gave them unto him, and gave him for them, with long life, even length of days, for ever and ever. And having chose their per-

sons in him, and having accepted their persons in the Beloved, God the Father, loving the elect in Christ with an incomprehensible love, as boundless and bottomless, as vast and infinite, as Godhead itself, the Father blessed them in Christ with all spiritual blessings. (See Ephes. i. 3.) And God, unto whom all things past, present, and to come, are ever in view, foreseeing the fall, and the miseries which would be brought upon the elect hereby, was pleased to purpose, by an eternal purpose in Christ Jesus, the salvation of them from sin, Satan, death, and hell. In his vast and infinite wisdom, he found out a way, in which all the persons in the Godhead might be manifested, and all the perfections of the Godhead might be glorified. And the eternal Father laid help upon one that was mighty to save. He was Almighty. He being in the Godhead, a person co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit. And Christ the eternal Son of God, who was the great Head of his church and people, was graciously pleased to undertake the work of bringing

many sons and daughters unto eternal glory, by his becoming man, and by his obedience and death, giving satisfaction to his Father's law and justice, and conquering in his own person, sin, death and hell. Now, if it be asked, why this divine compact between God and the Lamb, is called the Council of Peace? the reason is, because in this council and covenant of the eternal Trinity, it was contrived and agreed upon, that the Lamb of God should be cut off by the sword of divine justice, and that peace should be made by his most precious blood. The Son of God, in the council and covenant of grace, undertook to be the surety of his people, and engaged to assume their nature into personal union with himself; and in that nature to fulfil all righteousness for them, and to bear their sins in his own body on the tree. To bear the curse and wrath of the Father's justice, and "the chastisement of their peace;" that is, the punishment for the sins of the elect, was to be inflicted on him, whereby their peace and reconciliation was to be made. And the Father's

promise to the Son in covenant was, that upon condition of his making his soul an offering for sin, "he should see his seed, the travail of his soul, and should be satisfied." Now, as this counsel was concerning peace and reconciliation, how peace may be made between God and man, it may well be called a "counsel of peace." And it may very justly be called a council, because such resolutions that are taken after mature deliberation and consultation, are generally formed in the wisest manner. So the purpose and council of God, concerning the salvation of the elect, is the effect of his own infinite wisdom. Yea, it is the effect of the manifold wisdom of God.

Having spoken of the covenant between the Father and the Son, concerning the salvation of the elect, I proceed to consider the other particulars in our text, and shall begin, first, with the Promiser, "The Lord of Hosts." Even him, who is self-existent, and who is independent of all creatures, beings, and things. The whole creation being unto him, but as the drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the

balance. In him all creatures live, and move, and have their being. "He is before all things, and by him all things consist." This infinite and self-sufficient God is the promiser; and therefore he is able to fulfil all his promises to the very uttermost, because he is Almighty. And he is that God that cannot lie, and who keepeth truth for ever. And he is pleased to insert his name in the promise, to shew his mindfulness of it, and his readiness to perform it. I would, secondly, consider, what a demand is here given for our attention to what he speaks, and concerning the person of whom he speaks, "Behold the man whose name is the Branch." Here the Lord God calls for our attention, and directs us to behold with admiration, the adorable person of whom he speaks. The eternal Father calls upon us to behold him, who is the wonder of heaven and earth, his eternal Son, clothed in our nature, and becoming God manifested in the flesh. The person we are called upon to behold is Immanuel, God in our nature, God with us. Even him who is Jehovah's fellow, in whom

dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD !
And we may well *behold* him, and have our admiration drawn forth concerning him, for he is a most wonderful person. He is God's beloved son, his chosen one, in whom his soul delighteth, in whom he is well pleased. It is that adorable person, who though co-equal and co-eternal in deity with the Father, was graciously pleased in the covenant of grace to become the Father's servant, in the stupendous work of man's salvation. And "though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." This illustrious person is described as the "man, whose name is the Branch." This name was given him in prophecy, *The man* by way of eminency, he being fairer than the children of men ; Yea, he is God as well as man : and God and man in the person of one Christ. Isaiah speaks of him as a *branch*, which was to spring from Jesse's withered stock. Jeremiah calls him a *righteous Branch*. He is the

Branch of the Lord, raised up by the Lord, and to the glory of the Lord. He is a Branch, as well as a Plant of renown. He is the Branch of righteousness; for the display of his righteousness. God sent him into the world, and by him, and in him, everlasting righteousness is brought forth; and in him, all his people are made righteous before him, Christ being Jehovah their righteousness. Thirdly—here is in our text, a promise of Christ's incarnation, and an account given of the work appointed him to do and perform. "He shall grow up out of his place." Bethlehem was to be the place of his birth, and Nazareth the place of his education: the incarnation of Christ was the grand promise of the Old Testament, and what the Lord's people were encouraged to expect, and what they were earnestly longing for. They knew, by the Lord's word, that God the Son had undertaken in the covenant to be made man. And they longed for his glorious advent. It was the prayer of their hearts, "Make haste my beloved, and O that thou wert as my brother that sucked

the breasts of my mother!" And here the promise of his coming is renewed, and the work assigned him to perform is likewise mentioned. He was "to build the temple of the Lord." This work was to be done by the incarnate God. He was to raise up out of the ruins of the fall, a church, to the praise and glory of free, rich, and sovereign grace. A work which required the arm of God to be made bare, and the power of GODHEAD to be put forth. The temple built by king Solomon was typical both of Christ and the church. Solomon, the builder of it, was a type of Christ. The word Solomon signifies peace. And Christ the antitype of Solomon is the Prince of Peace, who has made peace by the blood of his cross. Solomon was exceeding wise, and exceeding rich, and Jesus has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and his riches are unsearchable and durable: Solomon was the builder of God's temple, and Christ is the builder of God's church. The temple of Solomon was a magnificent structure, and it is reported, that when the sun shone upon it,

it dazzled the eyes of beholders, who were on the mountains coming towards it. The temple was a type of Christ's human nature, which when the glory of the GODHEAD darted its rays through it, as it did on mount Tabor its glory was too refulgent for the beholders. Yea, they saw and knew that this was the glory of the only begotten Son of God. In the temple God was worshipped, and by Christ we have access unto the Father. At the dedication of the temple, the glory of the Lord filled it. And this was to point out how the Deity would dwell in the human nature of Christ, and that the Son of God would become the Son of man. The temple was framed according to the orders and pattern which the Lord had given unto David. And Christ's human nature was entirely framed by the Holy Ghost in conformity to divine decrees. And the temple was reared up without the sound of axe or hammer: so the formation of Christ's human nature was entirely the Lord's own work: and the work performed by the Son of God in our nature, was his incommunicable

work. He trod the wine-press of divine wrath alone, and of the people there was none with him. The temple was likewise typical of the elect of God, the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. And as all the stones were hewed and squared, and made fit for the building, before they were laid in the building : so the Lord's people are dug out of the dark quarry of nature, and hewed by the word, and polished by the Holy Ghost, and brought to know their union with Christ the living stone, and from him they receive life. In him they live ; and by him they grow up into an holy temple in the Lord. And as all the temple received its support and strength from the foundation and cornerstone : so the whole temple of grace, the whole church of Christ receive all their strength, and are wholly sustained and supported, knit, and cemented together, by the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, it was Christ's work to build the temple of the Lord ; his, and his only. He, by his incarnation, laid the foundation of it ; and by his everlasting righteousness, and

by his most precious and perfect sacrifice, he fulfilled the holy law of his Father, and made it everlastingly honourable. And by the same sacrifice he put away the sins of his elect out of the sight of God. For he is the Lamb of God, which hath taken away the sin of the world: whose blood cleanseth from all sin, whose righteousness is an everlasting garment of salvation, and "which is unto and upon all them that believe." He loved his church, and gave himself for it, to cleanse and sanctify it, with the washing of water, (that is, his own blood, which is the fountain to wash in, and which cleanseth from all sin.) By the word, (that is the gospel, which declares the wonderful property and virtue of the blood of the Lamb) "that he might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, but that it should be holy and without blemish." He loved the church, and washed her from her sins in his own blood. He laid down his life for his people. He shed his blood as the redemption-price, whereby they were bought out of the

hands of law and justice. And he being lifted up upon the cross, and being now lifted up upon his mediatorial throne of glory, does by his almighty grace, through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of the elect, draw them unto himself for life and salvation. He brings them all unto that knowledge of himself, which is life eternal. And he will one day bring them all home to the Zion above, with joy and everlasting songs of praise, shouting salvation to God and the Lamb. Fourthly, here is a confirmation of the promise, and what should follow as the consequence of it: "He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne." If we consider the wonderful work which the God-man was to perform for his people, by his incarnation, life, and death, we need not wonder that God the Father, in our text, should be pleased to add this confirmation of it, for the strengthening of our faith. That God should so love the elect, as to send his

Son to die, is such, and so great a love, that it requires the mighty power of the Holy Ghost to enable us to believe it. And though the subject-matter of the whole book of God is concerning the everlasting love he bears towards his people in Christ his Son; yet the Holy Ghost must give us an understanding, a new understanding, before we can know Jesus Christ. We cannot perceive the glory of his person, the amazing greatness of his love, the excellencies of his righteousness, nor the virtue and power of his blood, to cleanse, purge, pardon, and sanctify our souls, but by the Holy Ghost. He is the glorifier of Jesus, and he only can take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto us. No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, that is, that Jesus is Jehovah; nor that he is my Lord, and my God, but by the Holy Ghost. And the amazing sorrows and sufferings which Jesus Christ sustained and underwent for poor sinners, are only to be known, and experimentally understood, in the light, and by the teachings of the Holy Ghost. For God to become

man, was a surprising instance of divine grace and love. For the infinitely blessed Jesus to leave his Father's bosom ; and for him who was rich with all the treasures of Deity, to become poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich, was infinite and astonishing grace ! For Jesus Christ in our nature, for us men and for our salvation, to be in an agony, and for his righteous soul, having a view of the wrath and indignation of God, to be sore amazed, and to sweat great drops of blood for us ! How did his love appear in all this ! Behold him suffering at the hands of men, all the shame and indignity the malice of hell itself could devise ! The malicious enemies of the Lamb of God, crowned his sacred temples with thorns ; his sacred body they lash with knotted stripes, and his blessed face they spat upon ! All his sacred offices they mock and deride. The devil had his hand in all this ; and no doubt but the infernal hosts of hell surrounded the cross, crying, "Aha, aha, so would we have it !" God the Father likewise smites this Shepherd of the flock. "The

Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all." And the Father, looking upon Christ as the substitute of sinners, and beholding him standing in the law-place, room, and stead of the elect, bearing their sins in his own body on the tree ; he bruises Christ with all the weight of divine wrath and vindictive justice. The curtains of heaven were drawn, and Christ was left exposed to all the storm of divine wrath. Whatever was due to the sins, iniquities, and transgressions of the Lord's people, was poured out upon the devoted victim of sinners, Christ Jesus. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief. And in the sufferings and death of Christ, we have an amazing discovery of everlasting love, both as it possessed the heart of the eternal Father, and the eternal Son. So great and boundless was the love of the Father's heart towards us, that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up freely for to suffer, bleed, and die for us ! So great was the love of the Son, that he was pleased to

bear our sins, and filth, and guilt, in his own body on the tree, and to suffer and endure in his body, and in his soul, all the whole curse and wrath, and shame, and death, and hell, due unto his people! And he was pleased to stand up between our sins and infinite justice, in order that he might deliver his people from dying eternally. If we by faith view the amazing agonies, sorrows, and sufferings of the incarnate God, we shall see his love to be stronger than death, such as all the waters of divine wrath could not quench. Surely it may be said, And O that God the Spirit may give us to know, feel, and experience it, that “the love of Christ passeth knowledge!” Christ, in consequence of his sufferings, was to enter into glory. The whole glory of salvation work was to be ascribed unto him. He having built the temple of the Lord, was, as it was most justly his due, *to bear the glory*. The elect, the travail of his soul, were all by him to be brought unto eternal glory; as the fruit of his most precious blood-shedding. His gospel was to be preached and accompanied

with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. And he himself was to have a crown of pure gold put upon his head, upon his return from his everlasting victory, won over sin and Satan, death and hell. He, the great King over all the earth, King Jesus the conqueror! ascended from earth to heaven, drawing at his chariot-wheels the host of hell. The host of heaven waited upon him; a cloud of angels received him, and carried him out of the sight of his disciples, and went to the portals of heaven, crying, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts, the Lord of Glory, may enter in!" And no sooner did the Lamb of God enter heaven, and was seated upon his mediatorial throne, but "the four beasts, or living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, fell down before the throne, and they sung a new song, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!'" And Christ being

admitted into the holiest of all, was *to sit and rule upon his throne*. His throne was to be an everlasting one. When he went to heaven, the Father bid him welcome, saying unto him, "Sit at my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool." "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." And upon this throne Jesus was to sit, to point out to us that his work is finished, and that he is entered into his rest. And as Mediator he was to rule. In consequence of his mediatory work, he had a Mediator's throne, and a mediatorial kingdom given him by the Father. The whole kingdom of priests and kings, that holy nation, and royal priesthood, the peculiar people, which he redeemed by his most precious blood, were to be ruled and governed by him, and ruled by the sceptre of his grace. And his implacable enemies were to be ruled by him with a rod of iron. He was to be *a priest upon his throne*, invested with all power in heaven and in earth. Ever ready to receive all who come unto him for grace and mercy. The

sceptre which Christ holds forth and displays, is a sceptre of mercy. And the motto of it is, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Jesus Christ entered upon this great work of being an High Priest in the everlasting covenant. The Father chose, called, and anointed him. And he performed it upon earth, by bearing the sins of many, and by offering the sacrifice of his own body. And having, as the great High Priest, entered within the veil, he is upon the throne, as a Lamb newly slain. And he wears in heaven, in the presence of his Father, and will wear throughout eternity, the marks made in his sacred hands and side, when he was made a sacrifice for sin. And he pleads in heaven before the throne, what he did and suffered for his people in the days of his flesh ; and he being a Priest upon his throne, gives us blessed encouragement to look unto him, and we are hereby encouraged to come unto him as able "to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him seeing he ever liveth to make

intercession for them." The crown is upon his head to denote that he is an everlasting Conqueror, and an everlasting Saviour. All power in heaven and in earth is given unto him, that he may be able to do us good. The names of his people are deeply engraven upon his breast-plate, and upon the palms of his hands; so that he cannot possibly be unmindful of their concerns and interests. And he is continually presenting the sacred memorials of the wounds received by him in the day of the Lord's fierce anger, when "he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." And it is from Christ as a priest upon his throne, that every spiritual blessing comes down unto us. From this throne he blesses his people; —from this throne he pours down his Spirit upon them; and he is ever upon the throne ready to hear their requests, and to grant them such supplies of grace as they need, and to afford unto them all needful assistance. May we look to Jesus as our Priest upon the throne! May we study his priestly work and office! And may we love him, and look to him, and

live upon him, as our High Priest, called of God, and made an High Priest for ever, by him, who sware, and will not repent, saying, "Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck." Amen.

S E R M O N IX.

PSALM LXII. 12, 13.

FOR HE SHALL DELIVER THE NEEDY, WHEN HE CRIETH:
THE POOR ALSO, AND HIM THAT HATH NO HELPER.
HE SHALL SPARE THE POOR AND NEEDY, AND SHALL
SAVE THE SOULS OF THE NEEDY.

THE Lord God created man in his own image, in righteousness and true holiness, and placed him in a state of happiness and honour, from which he fell by the mutability of his own free-will. By his fall he corrupted the whole fountain of human nature, and opened the flood-gates of sin and corruption, which have deluged and overflowed the whole human race. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that, or in whom, all have sinned.” (Rom. v. 12.)

Sin is the greatest of all evils, and it hath introduced into the moral world all

sorts and kinds of evils and miseries, it hath brought a sinful defilement and corruption upon every faculty of the soul, and every member of the body, and it deserves God's curse and wrath in this life, and in that which is to come; "For the wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23.) Death of the body, and death of the soul; death temporal, and death eternal. There is no pain we feel, but it is the fruit and effect of sin. There is no suffering the damned sustain in hell, but sin is the cause of it. Immediately upon the fall, the Lord God was pleased to manifest himself in the following manner. Jehovah the Son, probably in an human form, appeared to the guilty criminals, erected his tribunal, and cited them to appear, when he solemnly interrogated them concerning the shameful fact, convinced them of their exceeding sinfulness, pronounced upon them, and their whole posterity, the sentence of condemnation, and then, threatening-wise to the devil in the serpent, let drop some intimation of grace to elect sinners, saying, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the ser-

pent's head." Thus light shone out of darkness, and where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. This was the first dawn of everlasting light and life, and laid the foundation of the first faith in Christ, which was the sole fruit and effect of this sacred, mysterious, and wonderful revelation of Christ's person, incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and victory over sin and Satan, death and hell.

The Lord in his transcendent grace and mercy went on age after age, to shine more brightly upon this revelation, and upon the minds of the believing Patriarchs, who, through the Holy Spirit's grace and influence, embraced Christ in this word of grace, and trusted in him for their everlasting salvation. The two grand points of doctrine the Lord taught them, were original sin and redemption by Christ. They learnt from the teachings of the Holy Spirit, that by Adam's fall and sin, and our fall and sinning in him, we have contracted that exceeding sinfulness of nature, which deserveth the curse of God, and eternal damnation.

They were led to know that Christ undertook for them in the everlasting covenant, and was to be manifested to take away their sins, which belief influenced them to walk with God, and before him, unto all well-pleasing.

In each successive period of time, Christ was increasingly revealed. Abraham embraced him as the seed in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

Jacob spoke of him as God's salvation, the Shiloh, Shepherd and stone of Israel.

Moses by God's appointment directed the people to look on Christ as the anti-type of the ceremonial law. Many famous persons, who were raised up as deliverers among the Jews, served as shadows to set forth the high and mighty Saviour.

In the times of David, the saints' knowledge of Christ was greatly increased, and he was raised up, and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, wrote concerning Jesus, his person, salvation, grace, and glory.

The psalm before us, was wrote by

him to set forth the glories, excellencies, salvation, and kingdom of Jesus Christ. It is entitled a psalm of, or for Solomon; but it refers to the antitypical Solomon. It is acknowledged by all divines, that Solomon, was a type of Christ, in his wisdom and riches, in the peaceableness and extent of his kingdom.

His name signifies peace, Christ is the prince of peace, he is Jedidiah, the beloved of the Lord, in whom dwell all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Many passages of this psalm could never be applicable to king Solomon, though they are strictly true of Jesus. For instance, he was to be feared so long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He was to be the Saviour of the soul, the Redeemer of the soul. Prayer was to be made continually to him; daily he is to be praised; men were to be blessed in him; all nations were to call him blessed. All which can only be applied to Christ Jesus. This psalm begins with a prayer, put up by the Old Testament church to Jehovah the Father, on the behalf of Christ. "Give the king

thy judgments O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's Son;" requesting that the God-man, Mediator, might be filled and furnished with every gift and grace, qualifying him for the discharge of his sacred office. It is in fact an expression of faith, that all power in heaven and earth being given to him from the Father, he would be the immediate object of faith and hope, having every ability for the work undertaken by him. He would, as King, Mediator, rule, judge, protect and defend his people, plead their cause, defend and maintain their right, and avenge them on their enemies. Many blessings and gracious acts of his are repeated; and his mysterious incarnation, with the blessings of it are glanced at in verse 6th. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth."

He, the essential Word, and consubstantial Son of the Father, came down from heaven by the assumption of our nature into personal subsistence with his person, by which, he who was God became man: and like as the rain comes

from heaven; so Christ came from the heaven of heavens. As the rain hath no father, so Christ was without father as man; as the rain waters and refreshes the earth, so Christ, when he descended, a shower of heavenly blessings watered the church at the same time, and in the communications of himself, his presence, grace and Spirit, he comes down as rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. The blessed effects of his descent are next described. "In his days shall the righteous flourish; yea, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth." Universal peace, in a temporal sense, was in the times of Augustus Cæsar, in which Christ was born, and the temple Janus was shut up as a sign of it. The dominion and extent of Christ's kingdom is next mentioned, which if understood according to the latter, must refer to what is styled latter day glory, when, the whole earth being enlightened with his glorious gospel, "all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him." Then follow the words of my text; "for he shall deliver the

needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper; he shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.”

In speaking from the words, I would sum up the substance of what I intend to propose as the grand subject of our present meditations, in these three propositions.

First, I will consider the great grace of Christ manifested in taking hold of our nature, and becoming incarnate.

Secondly, his ends and design herein.

Thirdly, his infinite mercy and compassion towards poor miserable sinners, as it is expressed in the words before us, in which a descriptive character is given of them. And will close the whole, if the Lord please, with some suitable reflections.

I have proposed to consider, in the first place, the great grace of Christ manifested in taking hold of our nature, and becoming incarnate. This must necessarily lead me to contemplate the person and life of Christ before his incarnation.

He is, as personally considered, the

Son of the living God, co-equal, co-eternal, and con-substantial with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and by essential union with them, a partaker of the nature, essence, perfections, and glories of GOD-HEAD—he being by nature, Jehovah—“I, even I am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour.” (Isa. xliii. 11.)

His personal distinctive property is to be the only begotten of the Father, who was the Son of God, lived a life of essential blessedness, incomprehensibly, immutably, and essentially glorious in himself, of himself, and from himself, as self-existent, self-subsistent, and all-sufficient. His life, as second person in the Trinity, living in the Father, the mutual indwelling of the Father in him, and he in the Father, the solace, delight, converse, and society of the Eternal Three between themselves, and before all creature-existence, is a subject too sublime for us to study; yea, it must, and will for ever be beyond the conceptions of angels and saints in glory to guess at. Here all is boundless ocean and infinity: so that I drop it, and descend incomprehensibly

lower, to cast a few thoughts on that life of glory and blessedness, which Christ as God-man lived before all time.

We have some bright views of this in the eighth chapter of Proverbs ; in which we learn, and from it perceive, that the second Person in the GODHEAD was set up in his office-character and capacity before all worlds, being predestinated into creature, being, and existence : he was constituted Head and Mediator from everlasting, in the federal settlements of eternity, and the glorious transactions in and among the Three Persons in God. “ I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth : when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth. While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens I was there : when he set a compass upon the face of the depth. When he established the clouds above : when he strengthened

the fountains of the deep. When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment : when he appointed the foundations of the earth : then I was by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. Rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 22—31.)

He was set up from everlasting as God-man, bore the title, personage, and glory of being God-man elect, existed in the form of God, and lived a life of glory and blessedness inconceivably by us ; which glory he laid aside and parted with for a season, for us, and for our salvation. " Ye know, (says Paul,) the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) Christ did not lay down, nor part with his essential nor personal glory, considered simply as the Son of God : but he, as dwelling personally in our nature, which he assumed, and to which he gave a personal subsistence

by his union with it, laid aside the glory due to the human nature united into personal union with himself. In this lay the deepest act of our Lord's humiliation. He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and this with everlasting love in his heart towards the elect sons of men, in whom he had delighted before all time. The boundless grace of Christ, in descending from heaven to earth, by his assumption of our nature; his laying aside the glory he had with the Father before the world was; his taking upon him the form and likeness of sinful flesh; was astonishing condescension, ineffable love, sufficient to fill the host of angelic spirits, who surround his throne, with admiration and astonishment to eternity. In the 17th of John, our Lord prays thus: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was." Which must be interpreted thus: Christ is there addressing himself, as God-man, Media-

tor, to his divine Father, and praying for the open glorification of himself, as such in heaven, where, before his incarnation, he enjoyed this glory, and which was to shine forth with redoubled splendour in him, upon the performance of his work. Christ, as God-man, spent a boundless eternity before time began, expressing his love, venting his delights towards his elect, foreviewing with pleasure the spots of ground on which they would tread and inhabit, and pleasing himself in his Father's everlasting love to them ; and so-lacing himself in the prospect of what he was to be, and do, and suffer for them. " My delights (says he himself) were with the sons of men."

I proceed, secondly, to consider the end and designs of Christ's incarnation.

In the incarnation of Christ, one grand mystery and miracle of love appears, in Majesty infinite ! for 'tis this is the sublimest mystery of godliness, " God manifested in the flesh." The grace, love, and mercy of GODHEAD, as in the fountain of God, whereby Christ's taking hold of our nature, is displayed and discovered to us.

By this means, a ladder is erected which reaches from heaven to earth, God descends to man, and man ascends into fellowship with God. A chain of holy wonders is here linked together in the person of Christ, in whom all is wonderful, his incarnation, the hypostatical union of two natures in one person; his life of obedience, his passion, resurrection, ascension, session at the right hand of God, where he intercedes for, and acts the part of an advocate, are a wondrous exhibition of his infinite goodwill to the elect sons of men. One great end of Christ's incarnation was, that he might be capacitated and fitted for performing his office, and executing his mediatorial trust. He took our nature with all its sinless infirmities, a frail mortal body, which was susceptible of grief, capable of pain, which stood in need of temporal support, even as ours do. By which means the Lord of glory became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and has an heart to pity and compassionate us, having himself dwelt in frail flesh, and tabernacled here below, where he himself by expe-

rience felt and sustained, and was encompassed with all sorts and kinds of evils, sin only excepted, which had no place nor being in him. ' Christ himself, (says ' Doctor Goodwin) who sanctified our nature, to the end we might be sanctified, ' (see John xvii. 19. Heb. ii. 11.) representatively sanctified every age of man's ' life he went through, as well as those ages ' or years of man's life he fell short of. He ' was sanctified in the womb, to sanctify ' some infants in the womb. He was holy ' when born, even because some infants ' when first born might be sanctified. And ' the same Lord Jesus pronounceth of infants, " that of such is the kingdom of ' God." The incarnation of Christ was the ' first step to his finishing the salvation of ' his people by his obedience and death. ' This he had in view, therefore just before his assumption of our nature he ' said to his eternal Father: " A body ' hast thou fitted or prepared me, lo, I ' come, I delight to do thy will O God, ' yea, thy law is within my heart." ' Christ undertook the salvation of his ' people before all time, immediately

‘ upon the fall he was revealed as the
‘ serpent-bruiser, the sin-bearing, sin-
‘ atoning Lamb. All the prophets spake
‘ of him, gave witness to him, declaring
‘ that through his name, whosoever be-
‘ lieveth in him, shall receive remission
‘ of sins. But this glorious Saviour was
‘ manifested in the flesh in the fulness of
‘ time, when all flesh had corrupted its
‘ way upon the earth, and there was none
‘ of the human race righteous, no not
‘ one; when Jew and Gentile were both
‘ plunged into the deepest abyss of sin
‘ and misery, and were fallen as far as
‘ possible into sin, and yet out of hell,
‘ then the son of God was manifested
‘ that he might destroy the works of the
‘ Devil. “When the fulness of the time
‘ was come, God sent forth his Son, made
‘ of a woman, made under the law,” to
‘ deliver from sin, curse and damnation,
‘ his chosen and beloved ones. Our
‘ blessed Jesus took hold of our nature,
‘ that in it he might manifest to us the
‘ boundless love, grace and mercy of his
‘ divine Father towards us. Hereby he
‘ that sanctifieth and they who are sancti-

' fied, are all of one nature, which is an
 ' act of wondrous grace in Christ, and
 ' should lead us to consider that his heart
 ' is full of love, his bowels of mercy, that
 ' he is cloathed with infinite compassion,
 ' and is in every respect a most suitable
 ' mediator, in whom all fitness and fulness
 ' of relations meet. All fitness for the
 ' office of mediator is found in him, he is
 ' both God and man united in one person,
 ' he sustains all sorts and kinds of relati-
 ' ons to us and he is solemnly bound and
 ' engaged to us towards his members
 ' with the utmost affection, sympathy and
 ' love. "For as much then as the
 ' children are partakers of flesh and blood,
 ' he also himself likewise took part of the
 ' same: that through death he might
 ' destroy death, and him that had the
 ' power of death, that is the devil."

I proceed, thirdly, to consider his infi-
 nite mercy and compassion towards poor
 miserable sinners, as it is expressed in
 the words before us, in which a descrip-
 tive character is given of them. They
 are described as needy, poor and helpless.

"He shall deliver the needy when he

crieth: the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.”

I will begin with the first description given of them, which is that they are needy. All mankind are needy, but it is such as feel their spiritual needs and necessities we have to do with. And they are such whom the Holy Spirit by his invincible, irresistible grace has wrought upon, by quickening their souls with new and spiritual life, which discovers itself in the following way and manner. The soul is brought experimentally to feel its want of all spiritual good, to view its own inherent filth, impurity and defilement, to taste the bitterness of sin, and to find none but Christ can relieve, save or succour. The awakened sinner finds himself ignorant of Christ and his salvation, and that he is indeed alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, and he crieth out being grieved and burthened with the remembrance and heavy load of his iniquities, unto the Lord, whose eyes are upon his people for

good, and his ears are open to their cry. It is impossible to describe the feelings and inward emotions of the soul under the first influences of the Holy Spirit. This however is the truth, when Christ, who hath loved his people, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, comes to reveal, make known and manifest himself to their souls, by drawing them in regeneration and conversion to himself, he acts with and towards them, as we before declared he did with our fallen parents. He convinces them of, and charges home upon them, sin, their own personal and actual sin. It is perhaps always the case to lay home upon the mind the particular sin, which hath had the chiefest place and room in the affections, to make the soul sensible of the exceeding guilt contained in it, and the exceeding evil of it, to bring the sinner by this means to see, feel, and acknowledge himself, as self-convicted, and self-condemned, justly liable to, and properly deserving of God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come. By this means sin, our own personal, pe-

cular, secret, bosom sin, is seen in its filth, felt in its guilt, perceived in itself, and in its own nature, to be out of measure sinful. And we are brought to groan being burthened, crying out, "Lord save or I perish." The soul awakened by the Holy Spirit, is led from the conviction of particular sin, to enter into the dark chambers of imagery, the heart, and it finds it to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. In this way, and by these divine convictions from the Spirit of the Lord, the soul is to be brought to feel sensibly, to experience deeply, the total corruption and depravity of every faculty of soul and body, which increase spiritual distress; all which the Holy Spirit improves to the real benefit and advantage of the awakened sinner, giving him to cry out and pray the more importunately to the Lord. A person whose real experience and case is as I have described feels his need of Christ, groans for redemption in the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. Though heretofore all darkness, yet now the light of life hath shone upon him, and shone with-

in him ; and nothing can give content but a revelation and an application of salvation to the soul. Crowns, sceptres, kingdoms, the riches, honours, glories and beauties of this world, are now all empty things. The whole world out of Christ, and without Christ, is not worth enjoying. This the soul feels the truth of, that "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth ; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it : surely the people is grass." God's presence, pardon, grace and mercy are now prized beyond ten thousands of gold and silver. God's word is now read and searched, the means of grace attended upon, and prayer from the heart is offered up with inward groanings which cannot be uttered. But I would proceed to view the expression used to denote the souls earnestly seeking the Lord. Such are said to *cry*. "He will deliver the needy when he *crieth*." The phrase denotes a deep and effectual sense of want of God. No forms of prayer are now needed, the soul feels its wants, knows its own case, crieth

out to the Lord and finds him a God who heareth and answereth prayer. He hath delivered, he doth, and he will deliver such to the praise of his own grace.

And when the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to make himself known, and to manifest himself to such, they find heaven begun in them, and the kingdom of God set up in their souls. "He will deliver the needy when he crieth." What does Christ deliver from? Sin, the greatest of all evils, and damnation, the greatest of all miseries. He delivers from the guilt of sin, by making known to the soul the everlasting virtue, efficacy, worth and value of his most precious blood-shedding, by making an application of it to the soul in the promise of the everlasting gospel, and by sealing it home upon the heart by the eternal Spirit, by warming the soul with a sense of his love, inflaming the affections with a view of his mercy; giving the sinner to find that there is no love in Christ's heart, but he is interested in it, no mercy in Jesus but he has a share in; that Christ is his righteousness to cloath him, his fountain to cleanse him, his phy-

sician to heal him, his fountain to supply him with present and everlasting consolation, his all in all, his Saviour, friend, and brother born for adversity, and who sticketh closer than a brother. He delivers also from the love of sin by filling the heart with an enjoyment of his love which passeth knowledge. He saves from the dominion and reign of sin, as he dwells in the heart by faith. He delivers from a state of darkness and the shadow of death, as he guides the feet into the way of peace. It is impossible to express the holy, heavenly, transporting joys with which Christ fills the soul when he opens the door of life and salvation to poor convinced sinners, in and by the everlasting gospel, and by revealing himself to, and living in his people as their hope of glory. But I pass on to consider the next description of those to whom Christ is pleased to make known himself. "He shall deliver the *poor* also, and him that hath no helper." By the *poor* are meant such who are so in a spiritual sense; for though all mankind are poor as spiritually viewed and considered, being destitute of all

creature-holiness, purity and righteousness, yet they are not sensible of it. None feel their poor, sinful, deformed, wretched case, before the Lord opens their blind eyes, and puts his Holy Spirit within them. Therefore the poor here are such as feel themselves to be in, and from, and of themselves, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked : to whom the Lord gives the following advice : “ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see.” (Rev. iii. 18.) And who are pronounced blessed? “ Blessed are the poor in spirit.” They are brought to true spiritual poverty of spirit, by the sacred enlightenings and blessed teachings of the Lord the Spirit, and from the inward knowledge, feeling and experience which they have of themselves. They lost the whole stock of creature grace, holiness and purity, by Adam’s fall, and upon the discovery of it, are taught from the word

and by the Spirit, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth : that it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and that it is out of his fulness we all receive grace for grace. The poor, and such as have no helper, are the objects of Christ's pity, the subjects of his mercy ; on such he displays his divine grace, and glorifies himself in them, and upon them. The inward teaching, and divine progress of the Spirit's work in the souls of awakened persons is beautifully expressed. As they are first brought to feel their spiritual maladies, wants and miseries, so the sight they have had of sin breaks their hearts, makes them broken and contrite, they feel more than tongue can express of the evil of their corrupt nature, and are humbled more deeply before the Lord for the plague of their own hearts than is easy to conceive ; they feel themselves helpless, hopeless, sink into self-despair, and from thence the Lord raises and delivers them, by giving them to know that his mercy is above the earth and heavens. When the Holy Spirit

proclaims Christ and his salvation to the poor destitute, and sets forth to view the redeeming efficacy of the Saviour's blood, the transcendent glory and splendour of his righteousness, giving the soul a view of his unsearchable riches; this lifts up the heart to the Lord, unites the affections and knits them to Christ, renders him precious and lovely; so that the believer counts all but dross and dung beside, and below Jesus. He is the Saviour of such as are needy, poor, and helpless, and they are saved in him, and by him, with an everlasting salvation. In him they have life, light, righteousness, pardon, peace, holiness, grace and glory. In his obedience they are justified, in his atonement they are cleansed, in him they are complete, and he presents them in himself holy and unblameable and irreproveable before the throne. It is added, "he shall spare the poor and *needy*, and shall save the souls of the *needy*." The sum of which is this: Jesus Christ is exactly suited to poor sinners, to save them, to cleanse, heal, pardon, bless, defend and succour them; there is no sin you

feel but Christ is able to save you from it; there is no want you have, but Christ is all-sufficient to supply it. Here is the great mercy of Jesus declared and discovered, even in his holy and immutable word. He declares that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and anointed him by the will and delight of God the Father, that he should preach the gospel to the poor. He was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to open the prison to such as were bound, to set at liberty them that were bruised. Every sinner who feels his want of Christ, who sees the pollution of sin, feels an heart of stone; who finds himself ruined and undone, because he has broken God's holy and righteous law; has the warrant of God's word to encourage him to come and make trial of the Lord Jesus, and prove what the love, mercy and compassion of his heart and bowels are. 'Yea, (says holy Romaine,) you cannot honour Christ more than by coming to him, and trusting in him.' Does any ask, How shall we come? I answer, Just as you are, with all your filthiness, plague sores,

wants and miseries, that Christ may be honoured by cleansing you, healing you, supplying you, and saving you from all, and above all, for his blood cleanseth from all sin: and he hath said it, and will make it good, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." I would illustrate this by reminding you concerning the poor leper who was full of leprosy, and came to Jesus saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." To whom our Lord replied, "I will, be thou clean." The leprosy was a figure of sin, of its defiling, spreading influence, of its contagion and filth. The man with it, full of it, approached Christ, and was healed. Just so under the drawings and inward operation of the Holy Ghost upon our souls, we approach Christ as we are, full of the leprosy of sin; he by putting forth the hand of his power, and making known in our hearts the virtue of his blood, cleanseth us from our guilt, and heals our spiritual wounds. And O that it might please him to look down with infinite pity and compassion on us! Then our hearts would be melted, our affections attracted

to him, our sins would be subdued, and our souls would rejoice. I will now close, if the Lord please, with some suitable reflections.

What astonishing grace does the gospel discover to be hid in Christ ! There is no sinner needs any mercy, or blessing, but it is to be found, and enjoyed in Jesus Christ. Nor is there any state or case, any sort or kind a sinner can be in, but Christ is almighty to save and deliver him out of it, and from all the evil and miseries of it. Some, when under a sight and view of their own sinfulness, are ready to cast away their hope in God ; but alas ! this is dishonouring Christ indeed ! Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, yea, the chief of sinners ; and all his love, mercy, and compassions, are to be exercised towards and upon elect sinners. The sinner needs Christ, none but Christ can do him good ; and he is an hiding-place from the storm of divine wrath, a covert from the tempest ; every one who is under the covering and application of his blood and righteousness are eternally safe and se-

cure. They are fit to live, and fit to die. To such, to live is Christ, and death is to them an advantage. You are blessed indeed, because ye are Christ's! But may not such happy persons live low, and far short of their high calling? Verily they may, and do. Few of us make use of Christ, and live upon him, and upon what he hath done. We should contemplate Jesus as our friend, and live in the belief, that we are one with him, that he is eternally engaged for us, and hath promised never to leave us, never to forsake us. That he is ever mindful of us, and will never turn away from us from doing us good. God's dearly beloved ones are prone to look too much at their sins, corruptions, temptations, and miseries, forgetting that the proper use and practical experience of these, should make more room for them to receive Christ into their hearts. It is good to feel sin, and to be exercised with our own inherent corruption, when by it we learn more of our need of Jesus, and are led from it to Christ for him to subdue and dethrone it. It is a sign of growth

in grace when we feel sin, and loathe it, and ourselves for it, and we have no true sight of sin, when we are kept by it from the Lord Jesus.

It should be one grand subject which should engage our minds, and employ our thoughts,—the person, work, and offices of our Lord. As we contemplate him as God and man, we learn and read what his heart is, and must be towards us. He hath taken our nature, our sins, the curse due unto us for them, upon himself. He makes our cases his own. Not a grief we feel, not a distress befalls us, but he pities and sympathizes with us under it. There is no state we pass through but he follows us, preventing us with his mercy. As it respects our sins and sinfulness, he knows we look upon it as our greatest misery, and groan under it as an intolerable burthen, and he is our propitiation and advocate in heaven with his Father, and our Father, his God and our God.

He became incarnate on purpose to express and manifest his love. He was made a sin and a curse, to deliver his people from it. He laid down his own

life, shed his own heart's blood, and gave himself for them, as their sacrifice and ransom. He arose from the dead with everlasting love in his heart, not abated by his sufferings, but rather increased. He lives in heaven as their representative, intercessor, and advocate, and says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." This is our security. O that he may look at this time on us, and give us to hear his blessed voice; "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else." May his blessing accompany what has been delivered; even so. Amen.