

The Nature and Design of

GOSPEL INVITATIONS.

A

SERMON

Preached before an

**ASSOCIATION OF BAPTIST MINISTERS,
IN LONDON.**

On Tuesday, 22nd September, 1835;

**I At the Baptist Meeting-house, Pell Street, Ratcliff
Highway.**

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RED-CROSS STREET, CRIPPLEGATE.

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DEAR READER,

THE occasion of the following Sermon having been
preached, and of its being now published to the world, is as
follows.

An association of Baptist Ministers in London, maintaining the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel, are in: the habit of meeting together once in three months, at each other's places of worship, for their mutual edification, and to promote union among their respective Churches ; after which, a sermon is preached, on a previously appointed subject. Being one of that Association, I was at our meeting in June last, chosen the Lecturer for the next occasion, and the subject assigned me was, The nature and design of the invitations of the Gospel."

Accordingly on the 22nd of September, 1835, being through the kind providence of God, spared to meet with my brethren, I was by divine help, (at the same time conscious of my unworthiness and weakness) enabled to preach the following Sermon, before the Ministers and people then assembled. My brother Ministers, and many of the people, requested me to print it, which I had not the most distant idea of doing, either before or after the service, until so requested. But their entreaties prevailing, I have written out, as far as I could recollect, (by the help of the Lord) the leading ideas of the Discourse; my object being the good of men in general, of the Church of Christ in particular, and the glory of a triune Jehovah.

Those who heard the Sermon preached, will find, on reading the following pages, a little occasional variation in

the phraseology, and a few additional texts introduced, illustrative of the subject. But, I believe the substance of the whole, as delivered, is preserved. This is what I have aimed at ; and to compress it into as small a compass as possible, that the price might come within the reach of all.

I now commit it into the hands of my covenant Lord ; and as he deigned to bless the preaching of it, that he would more abundantly bless the reading, both to the openly profane sinner, and to the believer in Christ ; to the convincing and converting of the one, and to the building up and establishing in his most holy faith, the other, is the prayer of one of the least of all saints, and the chief of sinners.

DANIEL WHITAKER.

October. 1835.

P. S. The reader is particularly requested to turn to his Bible, for the texts, where reference only is given.

A SERMON &c,

Rev. xxii. 17.

"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

I would just observe by way of introduction, that there are four sorts of Inviters in the religious world ; namely,

First, The Arminians, who deny the doctrines of election, particular redemption, and efficacious grace in regeneration; and maintain, in their creed, the universality of God's love, redemption and grace to every man, also the free will of man and his ability to comply with all the invitations of the gospel.

Therefore they launch out into the ocean of unlimited invitations, using the most extravagant expressions ; such as the following.-,"Come just now ; this moment ; for the next you may be in hell,"-"Christ has died for you, the Spirit is striving with you, and wants you to come to Christ. Angels are hovering over you, waiting to see you willing to come to Christ, and accept the offers of grace ; that they may carry the news to heaven; and now God has done what he could to save you ; Christ the holy Spirit, and the Angels have done what they could, and we Ministers have done our part; now if you will not be saved after all, the blood of Christ will sink you lower and lower into hell." These must be considered as extravagant expressions, and altogether unscriptural.

The second sort of Inviters, are the Baxterians, who profess the doctrines of election and particular redemption in, a certain sense ; namely, that Christ died intentionally for the elect only; but sufficiently for the rest. And therefore they conclude the certainty of the conversion and salvation of the former, from the decree of God in election ; and the possible and probable conversion and salvation of the latter from the sufficiency of the death of Christ; maintaining also that it is the duty of all men, where the word is preached, to believe with that faith which hath salvation connected with it at the same time admitting, that no man can or will, have this faith, save God's elect ; and yet they launch out into the ocean of general invitations of a spiritual nature, to dead sinners : but they are not quite so extravagant in their expressions as the former sort ; equally foreign however are they from the truth, and not so consistent with themselves ; for the former are all of a piece, and more open than these, not concealing their views, so that we know what they are, and what we shall hear from them. They (the Arminian) are not so calculated to deceive, as these are, who in a crafty manner hold the doctrines of the gospel, making use of fine-spun definitions, and handling the word of God deceitfully. Of the two systems, I could sooner embrace the former and be an Arminian at once ; for there is no medium ; salvation is either wholly of grace or of works ; election is either true or it is false; redemption is either general or it is particular, both with regard to the intention of God in it, and the price paid to redeem. If there is no election, and redemption is general, and grace universal, then all men shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live spiritually and eternally.

On this ground there is a propriety in general invitations to all men, to come to Christ The saved. But men who believe election to be true, redemption particular and grace special, cannot, consistently with those truths, invite men in general, to spiritual blessings and services. Yet we find,

A third sort of Inviters, more inconsistent with themselves, than the second I have named. These are such as maintain the doctrines of election, particular redemption the inability of man both natural and moral, to receive spiritual blessings, and the efficacious grace of God in regeneration ; that is, that God hath chosen some of lost mankind in Christ, before the foundation of the world, and left the rest to perish ; that Christ died intentionally and sufficiently for the elect only and that they alone, through grace will be converted and eternally saved. Notwithstanding these views, they invite all indiscriminately, ' o come to Christ and be saved; to exercise living and precious faith in him, though dead in trespasses and sins ; not because they think it is man's duty to have and exercise this faith ; for they maintain that it is, the gift of God, anew covenant blessing, and a fruit of the Spirit ; but, because they think it is the most successful means of converting sinners, and of leaving the unconverted without excuse.*

* In proof that the above statement is correct, the reader is referred to Brown's Dictionary of the Bible, under the word " Gospel" ; and also to Jones's

Biblical Dictionary, under the word
"Call",

Thus while they would be considered as strenuous advocates for the glorious doctrines of the gospel, in the first part of their sermons, they pull them down in the latter, by their unlimited and indiscriminate invitations; and are very inconsistent with themselves, and the doctrines they profess. Of preachers of this description, it may with propriety be said that,

" After they've spoken much that is right,

Will then, application it out of your sight."

Their pretension that this plan is the most successful, as a means of converting sinners, is a mere notion of their own, and proves nothing. I admit, that great numbers have been converted to this their opinion, for it pleases many inasmuch as it tends to make them believe that there is no such thing as election and particular redemption ; doctrines so offensive to the bulk of mankind. These preachers have many admirers, they have large congregations, and derive much support from them ; and I fear that those effects are very powerful and successful reasons for leading many to adopt this plan.

The Apostle Paul thought that preaching the gospel, was the most successful means of the real convcoiaion of sinners, when he said, " I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

The fourth kind of Inviters, are those who, with the last named, hold the distinguishing truths of the everlasting gospel; but think it wrong to invite men in general to receive spiritual blessings, and exercise spiritual functions; because God hath not blessed men, in general, with them, neither promised to bestow them universally, but, upon his people in particular ; and that men in a state of nature are not in a capacity to receive the one, or exercise the other; namely to receive spiritual blessings, or perform spiritual services. Therefore they make a distinction between the natural man, and the spiritual man; between the natural and moral duties of the former, and the new covenant blessings communicated to the latter. They invite the natural man, to the discharge of the natural and moral duties enjoined upon him, by God his, Creator, Preserver, and kind benefactor ; and they invite the spiritual man, to receive spiritual blessings, as his privileges. and to serve God not only as his Creator, but as his Covenant God and Father in Christ Jesus. To this class belonged , Dr. Gill; and Mr. John Brine, and of the same kind are the Brethren united in this Society of Baptist Ministers. And as they have made choice of me,

to shew the nature and design of the invitations of the Gospel, I shall proceed to notice,

Ist. Those of a general nature.

2d. Those of a particular nature,

3d. The ends and designs of both.

In noticing the first part of our subject, we will see that there are invitations of a general nature in the gospel. This appears from the words of Christ in Matt. xxii. Where he, compares the kingdom of heaven to a certain King who made a marriage for his Son, and sent forth his servants into the highways, and as many as they found, both bad and good, they were bid to the marriage. The King, I apprehend designs God the Father; his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; and the marriage the external ministry of the word. The bride is the Church, the elect of God, who were given to Christ the Son, before the world began, by God the Father: eternally-betrothed by the Son unto himself in love and faithfulness for ever, and openly espoused, at their conversion, by his grace, word, and Holy Spirit. The gospel and ministry thereof, sets forth the marriage-union between Christ and his Church; and declares the great transactions of God in covenant. Now the Gospel, wherever it comes, invites men in: general to hear its truths, believe its facts, and revere its author: not to do so, it is to treat God its author with contempt which is contrary to their duty as His

creatures, who are commanded, in his law, to love, honour, and adore him their Creator. Therefore as the Apostle John observes, He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." 1 John v. 10. Many more scriptures I might adduce to ties same purpose. See John x. 38.

Again, they are not only invited to hear the word, believe its truths, and revere its divine Author, but they are invited and exhorted to a natural repentance, and faith in God; also to their duties towards him as their Creator, and towards each other as fellow creatures. This is plain from the Apostle's words in Acts. xvii. 30, where he saith, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." That is to change their notions of the Divine Being, who, like these Athenians, entertain erroneous opinions of him. "

Forasmuch then as were the offspring of God we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." verse 29. And in verse 27, he says, " they should seek the Lord," as the God of creation and providence, in whom they live, move, and have their being; seek him for food and raiment, and all things necessary to this natural life ; and glorify Him as God, by praising Him the Author of their being, the preserver of their lives, and the giver of all good, " For the Invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being, understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse. Rom. i. 20, The Apostle James also says, "

thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well. Chap. ii, 19,

Then we may and ought, to invite men in general, to attend the word preached, to hear it attentively, to search the scriptures, to believe that Christ is the Messiah, the sent of God the Father, to pray unto God for the things they feel they need, and to praise him for the bounties of his providence. Psl.xiv. 4. We may reprove of sin, invite, exhort, and dissuade from the practice thereof. The drunkard from drinking to excess, and to become sober; the Adulterer to be chaste ; the Swearer not to take God's name in vain ; the Liar not to lie, but to tell the truth; the Sabbath breaker to leave off breaking the Sabbath, and to revere the authority of God in observing the Lord's day ; and the quarrelsome to abstain from quarreling and fighting, to do no murder, but to love his neighbour as himself, and to do unto others as he would have others do unto him. Gen, xix. 7. For these things are enjoined on men to do and perform ; and they are their bounden duty, whether they are elected or not elected, redeemed or not redeemed, born again or not born again, for it is not election, redemption, or regeneration that makes men accountable to God their Creator ; but some men seem to think, that, if election be personal and eternal, redemption particular, and grace special, that all obligation ceases on the part of the rest of mankind ; as if the grace of God, bestowed on some in Christ Jesus, destroyed the relation of the others as creatures of God; and made null and void all obligation to serve Him, refrain from evil, and o good to their fellow

creatures. Jesus Christ said to them; 'Scribes and Pharisees, "ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone. Matt. xxiii. 23. When men have done these things, they have only done what was their duty to do; and if it were possible for them to attain to; that perfection which they had in Adam, they would only have an earthly paradise. Some men think that God intended to take Adam to himself into heaven, if he had stood the time God had appointed for his probation; but this is without the authority of "thus saith the Lord; 'for the Apostle saith,' "the first Man is of the earth, earthy; and that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural: and afterward that which is spiritual. And if the inheritance be of the Law it is no more of promise; for if there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law." 1 Cor. xv. 45-49. Gal. iii. 18-21. Adam then was not created a spiritual man, he had not spiritual life in him; nor had he eternal life promised to him on condition of his obedience; but the continuance of his natural life, with all the happiness he then enjoyed. Rom. x. -5. Gal. iii. 12. Ezekiel. xx. 11.

Christ is the spiritual head of the Church, the repository of all spiritual blessings; the way, the truth, and the life; and no man cometh unto the Father but by him. Eph. 1 3,4. & iv. 15. Col. ii. 19. John xiv. 6. Life, spiritual and eternal, is in the son of God; and he; that is chosen in him, united to

him, and born again of the Spirit, hath the Son and hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life. 1 John v, 11

" Thus saith the Lord, no man shall rise, "

To dwell in heaven, above the skies ;

Not one shall enter that bright plain,

Except they here are born again.

No soul shall to that glory rise,

But through the Saviours sacrifice ;

Washed in his blood from every stain,

And by the Spirit born again."

JONATHAN FRANKLIN.

Then say you, " where is the utility of inviting and exhorting men to these duties? since there is no promise of eternal life annexed to them, and consequently no hope of being saved eternally, if they attend to them ; for, if not elected, redeemed, and regenerated, they must inevitably perish, do what they will : therefore they may as well take their fill of sin, and be damned for much sin, as for little, for great sins as for small ones; [although no sins are little, being committed against the great God of heaven and earth, yet some are so when compared with others ;] for many sins as for few." Persons who make such remarks as these indicate thereby, their ignorance of the scriptures, and of the true

character of God therein set forth, whose justice is such, that he will render punishment to the wicked hereafter, according to their wicked doings here. see Jer.xvii. 10. & xxxii. 19. Matt. xvi.27, Rom. ii. 6. And it is evident from the words of Christ, (Matt: xi. 22,24.) that there will be degrees in the torments of the damned. For he says, it will "be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment," than for Chorazin and Bethsaida. The former not having having the advantages of the latter, yet were less wicked, than the latter; consequently their punishment will be more mild and moderate. The latter having had greater advantages of improvement, the means of grace, the presence, ministry, and miracles of Christ; but had despised, scorned, derided, and set them at nought; their sin being thus aggravated, their condemnation will be greater, and their punishment the more intolerable, Also Christ's words to Pilate, relative to him that betrayed him, proves this fact; for said be, "therefore he that delivereth me unto thee, hath the greater sin." His guilt is greater, and a greater punishment awaits him. Thus we see, that men may increase their guilt, and bring upon them selves the wrath of God to the uttermost; as in the case of the Jews, and many Gentiles, 1 Thess.: ii. 16. Not because they will not have the grace of God; will not be redeemed and saved by Christ; will not be born again of the Spirit; and will not exercise that faith which is a new covenant blessing, and the gift of God to his elect only ; (Eph. ii. 8: Titus i. 1.) but, because they disregard the authority of God their Creator, hate him; in their hearts, believe not the record he hath given of his Son, making him a liar, and do those things which are hateful in his sight. Rom. ii. 1-16.

Some men argue from hence, that there will be degrees of glory in heaven ; saying, if the torments of the wicked, in hell, may be increased by their bad works here; then may the glory and happiness of the righteous, in heaven, be increased by their good works here. To which I reply that though the damnation of the wicked, and their punishment, will be according to their bad doings; the righteous are not saved for, and rewarded according to their good works ; but "by grace are they saved, through faith; and that not of themselves: it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast," The saved are no better by nature than others. Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3, 10. It is grace that makes the difference; as the Apostle saith, "by the grace of God I am what I am." I Cor. xv. 10. " The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 23. The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; it proceeds entirely from his free grace, in Christ Jesus; is effected by his doing, dying, resurrection, and intercession ; and is applied to their souls by the Holy Ghost. Psa. xxxvii. 39. Heb. x. 14, 15. They are all of them loved with the same everlasting love ; not one before, nor one more than another; none of them loved for their good works ; but all of them loved freely, invariably, and for ever, Each of them washed in one fountain, the blood of Christ, from all their sins ; clothed in the same robe, the righteousness of Christ, in which they all stand complete, and "justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." They are all born again of the same Spirit; have all one hope, one house above, and wear one crown ; are all made kings and priests unto God ; all made like Christ, and they all sing the same song; " Not

unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory," and, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Ps. cxv. I. Rev. i. 5, 6.

We observe then, that there is a consistency in Ministers of the Gospel, inviting and exhorting the natural man to the duties incumbent upon him, as a rational and accountable creature, to God his Creator, preserver, and kind benefactor. But, we ought ever to keep up the distinction, made in the word of God, between the natural and spiritual man; between the duties of the one as a creature, and the spiritual blessings bestowed on the other as a new creature in Christ Jesus; for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle ? " The Lord said to Jeremiah "if thou take faith the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." Chap. xv. 19. And the Apostle admonishes Timothy, to "study to shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Tim. ii. 15.

Some men, who would be thought more wise, knowing, and sound in the faith, than others, have said some strange things; namely, that the natural man has nothing to do with the gospel, or the gospel with him. These are unwarrantable sayings. The Gospel has much to say to the natural man ; whether he will hear, or whether he will forbear. Luke xvi. 29. But then, we are not to call upon the dead to live, nor

exhort the dead to do living acts, or perform spiritual services: we are not to invite all, indiscriminately, to come to Christ, as poor, needy, labouring and heavy-laden sinners, and cast their burden upon him ; for all men are not poor in their own eyes, and heavy-laden with their sins.

It would be improper to invite even the elect, thus to come to Christ while in a state of nature; for though they are known unto God in that state, they are not known to us, and if they were, they are not in such a capacity as to receive the invitations of a spiritual nature, for, they are not spiritual by nature, but natural, like the rest of mankind. The invitations of the gospel are not, -Come ye elect of God, without any description of character; come ye sheep of Christ, without any descriptive marks : come ye redeemed, without that feeling sense of your lost condition, which evidences your souls to be quickened by the Spirit. - Thus to invite, would be like inviting a man in health, to come to a Physician and be healed; and Christ has said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick: I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matt, ix. 12. 13.

Once more. To invite all men indiscriminately to receive spiritual blessings, and perform spiritual services, is inconsistent with the doctrine of election, (which is a choosing of some, and not of all men ; Rom. xi. 5. 7. 1 Cor. i. 26,) and with redemption, which is a redemption of the elect of God only, for Christ laid down his life for his sheep

; (John x. 15.) and purchased the church with his own blood ; (Acts xx. 28.) and gave himself for it. Eph. v. 25.

Therefore none but the elect are blessed in Christ with spiritual blessings, Eph. i, 3. 4. Also it is inconsistent with the special grace of God the Holy Ghost, in regeneration; who gives spiritual life, light, and understanding, to none but the chosen and redeemed. Unto you, saith Christ, it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. Matt.xiii. 11. And when speaking to the non-elected Jews, he saith, "ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." John. x. 26. again, "my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life : and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." verses 27, 28.

Then, as the grace of God is special, and a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven; (John iii. 27.) it is improper to invite all men to come to Christ, and exercise precious faith on him. "No man," saith Christ,"can come to me, except the Father which bath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." John vi.44. 45. and the Apostle Paul saith,"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he make them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual, Judgeth (or as it reads in the margin, discerneth) all things. I Cor. ii. 14. 15. Now the things of the Spirit of God, which the natural man receiveth not,

neither can know, are not the things of God spoken of by Paul, in Rom. 1. 20. namely, his eternal power and Godhead, which are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; so that every natural man ought to know and observe them ; but, the things of the Spirit of God, are the things relating to the love of God in Christ; the Covenant of grace, and the blessings thereof, namely, pardon of sin through the blood of Christ, justification, sanctification, eternal redemption, and the kingdom of glory prepared for them that love God. These things Adam knew not, as a natural man ; while he possessed a most extensive knowledge of the things of God, his eternal power and Godhead ; he knew nothing of spiritual and new-covenant blessings, in Christ Jesus. He knew God and worshipped him as his Creator; but he knew not the Mediator, and how to approach God through him. These things were kept secret and hid, and were not revealed to Adam as a natural man. They are not made known by the works of creation, but by the word of God, through the teaching and anointing of the Holy Ghost, Rom. xvi. 25. 26. 2 Tim. i. 10. The external revelation is made to men in general, where the gospel is preached; but the internal revelation by the Spirit, is only given to the elect of God. As Christ saith, " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight. "Matt. xi. 25. 26.

Adherence then to the invitations of the gospel of a general nature, will preserve from temporal ruin, as well as render

punishment hereafter more mild, and moderate, See Matt xi, 22. Luke xix. 41. 44. Therefore it is for the interest of Nations, Cities, Towns, Villages, Families, and Individuals, that men regard and attend to them.

We now proceed to notice the second part of our subject, namely, the invitations of the Gospel, of a special, internal, and spiritual nature. Special, as belonging only to the Lord's people ; internal, as they are addressed to the inner, or new man; and spiritual, as they are invitations to receive spiritual blessings, and perform spiritual services. And first we will notice the characters thus invited, which are descriptive of the family of God, for whom all spiritual provisions are made. And

1st. "They are described as sinners; as Christ saith," I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matt. ix. 13. True, all are sinners, in the eye of the holy, just, and good Law of God, which they have broken ; but all men are not sensible, broken-hearted, and penitent sinners; ready to perish, faint away and die ; like the Publican, who smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner". And the Apostle Paul, when the commandment came to him, in the power and demonstration of the Spirit, sin revived, and he died : he saw and felt himself, a vile, lost, and ruined sinner : Rom. vii. 9. for he cries out, " O wretched man that I am," and acknowledges himself the Chief of sinners ; saying," this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ

Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief." 1 Tim. 1. 15. Every one that heartily receives Christ, and his free-grace salvation, in the free invitations of the gospel, is made by the Spirit, to feel himself, a lost, perishing, ill and hell deserving sinner. As the Poet finely describes the case,

" To understand these terms aright,

" This grand distinction should be known,

" Though all are sinners in God's sight,

"There are but few so in their own.

"TO such as these, our Lord was sent,

"They're only sinners who repent."

HART.

2ndly. They are described as hungry, thirsty, weary and heavy-laden ; which characteristics, mark them out as those that are "alive, from the dead ; quickened and made spiritually alive, by the Spirit of God. No dead sinner can possibly feel a need of spiritual food, and heavenly drink; consequently he can neither hunger nor thirst after them. Nor can the dead, feel weary and heavy laden : only the living, feel their sins a burden upon their heart, and sink under them as a load too heavy for them to bear; are tired out with hard labour, under the yoke of bondage ; saying with the Psalmist; " I am bowed down greatly, I go

mourning all the day long." And with Hezekiah," O Lord I am oppressed, undertake for me." Psal. xxxviii, 4--6. Isa. xxxviii. 14.

3rdly. They are described as poor and needy. As the Lord saith, " when the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys." Now the poor and needy to whom the promises are made, and the invitations given, are not the poor in purse, in pocket, and in outward circumstances : but, as Christ hath shewn, the poor in spirit, Matt. v. 3. Poor in their own spirit, in their own soul feeling ; having a discovery of the poverty of their own depraved hearts, which are destitute of all good, and full of all that is bad. As the Apostle observes," in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing." And as the Lord, by the Prophet, describes the heart to be "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Rom. vii. 18. Jer.xvii. 9. They know themselves to be deep in debt, yea as sold beyond the possibility of ever redeeming themselves. They know they are without food to eat, or clothing to wear; and without money to buy; their own righteousness being but as filthy rags, and their goodness as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away, Isa. lxiv. 6. Hosea vi. 4. Therefore they find nothing in themselves, nor in the broken law, to afford them the least shadow of hope for life eternal ; nor to yield the sin a smallest drop of joy or peace to their distressed minds. They are like the prodigal Son, in a destitute and

starving condition. Luke xv. 17. And like the two debtors, deeply involved, and having nothing wherewith to pay their debts. Luke vii. 41, 42.

Thus they are poor, and need the riches of Christ ; guilty, and need pardon; unrighteous, and need the righteousness of Christ ; polluted, and need the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness ; fools, and need the wisdom of Christ ; weak, and need the strength of Christ ; lost, and need his redemption and salvation. These are the sinners Christ came to call to repentance; the characters he invites to come unto him, and receive from him all that they need. And they only will hear the invitations of the Gospel, of a spiritual nature, and take the water of life freely : being made willing in the day of Christ's power. Ps. ex. 3.

Having noticed the characters invited, we proceed to notice the invitations more distinctly ; And,

1st. They are invited and exhorted to the exercise of evangelical repentance ; a godly sorrow for sin ; having the grace thereof granted unto them by God the Father ; Acts xi. 18. and given unto them by God the Son ; Acts v. 31. and produced in them by God the Holy Ghost; Zech. xii. 10. John xvi. 8. agreeable to Acts ii. 31. Peter invited those who were pricked in their hearts, alarmed in their consciences, and enquiring the way of salvation as lost sinners, to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus

Christ, for the remission of sins ; and encouraged them therein, with the promise of pardon through a Saviour's name, blood, and sacrifice. In the previous part of his sermon, he had charged his audience with the sin of crucifying Christ; and proved him to be the Messiah, the sent of God : and when he perceived that the grace of God had reached the hearts of some, manifested by a deep concern in their souls for salvation; then he knew they were quickened souls, vessels of mercy, and those for whom Christ died. Therefore he invites and exhorts them to repent : not to get the grace of repentance, (as some say) but, in the strength of the grace of God already given to confess their sins unto God, with contrition of heart, and compunction of soul ; looking to Jesus' sufferings, and blood for pardon ; which are set forth emblematically in their baptism.

This repentance is necessary to the enjoyment of salvation: and it is the will of God that all his people should come unto it. 2 Peter, iii. 9. Therefore he waits to be gracious unto them ; bestows this grace and mercy upon them ; and gives his Holy Spirit, as the spirit. of grace and supplications in their hearts ; who, (as Christ promised he should) convinceth them of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; gives them a true sight and sense of sin, not only in the glass of the holy law of God ; but in the glass of his holy gospel ; which sets forth Christ crucified for sin; and the pardoning love of God, streaming through the precious blood of Christ, to the vilest of the vile. He also directs their hearts into God's love, manifested in the gift of his

dear Son, and in the pardon of their sins for his sake: and produceth in them a contrite heart : and invites them to the exercise of this repentance; which lies in a true sight and sense of sin, godly sorrow for it, self-loathing and shame on account of it, humiliation of soul before God, confession to him, and in hating and forsaking of sin. Ps. xxxviii. 18.

Prov. xxviii. 13. 1 John, i. 9. They who thus repent, have the promise of pardon, life, and salvation : for says Peter, " the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Acts ii. 39. This repentance, is more or less exercised by the renewed children of God, from the time of their call by grace, to the time of their final deliverance from the body of sin and d death, and of their soul's entrance into glory.

Not for an hour, a day, or week,

Do saints repentance own ;

But all the time the Lord they seek,

At sin they grieve and groan.

Nor is it such a dismal thing,

As 'tis by some men named ;

A sinner may repent and sing;

Rejoice and be ashamed."

HART.

2nd. The labouring and heavy-laden, are invited to come to Jesus in the exercise of faith ; with all their sins, sorrows and burdens, and repose their weary souls on him. As Christ saith, " Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Mr. Hussey labours hard to prove this, a local coming : but it is plain that this invitation relates to the soul, and is meant of spiritual coming; for the persons invited were in Christ's presence ; and consequently had locally come unto him. They were labouring and heavy-laden in soul, and the promise is of rest to their souls ; as the following verse proves, which shews that it is meant of the soul in distress for sin, here invited to come to Christ, in the actings of faith, for pardon, peace, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. All these he is made unto every poor, burdened, and bruised sinner. I Cor. i. 30. " But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This coming to Christ, was foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, chap. xlv. verses 24 and 25. " Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength : even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." And Christ hath shewn, that coming to him with the soul, by faith, is the consequence of the electing love of the Father, in giving his people unto him. " All that the Father giveth me shall come to me : and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

Having felt the power and sweetness of the above invitations in my own soul ; they are more precious to me, than thousands of gold and silver ; suiting the circumstances of my burdened soul, better than if the Lord had said, come all men, or come all Daniels.

This invitation to weary and heavy-laden souls, to cast their burdens upon Christ, has been the means, in the hand of the blessed Spirit, of shewing me the willingness of Christ to save my soul; and of encouraging me, vile as I am, to believe in him, and cast my burdened soul upon him, and receive comfort into my distressed mind. Therefore I would not have it out of the gospel, for all that earth calls good or great. Come then ye burdened, and brokenhearted sinners, to Christ; and he will receive you, give you rest, and save your souls.

Come ye sinners, poor and wretched,

Weak and wounded, sick and sore

Jesus ready stands to save you,

Full of pity joined with power.

He is able,

He is willing : doubt no more."

HART.

3rd. The hungry and thirsty ones are invited to come, and eat the bread of heaven, and drink the water of life. Not only are they, in common with men in general, invited to come to the means, the word, and ordinances ; but their souls in the means, are invited, to eat of the bread, and drink of the wine, which Christ hath mingled. Prov, ix. 5. They are invited to feed by faith on Christ crucified, who is the bread of life, the fatted calf, the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; and to drink his precious blood, feast on his dying love, and his sin-cleansing sacrifice. The glorious doctrines of the gospel,-the electing love of God ; pardon through a Saviour's blood ; justification through his righteousness; complete redemption by his sacrifice ; the efficacious grace of God, in regeneration, and his love therein displayed to their souls; together with their safety in the hands of Christ: constitute the east of fat things, full of marrow ; of wines on the lees well refined ; the provision of Zion, which God has promised abundantly to bless; even the good news from a far country, which is as cold water to these thirsty souls ; refreshing and reviving their drooping minds. Isa. xxv. 6. Ps. cxxxii. 15. Prov. xxv. 25.*

* I would hope that no man living, is more alive to the necessity of Divine power and influence, needed to be found in these things, than myself. I know that I must be drawn, in order

that I may run ; (S. Song i. 4.) and, if there is even a solitary sentence, in this discourse, at all in real variance with the doctrine of Divine influence, it conveys not my meaning ; I know better ; but I do not believe that such a sentence can be there found. Yet I know the prejudices, even of some of God's children, to a certain Creed ; and the following remarks of the late John Martin of Keppel-street, exactly express my sentiments.

"We are clothed in our minds, with more fantastic robes than ever woman invented ; when we look within, we are coated with more coats than an onion ; yea, we have an hundred to lay aside before we come to any pulp, at any serious business, God Almighty knows what prejudices we have to give up ; what pride, what passion; what sensuality, what superfluity of naughtiness (James i. 21.) ere we can exercise ourselves, with any vigour, unto godliness ; ere we can receive with" meekness the engrafted word."

"Now, my friends, do not tease me,;-- do not say- you exhort very strongly ; but you do not tell us where the power is.'- Tell you ? Why should I tell you, who know it so well? Ah ! how often have I shook my head at that silly saying ! What! do you not know where the power is ?- You should tell us of the power.'- Ay, I would to noodles; but why should I tell you ?- You know the power, and know where it is to be had. Instead, therefore, of debating on the power, go down on your knees and ask for power ; if you need it, then go to the throne of Grace for it. I know that people can do nothing without power, without the help of the Spirit; and am I not often on that power, when I am called to it? Why should you think that I have forgot it then? I charge it upon your consciences, that you ask to be godly, and that you be godly too; that you cleave to Christ with purpose of heart; else you will talk of power in a weak and silly manner." John Martin.

Now Christ in his Word, by his Spirit, and Ministry (as in our text) invites the poor and needy, the hungry and thirsty, to come to him, and eat, drink, and be filled ; yea to be abundantly satisfied. And he promises to give unto him that

is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely ; Rev. xxi. 6. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink ; John vii. 37. " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy, and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Isa. Iv. 1, 2.

Some men think and say, that, every body is invited in these texts; some thirsting literally, and others sinfully some for gold and silver ; some for advancement and honor amongst men; and others for the gratification of their carnal, sinful and devilish lusts. How strange for Christ to entertain such characters as these ! how improper to invite the man who is thirsting for gold, to come to Christ and be filled, when he himself said, when upon earth, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.', Matt. viii. 20. Is it likely that the man whose heart is set on money, and saying with the horse-leech, "give give," will be satisfied with the humble lot of Christ? or is it likely that the ambitious man, will be satisfied with the lot of Christ and his followers; when it is left on record, that he was despised of men, counted a madman, and possessed of the devil : and as he was treated, so must his disciples be, in their measure. And will the man that wants the honor of men, be content with

this portion? I think not. And can we suppose that the man who burns with the thirst of lust, will be any better pleased with Jesus and his yoke?

But it is evident, the persons invited in these texts, are thirsting for spiritual things ; after the blood and righteousness of Christ, after pardon and salvation ; as Christ hath described them in Matt. v.6. and surnamed them "blessed," and promised they shall be filled. Now the other characters cannot be said to be blessed; for there is no evidence thereof; but they who hunger and thirst after spiritual blessings, are already blessed, and shall be filled. Come then ye hungry and thirsty, whom Christ hath pronounced blessed ; whosoever will, and take the water of life freely. The blessings of grace are all free : no goodness, or money, on your part is required; you are heartily welcome to all that Christ is, has, and hath promised.

Ho, ye needy, come and welcome,

God's free bounty glorify ;

True belief and true repentance,

Every grace that brings us nigh,

Without money,

Come to Jesus Christ and buy."

HART.

4th, The Lord's spiritual people are invited to draw near to God, with the heart, in the solemn and spiritual worship of prayer and praise; by faith in the blood and sacrifice of Christ, through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. As the Psalmist exhorts, "Trust in him at all times, ye people pour out your hearts before him." Ps. lxii. 8. Thus Paul invites the believing Hebrews, " Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. and our bodies washed with pure water," Heb. x. 22. Again, they are invited to " come boldly unto the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 16. They are invited to pour out their souls before God ; to draw near unto him, and to come boldly unto the throne of grace. This they are invited to do in secret, in their closets ; as Christ hath taught, Matt. vi. 6. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." And Christ not only invites his disciples to secret prayer and private devotion ; but he sweetly invites his spouse, to public prayer also ; to social as well as secret worship ; using the most endearing and affectionate words; saying "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Song. ii. 14.

The saints, in drawing near to God, are encouraged by the promise of God that he will draw near unto them : and that by the blood of Christ, that new and living way, that brings nigh the lost sinner unto God, and cleanseth from all sin. "Having" (saith the Apostle) therefore, Brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say his flesh." Heb. x. 19, 20. They are also greatly encouraged by the consideration of what Christ is now doing; who is interceding for them in the presence of God. And the great compassion of Christ, the High Priest of their profession, affords them abundant encouragement, in drawing near unto God, sensible of their manifold sins and infirmities. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." " And having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering ; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is ; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Heb. iv. 14-16 & x. 21-25. Thus the Spirit of the Lord prompts his dear spiritual people, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. I Peter ii. 5, helps their infirmities,

makes intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered. Rom. viii. 26. And he sweetly invites them in the gospel, both to private and public praise, as well as prayer; to secret., and to social worship.

" And who that knows the worth of prayer,

"But wishes to be often there."

5thly. The people of God, are invited in times of danger, calamity, trouble, affliction and temptations, to come and enter into their chambers; agreeable to Isa. xxvi. 20.

"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy door, about thee ; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over past." Dr. Gill, interprets the Chambers, as places of prayer and devotion; of the perfections of God; who is a strong tower into which the righteous run, and are safe, Prov. xviii, 10. and every perfection in Him, is a chamber in this tower, where the saints betaking themselves:-, may securely lodge, till the trouble is over : as the everlasting love of God, which changes not; therefore they are not consumed ; the faithfulness of God, in His Covenant and promises, which never fail; and his power, in which they are kept as in a garrison: also of Christ in his blood and righteousness, who is a hiding-place, and a covert from the storm and tempest, Now, where should the people of God go, in times of danger, calamity, temptations, and afflictions, but to the places of prayer, and there betake themselves to God, their

rock and their shield; and by prayer and supplication cast their every care upon Him ; and encourage themselves in the Lord their God ; in His love which is immutable, in His faithfulness which never fails; and in His power which is all-sufficient to bear them and their troubles too; and in Christ who is a strong hold, in his person, blood, and righteousness. The Lord says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Ps. l, 15. And the Apostle James says, " Is any among you afflicted, let him pray." Ja, v. 13. It is your privilege, ye tempted souls by the Spirit's help, in times of affliction and trouble, which are many, to call upon your heavenly Father, to take shelter in the wounded side of Christ, and receive comfort and strength from the perfections of God, in the fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ; as the Psalmist says, " God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. Ps. xlv. 1-3. Come then ye people of God, made manifest by calling grace, and, enter into your Chambers.

" Come children, to your Father's arms,

" Hide in the chambers of his grace,

" Till the fierce storms be overblown,

" And the revenging fury cease."

WATTS.

6thly. they are invited and exhorted to the exercise of every Christian duty ; a summary of which you have in the 12th, chap. of Romans. The Apostle having in the preceding chapters, established the doctrines of the Gospel, proceeds in this, to build the duties of the Christian upon them. By the love, grace, and mercy of God, he invites and exhorts them united, to present their bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, as their reasonable service : and "not to be conformed to this world; but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds; that they might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God , "This is the reasonable service of all God's regenerated people ; for they are loved and chosen of God ; redeemed and bought with the price of the Redeemer's blood, and regenerated and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, by the Holy Ghost. Therefore they are not their own, but the Lord's ; consequently they should glorify him, in their bodies, and in their spirits. 1 Cor. vi. 20.

Then the Apostle goes onto notice the duties of the Officers of the Church ; and invites and exhorts them, "not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think ; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." " Having then," says he, gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith ; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering ; or he that teacheth,

on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence ; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." Then he invites and exhorts, believers in general, to let their " love be without dissimulation," both to God, and to one another ; to " abhor that which is evil, to cleave to that which is good;" and various other duties be inculcates, relating to God, themselves, to one another, and to the men of the world. To notice all the invitations of this nature, would be to bring forth a great portion of the new Testament, more especially the Epistolary parts thereof.

But we would remark here, that we live in a day in which profession abounds : some professors making their salvation depend on their duties ; going about, as the Apostle observes, to establish a righteousness of their own, and "have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Rom. x. 3. Others there are (blessed be the Lord) who love the precepts of the gospel ; who preach, and in some measure live according to them, but at the same time look ALONE to the finished work of Christ for salvation; as the Apostle saith, " We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have NO confidence in the flesh." Phil. iii. 3. Those who are looking to their duties for salvation, are all ear to listen to the precepts; but cannot bear to hear so much of the doctrines of the gospel.

There are some, on the other hand, who profess to love the doctrines of the gospel ; but disregard the precepts, ordinances, and invitations thereof: hence you will generally find them all ear to hear the former, but deaf to the latter. You will see them stand up in their pews, their eyes sparkling, and their countenances smiling, while you are preaching the glorious doctrines of free grace, and expatiating on the depravity of the human heart : Then they will call you "a blessed man of God; one sweetly and blessedly taught, and deeply led into the mystery of godliness." But, when you come to describe the power and experience of the truth in the heart, and the practical tendency thereof in the life and conversation : and exhort Believers to good works, as the necessary fruits and effects of the grace of God in the soul ; -then you may see their countenances change, and instead of a smile you have a frown, and their heads often hanging down on the pewledge. And you may hear of them speaking against you "by the walls and in the doors of the houses," as they spake against the prophet Ezekiel ; Chap. xxxiii. 30. *

* I earnestly request the reader to peruse attentively the whole passage. See Ezekiel xxxiii. 30-33.

But, my brethren, remember, it is their sin to reproach us ; while it is our happiness and glory to be so reproached; as the Apostle bath said, " If ye be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on

your part he is glorified." 1 Peter iv. 14. Let us then, as the Apostle admonished his Son Timothy, "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." 2 Tim. iv. 2,

For my part, I am determined, by the help of the Lord, to preach the word, doctrinally, experimentally, and practically ; " whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear:" whether they please to call me sound or unsound; an arminian, or an antinomian.

But, it is to be feared, that we, as Ministers, have been too negligent in inculcating this branch of divine truth ; dwelling somewhat largely on the doctrines, a little on experience, and less on the precepts: willing rather to be styled Antinomians by Arminians; than to be called Arminians by Antinomians.

Let us, my brethren, while we are faithful in one branch of truth, not shun to declare another, as the manner of some is. And let the Lord's people, hear all the counsel of God; not only his good-will, of love, grace, and mercy, towards them, in the gift of his dear Son; Luke ii. 14. but his will concerning them, in Christ Jesus: as the Apostle observes, "in every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you." 1 Thess. v. 18. Many are willing to hear the former ; but few to hear, and do, the latter. Wherefore be ye " not unwise but understanding

what the will of the Lord is"; and as his servants, be ready to do the will of the Lord. " Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh shall find so doing." Luke xii. 43. *

* " Among the dissatisfied, it is probable, some will complain of your ministry being dry, legal, and of an Arminian cast ; while others it may be, will quarrel with it, under a supposition that you dwell too much on the doctrines of divine grace, and verge towards Antinomianism. My own ministry, however, has been the subject of loud complaint, in these opposite ways, and that at the very same time.- Nor have we much reason to wonder at it. For, if a minister, to the best of his ability, display the glory of sovereign grace, in the election, redemption, and justification of sinners; he will be sure to offend the pride of multitudes, who are seeking acceptance with God, by their own obedience. -Does the same preacher insist upon the necessity of that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ," -Upon that conformity to the example of Christ, and that spiritual-mindedness, without which all pretensions to faith in the Son

of God are vain ? the covetousness and carnality of others will be disgusted : they will pronounce him legal, and consider his doctrine as inimical to the prerogatives of sovereign grace ; and this, because he maintains, that, evangelical truths have a holy influence on all who believe them ; or, in the language of James, that, "faith without works is dead."

Booth's, " Pastoral Cautions."

And here let me observe, the more we are enabled, in a scriptural, and then in a consistent manner, to set forth the precepts of the gospel, and invite the spiritual man, upon gospel principles, to the observance thereof; the more Satan will tempt us to some secret sin or other, that he may thereby stop our mouths, and prevent us from inculcating of practicals. For he does not care on the one hand, how much practice the self-righteous have, so long as they trust in it: nor, on the other hand, he cares not how much doctrine we preach, so long as we neglect experience and practice. He can do very well with part of the truth; like many professors: but the WHOLE TRUTH is so mighty, so prevalent, and so detrimental to his kingdom, that he cannot stand it. *

* " He (Satan) has a something that comes so near the gospel, that it is called, by Paid, ' another Gospel,' and yet, in reality, it is no gospel at all. Gal. i. 6, 7. He deals much in half-convictions, and almost-Christians, but does not like THOROUGH work. He will let people talk about grace as much as they please, provided talking will satisfy them. They may be zealous for the blood, or, the water, or, the spirit ; which they themselves chose, provided they will be content with either one of them, without the other two. He will preach free-grace, when he finds the people willing to receive the notion, as an excuse and a cloke for idleness.

But, let him look and talk, as he will, he is Satan still: and those who are experienced and watchful, may discern his cloven foot hanging below his fine garment of light. He is never MORE a DEVIL, than when he looks MOST like an Angel ! ! !

Those of us, who are not ignorant of his devices, let us beware of him; for many wise have been deceived through his

subtilty, and many strong have been
cast down by him and let us continually
apply to HIM who is able to keep us
from falling." **Newton**

" So, if he can shut a faithful Minister's mouth, he will;
either by tempting him to secret sins, or by stirring up the
people to speak evil of him. O how he has thrust sore at me,
that I might fall! I cannot possibly describe his diabolical
insinuations and temptations ; or my wicked and deceitful
heart, which is ever ready to listen to him. So that I am
obliged to pray with the Psalmist, " Hold thou me up, O
Lord, and I shall be safe; and I will have respect unto thy
statutes continually. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that
my footsteps slip not." Ps. xvii. 5. and cxix. 117. I have
dwelt the more largely on this subject, from a
consciousness of its importance, and on account of the
great neglect of many ministers, in inculcating this
necessary part of divine truth.

7thly and lastly. The Lord's loved, redeemed, and
quicken'd people, are invited to come out from an ungodly
world ; out of the ungodly society thereof ; out of their
ungodly speeches ; and out of their ungodly deeds. As the
Lord, by his servant, hath said, " Come out from among
them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing;
and I will receive you, so ye shall be my sons and
daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

The Lord's people are too often mixing-up with the world,
in their lewd jestings, their fashionable pleasures, their
Lord's-day visitings, and in the ungodly practice of Lord's-

day marketing ; taking up religion in one hand, and the world in the other : serving Satan the God of this world, and following the courses of the world, in the early part of the Lord's day, either in purchasing, or preparing for the back, or the belly; * and attempting to serve God, and walk with his people, in the latter part of it.

* " Thanks for the Venison.-But, we cannot dress it TO DAY for all my family are to be at Court this morning. The King of Heaven has sent most positive orders, and will not excuse either man-servant or maid-servant."
Hervey's Letters.

But Christ hath said, " No man can serve two masters for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matt. vi. 24. And the Apostle James saith, " Know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God ? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." Ja, iv. 4. Again, the Apostle of the Gentiles exhorts, " Be not ye therefore partakers with them." Eph. v. 7-14. And, " be not conformed to this world : but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Rom. xii. 2. Therefore resist the devil, stedfast in the faith; and touch not the unclean thing ; but cleave unto God, and his ways, with purpose of heart ; for he hath promised to receive you, and lie a Father unto you.

Come then out of mystical Babylon, and be not partakers of her sins, in her perversion of Ordinances, in her corrupt Doctrines, and in her idolatrous Worship : denying the doctrines of the gospel,-the electing love of God the Father; the Deity of God the Son, and the efficacy of his blood ; and the invincible energy of God the Holy Ghost ; setting up the free-will of man, and human merit ; in opposition to the sovereignty of God in the choice of his people in Christ, before the foundation of the world ; in opposition to the blood and righteousness of Christ in redemption ; and in opposition to the power of the Holy Ghost in regeneration. Perverting the ordinance of believer's baptism, and substituting in its place, infant sprinkling : and serving the creature, and the respectable congregation, more than God. Hence what means the trumpery and noise, so common in the conversation of many professors ; " such a minister, has a very respectable congregation, and such a wealthy Church." It is to be feared that the one half of the religion of the day, consists in worshipping and adoring a fine speaker, and pleasing a genteel congregation. And the Lord's people are too much swallowed up and buried in this carnality; so that real spirituality of mind, is at a very low ebb with many.

When the Lord called me by his grace, and made me feel my lost condition, and the greatness of my sins, I was glad to get within the door of a Barn to hear his word, and to unite with the poorest of them that feared God ; knowing as James saith, that " God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." Jam. ii. 5. And as Christ

saith, "the poor have the gospel preached unto them." Matt. xi. 5. Fine speakers, and respectable congregations, all went for nothing then, with my poor, burdened, and distressed soul, and nothing short of Christ, and him crucified, would do for me : for I had such a sense of my wretched state, and the insufficiency of men and things, that I found none of them could by any means redeem my soul, or give to God a ransom for me. Therefore, if Christ was not set forth in his person, blood, and righteousness, the only Saviour of lost, perishing sinners, I felt disappointed, notwithstanding the fine sermon I had heard, and the gay congregation I had seen ; and like Mary returning from the sepulchre, not finding the Lord, said, weeping, " they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." John xx. 13. And, God knows, this is my feeling, more or less, to the present day ; to be nothing in myself, but to find Christ all and in all; myself the least of all saints and the chief of sinners ; unworthy of a name and a place among the poorest of the Lord's family.

Beloved, the period is fast approaching, when that which is so much prized and sought after, by many, will appear, as it really is, " vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" and when nothing will do, or be of real value, but Christ, and his blood and righteousness. Then they to whom Christ has been precious here, who here followed him through evil report, and through good report, and have been called fools and madmen, for so doing, by the wise and prudent of this world ; will be received by him into the kingdom of Glory and they who have lived and died in their sins, following the course of this world, will be cast into hell,

notwithstanding all their respectability . See Mitt. xxv. 31. 46. Come then ye backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you : and I will take you one of a City, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Jer. iii. 14, 22.

"Come ye backsliding Sons of God,

(For many such there are,)

Who long- the paths of sin have trod,

Come cast away despair.

Return to Jesus Christ, and see,

There's mercy still for such as we."

HART.

We proceed now to notice, in the third place, the ends and designs of the invitations of the Gospel. As to the general invitations, spoken of in the first part of this discourse, I think it unnecessary again to go over the same ground ; but having, as we went on, shewn in some measure, the design of those invitations, and exhortations, to men at large; I shall conclude, by stating more particularly, the ends of the special invitations to the Lord's own people. And,

1st. They are designed to set forth the will or willingness of God, to receive the poor perishing sinners invited ; and to shew the freeness of the things he is invited to receive. As when a friend invites us to his house, fixing the time when,

saying, "do not fail then to come, for I shall be glad to see you;" we then conclude that this is the mind of our friend, and that he loves us, delights in our company, and takes pleasure in entertaining us. But when the invitation is indefinite ; no time being fixed ; but it is general and unlimited ; we entertain some doubt, as to whether our friend really wishes our company ; for it is not a certain sound. So when men attempt to set forth the invitations of the gospel, of a spiritual nature, in an indefinite, unlimited manner; there is such an uncertainty in the sound, that the poor, needy and disconsolate sinner, for whose sake they are designed ; knows not what is piped, or what is harped. Therefore, while such men attempt to encourage all, they in reality encourage none ; but only discourage the real character, for whom they are intended ; namely, the hungry, and the thirsty, the labouring, and the heavy-laden.

But, when they are set forth, as they really are in the gospel, in a definite way, the character being described, the blessings pointed out, and their freeness shewn; then the mind and will of the Lord is clearly manifested ; as in the following invitation :-"Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden: and I will give you rest." Here the love of Christ is set forth to the persons invited ; and his readiness to receive and entertain them, and bestow his blessings needed by and promised to them ; for he means them to come and enjoy the blessing ; it being his delight to give it to them.

2ndly. They are designed for the encouragement of the Lord's people, incoming to Christ, sensible of the great impurity of their nature; and in the exercise of spiritual

services, sensible of their great weakness. They are often discouraged on account of these things; saying, "my sins are so great, and too many to be forgiven: my vileness is such that I think God never can delight in me, and admit me into fellowship with himself; and my weakness is such that I can do nothing spiritually good." But the Holy Ghost lays hold of the invitations of the gospel, brings them with power and energy into the hearts of these disconsolate ones; and reveals the good will of him that dwelt in the bush, unto them ; and encourages them thereby, to believe in Christ, and to draw near unto God by him; not withstanding their great unworthiness ; and in this manner makes the invitations of the gospel, enablings.

Hence the Lord saith by the mouth of the prophet, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great Trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the Land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." Isa.xxvii.13. The great Trumpet blown, designs the preaching of the glorious gospel, not only in its glorious and precious doctrines, setting forth the great love of God to his people, the great and glorious mediator and Saviour, the great salvation accomplished by him, and the exceeding great and precious promises, all yea and amen in Christ ; but also, in its great and glorious invitations, inviting all those who are ready to perish, and the outcasts, to come and receive Christ and his salvation freely. This is as music in their ears; charming to their souls; drawing them as " with cords of a man, .with bands of love." Jer. xxxi. 3. Hosea xi. 4.

Once more ; they are designed for the glory of God, and his people's good. The glory of God in his love, and mercy, therein revealed to their souls; which leads them to " speak of the glory of his kingdom, and to talk of his power," in redeeming their souls from destruction, in taking off their heavy burdens, raising them up from the depths of sin and iniquity, and from soul despondency, " the horrible pit and miry clay." Having thus experienced his goodness and mercy in the invitations of the gospel, they bless his holy name for mercies so great, bestowed on sinners so ill, and hell-deserving: so that while they reap the benefit, God has the glory ,in their praises.

And not only is God glorified in their praises ; but in their conversation and lives, becoming the gospel. He is glorified before men, in their humble deportment, their kind, affectionate, and affable carriage one towards another: also in their abhorring that which is evil, and cleaving to that which is good ; being ready to every good work ; to " do good unto all men, especially to the household of faith." " Herein," saith Christ " is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples." John xv.8. And again, he says, " Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt.v.16.

Thus while God is glorified, the souls of his people are edified ; seeking sinners are encouraged, weak hands are strengthened, feeble knees are confirmed, straight paths are made for the lame, and they are not "turned out of the way;" and while they behold the " chaste conversation" of

Christians, "coupled with fear," walking in the truth, they are obliged to say, " behold how good, and how pleasant it is, to see brethren dwell together in unity." And while others are constrained to acknowledge the reality of true religion ; the child of God himself, thus actuated, feels the power of divine truth, the sweetness of gospel invitations and exhortations; and realizes the truth of what the Psalmist says," moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward." Ps. xix. 11.

May the Lord add his blessing; and help the reader to think on these things ; and not only to think upon them, but to practise them. O may it be the mercy of both writer and reader, to

" Go on, to seek to know the Lord,

And practise what we know. " Amen.